



University of
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HONIARAN PERSPECTIVES ON EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

A Thesis submitted by

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this thesis is to assess and evaluate the understanding and effectiveness of the current system of governance within the communities living in the urban and peri-urban areas of Honiara City, Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands. It explores the perspectives of Honiarans on governance and issues currently affecting good governance, what they consider effective governance, and alternative models of governance. It explores the ideas Honiarans have about federalism and the devolution of power from the existing centralised model. The study investigates themes surrounding leadership models, corruption in government, and the role of social and political elites as well as issues surrounding the electoral process, including ballot manipulation and coercion. External factors and actors, including foreign owned companies, aid from donor states and the influence of foreign states in the nation's governance were also considered. Key to the analysis of this thesis is an investigation of the relationship between contemporary and customary ideas about governance. This study discusses the complexities of customary tradition and examines the positive and negative impacts of this on governance. It also explores the necessity of integrating customary tradition into governance, particularly regarding land ownership and management issues. The thesis explores how Honiarans regard customary and contemporary forms of authority, how they visualise the role of both forms in relationship to one another as well as the role of both within the country's extant mechanisms of contemporary governance. Honiarans offered their views on constitutional and electoral reform, changes to voting, and direct election of Prime Ministers. They express their frustration and ways to resolve broader economic and socio-cultural reforms, such as land management, health care and unemployment. The outcome of any of these reforms; political or otherwise, depends entirely upon what Honiarans would argue would be the most important reform of all, the omnipresent existential threat of corruption.

CERTIFICATION OF THESIS

I, Aaron Pearce, declare that the Thesis entitled *Honiaran perspectives on effective governance in the Solomon Islands* is not more than 103,525 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references, and footnotes. The thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

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DEDICATION

Anne Elizabeth Callahan

30 July 1954 – 17 April 2023

“The most beautiful word on the lips of mankind is the word ‘Mother’,
and the most beautiful call is the call of ‘My mother’.

It is a word full of hope and love,
a sweet and kind word coming from the depths of the heart.

The mother is everything,
she is our consolation in sorrow, our hope in misery, and our strength in weakness.

She is the source of love, mercy, sympathy, and forgiveness.

He who loses his mother loses a pure soul who blesses and guards him constantly.”

The Broken Wings, Gibran Khalil Gibran.

Sean Patrick McCarthy

7 Signals Regiment (EW)
Special Air Service Regiment

5 January 1983 – 8 July 2008

“He that is thy friend indeed,
He will help thee in thy need:
If thou sorrow, he will weep,
If thou wake, he cannot sleep:
Thus, of every grief in heart,
He with thee doth bear a part.
These are certain signs to know,
Faithful friend from flattering foe.”

The Passionate Pilgrim, William Shakespeare.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AFP	Australian Federal Police
AIC	Australian Intelligence Community
ASIO	Australian Secret Intelligence Organisation
ASIS	Australian Secret Intelligence Service
ASG	Abu Sayyaf Group (Islamic State-East Asia Province, Philippines)
BRA	Bougainville Revolutionary Army
BoM	Board of Management (RAMSI)
CRT	Critical Race Theory
CTF	Combined Task Force
FPTP	First Past The Post
GRA	Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army (Guale militia)
GLF	Guadalcanal Liberation Front (Guale militia)
IFM	Isatabu Freedom Movement
IPMT	International Peace Monitoring Team
JI	Jemaah Islamiyah (Islamist terrorist organisation active in SE Asia)
LPV	Limited Preferable Voting
MEF	Malaitan Eagle Force (Malaitan militia)
NPC	National Peace Council
ONA	Office of National Assessments
PG	Provincial Government
PMC	Peace Monitoring Council
PM&C	Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (Australia)
PPF	Participating Police Force (RAMSI)
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission Solomon Islands
RCDF	Regional Constituency Development Funds
RSIPF	Royal Solomon Islands Police Force
SIG	Solomon Islands Government
TPA	Townsville Peace Agreement
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
PFDP	Pacific Judicial Development Program
PGSP	Provincial Governance Strengthening Programme

SELECTED GLOSSARY

Atomistic Federalism: Defines system of federalism that devolves constitutional power to ethnically homogenous groups that have already achieved internal cooperative equilibria (Powell 2004).

Big Man: Refers to a non-inheritable, informal male position of authority in Melanesian society. It is a competitive role based on reciprocity and the exchange of resources and favour with followers (Sahlins 1963:285-303). It is reflective of chiefly authority found in Polynesian cultures; however, within the Melanesian social order, the role is one more of influence than leadership (Waiko 1993:9) in the Postcolonial context, it is often used to describe those who utilise *Kastom*, often inappropriately, to accumulate political influence.

Clientelism: is defined as a social hierarchy based on a system of patronage. In the Solomon Islands, clientelism is expressed through *Wantok* and other customary practices which in turn are the basis upon which the Solomon Island's political landscape operates. In a clientelist system, voters themselves will support a candidate offering local development and opportunity, the politician reciprocates through focusing on meeting needs of their constituents, which comes at the expense of the national interest and fuels corruption (Wood 2018:481-494).

Corruption: manifests in the Solomon Islands in a number of guises. It appears as 'grand' corruption; the dishonest, fraudulent conduct by those in authority, generally involving bribery, cronyism, nepotism, and trading in influence, and benefits a minority of elites. It also manifests in vote buying, electoral fraud and parochialism through the manipulation of customary reciprocal systems of patronage (Clientelism) by political elites to gain and maintain political power. It is a systemic collusive form of corruption between elites and their electorates that has formed the nation's political zeitgeist in one form or another since independence. Petty corruption in private life is also commonplace and can be 'masked' as customary gifting to minimise perceptions of illicitness but is popularly understood to be criminal behaviour.

Critical Race Theory: Developed by African American legal academics in the 1980s, Critical Race Theory (CRT) argues that the structures of state determine dominant perceptions (narratives) of racial minorities. The nature of those same institutions and practices as perceived by subordinated, marginalised racial minorities forms the counter-narrative. An example would be perceptions of law enforcement within US institutions forming the dominant narrative, with perceptions of law enforcement from the point of view of people of colour forming the subordinate counter-narrative.

Emic: A term originating from linguistics, emic refers to interpretation of cultural phenomenon that come from within a culture itself. In other words, it is from the perspective of an individual who participates in the culture being studied.

Etic: As opposed to Emic, Etic refers to the interpretation of cultural phenomenon that are cross cultural in nature. It is generally understood as being from the perspective of an individual who does not participate in that culture.

Guale: A term used to describe Indigenous people whose tribe or clan consider the island of Guadalcanal to be their ancestral home. They are not a distinctive ethnic group but a number of tribes who share the claim to Guadalcanal. During the Crisis Period, being Guale meant being a member of a supra-tribal *Wantok* network endogenous to Guadalcanal, its *raison d'être* being to defend their traditional rights over the island.

Isatabu: An Indigenous term for the Island of Guadalcanal. For example, the Isatabu Freedom Movement (IFM) was a Guale political organisation and erstwhile militia.

Kastom: A term used to describe traditional Indigenous social, political, and religious practices of Melanesian societies. Definitions of *Kastom* and customary practice are dynamic: Christian rites were once in conflict with *Kastom* but are now treated as being customary.

Maasina Ruru: Protest movement promoting self-government and self-determination. Originated in Malaita and influenced by African American GIs: it is credited with the push toward independence from the United Kingdom in 1978.

Mana: Defined as a supernatural force that permeates both the meta-physical and physical. How *Mana* manifests in people's lives varies between Polynesian and Melanesian societies. *Mana* can have an accumulative effect in people and place. Among the living, *Mana* can be measured as *gravitas* and accorded profound respect. It is understood that an individual can draw Mana from objects, as well as from other individuals. In the Solomon Islands, Oroï (2016:183-202) noted that individuals held ancestral objects as a device through which their customary claims to land is legitimated. *Mana* can also be observed or reflected within the Christian context in the Solomon Islands where the spiritual and cultural authority of religious leaders carry cultural connotations (White 2013:171-197.). It can also manifest in quasi-Arthurian ontology, such as the 'Secret Makiran Underground Army'; a force led by long deceased Prime Minister Solomon Mamaloni to herald in a utopian epoch of Makiran autonomy, and the restoration of Makiran *Kastom* (Scott 2007, 2011, 2013).

Masta Liu: A slang term in Solomon *Pijin* used to describe loitering. A large youth population combined with economic migration to Honiara from regional rural areas led to a concentration of unemployed young men in the capital. These under-skilled, under-utilised desperate young men were a factor underpinning the civil strife in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Moro Movement: Named for its founder, Paramount Chief Pelise Moro, the Moro Movement was a socio-political pressure group that had formed in 1957, the catalyst for its formation being Chief Moro's transformative spiritual experience while very ill. The movement sought to restore customary practice as well as co-operative socio-economic enterprises designed to improve the lives of his followers. The Moro Movement was a community focused organisation and looked to achieve socio-economic independence for Solomon Islanders codification of traditional customary practice into daily lives.

An Isatabuan traditionalist movement, the Moro Movement also sought to integrate customary laws regarding land ownership and its use, and had a particular interest in the spiritual well-being and ‘reconnecting’ with customary belief

Regional Constituency Development Funds (RCDF): A form of Consolidated Development Fund (CPA 2016), RCDFs were a long-term delivery of financial aid to provincial authorities in the Solomon Islands by the Republic of China (Taiwan). This funding was allocated to regional MPs for regional development projects, who in turn had direct control over the use and/or misuse of those funds.

Waku: A *Pijin* (derogatory) word meaning Asian person. It derives from the Cantonese phrase *wah kiu*, or “reside outside” (Moore 2008a:64). There are variations, such as ‘black *waku*’, used to describe Southeast Asians (Allen *et al.* 2013:22).

Wantok: A *Pijin* term meaning ‘one talk’, *Wantok* is used to describe an association based on common language. It is a flexible and expansive concept can be used to describe ties of family, kinship, tribe, ethnicity, a province or even the nation, depending on the context. As part of the customary tradition common to many ethnicities in the Southwest Pacific, ‘*Wantok*’ can be called upon as part of the tradition of obligation between members of a clan. Originally designed to affirm hierarchical social and political mores as well as a diplomatic device in pre-contact Solomon Islands), in the contemporary context it is called upon to support fellow ‘*Wantok*’ during times of need, as well as more practical application such as developing economic and social networks. The weaponisation of ‘*Wantok*’ by politicians and other powerbrokers (by manipulating its inherent reciprocal design) for economic and political gain forms a fundamental aspect of the country’s political tradition. It was a hallmark of the Crisis Period and remains a cornerstone of the political landscape of the country.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Structural Change and Recovery

This thesis is best understood as a collaboration. This project is a collection and interpretation of the ideas, opinions, beliefs, and experiences of over two hundred Honiarans of all walks and ways of life, about what they think about governance in their country. They were encouraged to be as honest as they wished, whether 'good, bad, or ugly'. The insights and truths they offer are remarkable. It is obvious that the questions formulated were my invention. Additionally, my lived experience of the region was at great variance to their world and their experience of it. Academic prevarication, bound as it were by the tentacles of Postcolonial angst leaves many scholars focused too much on their theoretical impact, and not enough on reminding themselves that they, like their subject, are human beings; all are individuals, all can reason and think critically. In the twenty-first century, where mobile phones are more prevalent than drinking water, the assumption that people of a particular background or national origin can or cannot seek understanding of another culture or people out of fear of misunderstanding or misinterpretation is misguided.

This attitude is reflective of academic exceptionalism and sycophantism rather than how human beings in a global community actually interact with one another. They are prevarications that divert attention away from the possibility of productive and inclusive change-making. The intention with this project was to collaborate with Honiarans to formulate the kinds of questions people *wanted* to answer and to respond to these questions and ideas with their own thoughts and words. For example, they shared their thoughts about the positive role *Kastom* could play in governance. They also share their ideas on repairing to damage done to the *Wantok* tradition by political manipulation and untangle those traditions from the bane of corruption. They also discussed reforms to reconcile and protect customary authority and laws with contemporary ones. It was crucial that participants be empowered to reflect on governance in their country in 2019 as they experienced it and communicate those ideas in their own words. In 2003 and 2004, patrolling the streets of Honiara as an Australian soldier, behind the anger and fear, it was clear that everyone had plenty to say, important things.

One of the things needed was a platform to communicate those ideas, opinions, and experiences. This study is an attempt to provide the platform to communicate the ideas, opinions, and experiences of Honiarans with governance almost twenty years later. Many of those experiences speak poignantly of the journey the nation has taken. Walking with one of my friends, an imposing but gentle Malaitan man, we were selecting betelnut at a roadside stand. He pointed off into the distance and said: “I remember you guys landing here. We were scared at first, but quickly realised you were coming to help. I was 14.” A striking moment, it illustrated how a failure in governance can often be an incredibly traumatic experience. This study offers an alternative approach to understanding governance in the Solomon Islands: Honiarans describing their own experiences of governance in their own words. This study will seek to understand what Honiarans expect from governance, and what they believe needs to be done to achieve this.

Focus and Scope

The focus of this thesis is to assess and evaluate the perceptions of the current system of governance among Honiarans living the urban, peri-urban, and rural areas of Honiara City, Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands to determine:

What factors do Honiarans perceive to be impeding effective governance and what changes could be made, reflective of their community’s customary practice and contemporary priorities, would be necessary to produce more effective governance?

To assist in achieving this, Honiarans surveyed were asked to

Explore and evaluate how they measure the effectiveness of governance and explain what they believe to be barriers impeding good governance, and to:

Explore and evaluate the role and value of customary forms of authority and the value and relevance of those practices in contemporary governance.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this project is based within Postcolonial theory. Ideas such as cultural homogeneity and internationalist indigeneity in the South Pacific region are of relevance, particularly concepts of re-indigenising governance (Muckler 2002). Concepts of delinking of non-western societies from the Coloniality of western socio-economic dogma through an emancipation of Indigenous practice in governance guided this project (Mignolo 2007:449-514., 2011:118-146). Postcolonialism is an academic discipline featuring methods of intellectual discourse that analyse, explain, and respond to the cultural legacies of Colonialism and imperialism and the human consequences of controlling a country and establishing settlers for the economic exploitation of the Indigenous people and their land (Young 2016; Ashcroft, Griffin & Tiffin 2000). Postcolonialism analyses the functionality of power in Postcolonial societies and how the colonisers' influence and structural footprint determined the socio-political dialectic in these societies.

In understanding the history of the Solomon Islands and the historiography of that narrative, Postcolonial theory is essential in underscoring the socio-political diversity between the ethnic groups that constitute the archipelago, and the cultural practices they draw upon (Dinnen 2008b, 2008c). Postcolonial theory encourages scholars to interpret interventionism as a by-product of the struggle between dominant and subordinate narratives of effective governance in the region (Corbett 2017:8-9). There is no such thing as singular Postcolonial experience; rather Postcolonialism assumes many guises; what is true of one Colonised people cannot necessarily be said to be true for others (Gardner 2013:113-4). The underlying worldview that determines the relationships between Coloniser/Colonised or Intervenor/Intervened is bound in Eurocentric narratives (Mignolo 2007:453-463), or more precisely, Anglo-American dominated narrative. Russian and French historiography suggest Colonial and Postcolonial narratives run concurrently in a globalised Postmodern context (France: Miles 2005:223-234; Demmer & Trépiéd 2017:274; Palayret 2004:221-252, Russia: Rojek 2022:447–461; Halbach 2018; Van Herpen 2014).

In the case of the Solomon Islands, the Regional Assistance Mission Solomon Islands (RAMSI) intervention could be construed as a reiteration of Colonial modalities of dominant/subordinate, and fails to account for regional, ethno-social, economic, and gender differences among the peoples and communities affected (Tuhiwai-Smith 1999:21-2). The RAMSI intervention viewed in a Postcolonial context appeared *prima face* to be a paternalistic perpetuation of the socio-cultural treatment of the subaltern as a subject of development, a subordinate stereotyped as inherently incapable and ignorant (Hameiri 2007:419). The intervention and the post-intervention period effectively excluded Honiarans from their own development (Hameiri 2009:37-41; Gardner 2013:120). The issue with modernisation is that there is the assumption that Postcolonial societies can or want to develop toward a so-called modern society in a linear or predictable way (Allen & Dinnen 2016:7). Underwriting this perception epistemologically are ongoing super-impositions of traditions of Coloniser upon the Colonised, deliberately, or otherwise, though recent efforts of Indigenous scholarship may go some way in re-dressing this (Huffer & Ropate 2004).

The lesson from RAMSI regarding issues surrounding the transition from dependency to independence is that development and modernisation count for nothing if the recipient community is not actively part its design and implementation (Fry 1990, 1996; White 2006). Concepts developed in Critical Race Theory (CRT), particularly in relation to structural determinism (Delgado & Stefancic 2001) were helpful in interpreting the vested hierarchies and dominant narratives found in jurisprudence and governance within Postcolonial Solomon Islands. CRT originated in law schools in the United States in the 1980s. It postulates that racial supremacy and power are sustained and endure in society due to the inherent institutional subordination of minorities (Delgado & Stefancic 2001). CRT asks the scholar to examine the structural determinism underpinning perceptions of minorities their competing but invisible or marginalised narratives. Much of CRT is about dialogue of subaltern narratives or counter stories. Of relevance to the Solomon Islands are counter stories in relation to indigeneity and governance (Merlan 2009; Wairiu, Tabo *et al.* 2003). These stories challenge dominant narratives, as they give silent minorities a voice with which the scholar can then quantify the impact of the dominant narrative on the minority.

In CRT studies, the contradistinction of narrative (Coloniser) and counter-narrative (Colonised) is crucial in measuring the ongoing impact of and resistance to neo-Colonialism, particularly in the guises of governmental and economic reform (Mignolo 2007:449-514; Slatter 2006:27-32). It questions concepts such as liberal democracy and whether it is in fact blind to colour and race; or are concepts like modernity and prevailing concepts of governance merely the dominant perspective of the coloniser or dominant culture (Wesley 2013:189-90). The project draws on these theories to examine the hybridisation or homogenisation of contemporary neo-liberalist concepts of governance development with customary Indigenous practices. This framework is imperative when examining the refinement of the process of governance and state building (whether imported, Indigenous or hybrid) in a Postcolonial environment.

Outcomes and Significance

This project documents the relationship between Honiarans and governance in the post-RAMSI period and illustrates that the structures and agencies of governance are a product both of their Indigenous origins, the legacy of Colonialism, and the socio-economic and political influence of foreign actors since independence. The study will contribute to the research regarding implementation of policy, particularly the structure of the relationship and distribution of authority between local and national agencies of governance. Key outcomes of a renewed focus on this relationship include addressing policy overlap and bureaucratic redundancy at local and provincial levels, as well as the role of customary law and traditional structures of authority, particularly in the local arbitration of land and extractive resource management, social justice, and sustainable economic development.

Thesis Structure

Chapter 1. Structural Change and Recovery: introduces the focus and scope of the study to assess and evaluate the perceptions of the current system of governance among Honiarans. It outlines the expected outcomes and significance of this study. The chapter concludes with explanations of the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis, such as Postcolonialism and critical race theory, which utilises socio-political and ethno-geographic priorities at the community level.

Chapter 2. Background: outlines the key historical and political issues that have impacted, led to, and created the situation today in the Solomon Islands. It explores the history and aftermath of Colonialism, including cultural adaptation and change. It investigates the deterioration of governance and social adhesion during the Crisis Period of the late 1990s and 2000s. The chapter turns its attention to the years of the RAMSI intervention, and more recent events, both political and cultural, that form the locus of concern for Honiarans. This includes ongoing problems with electoral fraud, politically motivated violence and social unrest, the role of foreign actors in the social, economic, and political life, endemic issues surrounding land management, and particularly the role of customary law and tradition in contemporary life.

Chapter 3. Literature Review: is an overview and evaluation of the current body of academic research about governance in the Solomon Islands. It situates this study within current research on the governance in the Solomon Islands and identifies gaps in our understanding of how Honiarans measure the effectiveness of governance. The review begins with a historiography of the Solomon Islands, reviewing key aspects of the nation's political journey from the colonial to contemporary period. The review then investigates the current body of literature regarding governance in the Solomon Islands, and its relationship with customary tradition, the development of political parties, the role of women and religion in governance, as well as key themes of interest, such as development, corruption and political devolution. The review closes with an analysis of literature on the Solomon Islands in relation to regionalism as well as international relations.

Chapter 4. Methodology: This chapter explains the elements that underpinned the process of researching the lives of people within this study as well as the importance of identifying the 'self' within research. As a non-Indigenous person who does not live in the Solomon Islands, the author must be cognisant and account for how their origins, bias, and experiences can influence how they perceive information, the ontological traditions drawn upon to interpret and evaluate, and how they then communicate an interpretation of that information. This project approaches this problem through the application of Critical Race Theory, and Auto-ethnography. Critical Race Theory (CRT) postulates that within the context of Postcolonial societies, the historical dominance of one community group over another will, over time, lead to the development of institutional bias against the subordinated group. In the Solomon Islands this is manifest in the fact that all institutional structures of governance originate from the Colonial Period, which subordinated existing Indigenous structures of governance, gradually supplanting them.

This chapter also explains how to utilize the auto-ethnographic approach in research. This approach utilizes both the author's experiences as well as those of Respondents to create a meta-narrative that informed the intent of this project. In this case, the researcher was a direct participant in the Crisis Period as an Australian soldier and witnessed the fear, brutality, and violence of the Crisis Period first-hand between 2003 and 2004. This experience forms the underpinning of the researcher's perceptions and understanding of the socio-political collapse in the Solomon Islands. However, the researcher's experiences are also informed by personal friendships with Honiarans long after the conflict period who, being children of the early 1990s, experienced the Crisis Period as teenagers, going on to raise families during the post-conflict RAMSI period. As a non-Indigenous researcher there is an obligation to be cognisant of one's affect upon those being researched and take steps to minimise any effect or influence this could have upon the integrity of the outcomes of the study. This chapter elaborates on how this obligation is met with an explanation of the techniques used to collect and treat data, as well as how to represent that information.

Chapter 5. Results & Interpretation - Centralism or Federalism: investigates what Respondents thought about Provincial and National governance. They were asked what form of governance best addressed their needs and concerns as citizens and asked to explain their reasoning. They were also asked if they believed whether federalism would or would not better deliver reforms in governance, as well as what that federal model might look like. It then elaborates on themes, issues and problems in governance generated from these ideas and opinions about devolution of power to marginalised communities. Ideas about the structure and effectiveness and alternative models of governance are explored. Respondents were asked to explore the issues currently affecting good governance in the Solomon Islands. Their responses to this question form what they consider the most important and urgent problems facing their country today. This includes ongoing lack of trust and faith in political leadership and incumbency of established social elites. They identify the ongoing challenge of endemic criminality in politics including ballot manipulation, electoral fraud, and corruption. Respondents' thoughts on reform of the multiparty system and electoral process are explored, and the chapter closes with discussions about the interference of foreign powers in politics.

Chapter 6. Results & Interpretation - Customary or Contemporary Authority: explores what Respondents see as the role of *Kastom* in contemporary systems of governance. While aspects of *Kastom* like *Wantok* are being excised from accepted practice, there are calls for other elements of *Kastom* to be integrated into governance. Honiarans cite the formal integration of customary law in relation to land management as particularly important. Other aspects of customary tradition explored in this chapter include the increase in calls for women to play a more active part in politics, defying many decades of what could be described as political patriarchy. It continues with a summary of the value and relevance in integrating customary practice within structures of governance. The chapter closes with an exploration of the key issues that Honiarans themselves believe are the most pressing concerns for their country. These include corruption, poverty, drug abuse and unemployment, healthcare, education, and opportunity, as well as nation building.

Chapter 7. Discussion and Conclusion: discusses the results established in Chapter 3, 5 and 6 in relation to the key central research questions developed at the beginning of this project. What do Honiarans surveyed believe impeded effective governance and what changes could be made, reflective of the community's customary practice and contemporary priorities, would be necessary to produce more effective governance? Two objectives were set to assist in answering this overarching question. These were to firstly explore how Honiarans measure the effectiveness of governance and what barriers impede good governance, and secondly, to evaluate what Honiarans surveyed think of the relevance and value of customary and contemporary forms of authority. The Discussion and Conclusion includes findings in relation to Honiarian views on National and Provincial governance and whether alternative models of governance could be more effective. It summarises Honiarans views on issues affecting good governance, particularly corruption and the incumbency of political elites and explore some solutions.

It describes how Honiarans believe customary authority and tradition must be strengthened and formally integrated into contemporary structures of governance, particularly within common law in relation to land rights and resource management. It discusses how Honiarans surveyed view the role of foreign powers such as China and Australia, their influence upon governance and sovereignty, as well as how it impacts their lives. The relationship contemporary Honiarans living in Honiara have with customary authority, its utility and relevance in contemporary governance is summarised; in particular, the role of *Wantok*, how it has moulded the political landscape. The discussion includes Honiarian views on combating corruption being a crucial step forward. It also discusses Honiarian views on political parties, constitutional devolution, electoral reforms, as well as civic concerns such as healthcare, education, and employment. Honiarans also discuss their ideas about the devolution of power, as well as the role of customary law and traditional leadership in contemporary life.

Chapter 2. Background

This chapter outlines the key historical and political issues that have impacted, led to, and created the situation today in the Solomon Islands. The narrative presented here is essential to understanding the development of long-term embedded issues undermining good governance; the issues to which the informants in this study are responding (Chapters 5 & 6).

Colonialism, Kastom and Adaptation

The Solomon Islands is an archipelagic nation state with distinct ethno-insular cultures. While sharing a few cultural norms, there are nevertheless very distinct differences between these cultures. In Malaita for example, Evans described pre-contact tradition that maintained a clear delineation between the 'saltwater peoples', referring to communities living on the reefs and coastal fringe, and the 'bush people' living in the interior (Evans 2003:59). Navigating these physical customary delineations defined and determined inter-island resource use, communication, and trade (Nanau 2011:31-55). Unlike neighbours such as Fiji, the Solomon Islands had not developed centralised structures of governance prior to Independence. The various cultures that inhabited the islands that became the Solomon Islands governed themselves through traditional Melanesian ties of kinship, interdependence, and a competitive meritocracy (Nanau 2011:41). It was pluralistic and did not recognise concepts such as hereditary leadership (Corrin 2009). When a chief died, the most charismatic, influential, and authoritative candidate took hold of the role chief, not necessarily the chief's eldest male child. This style of individualistic leadership, also known as the 'Big Man' phenomenon in Solomon Islands society has in one form or another survived the Colonial period and can still be recognised in contemporary Solomon Islands politics (Sahlins 1992:12-25, 1963:289). While some customary practice managed to influence aspects of western Colonial administration, much of what would be considered traditional governance was modified or replaced by Colonial structures imposed by British authorities (Moore 2017). Exogenous structures were imposed upon Indigenous systems with the view that Indigenous ones were incapable of implementing the kind of control colonisers needed to administer the colony (Dinnen 2008b:344; Quanchi 2014:43-58).

Evidence suggests that the introduction of Christianity also provides a clear marker of where pre-European customary practices were subsumed with practices and traditions that in time would be considered customary practice (Nanau 2011:41). The British Colonial administration's efforts to integrate customary practices and roles into governance prior to 1978 had been lacklustre (Saemala 1979). The effect was that Solomon Islanders had become disconnected from the mechanisms of governance under Colonial rule. Furthermore, what traditional structures of governance that did remain held little sway in any meaningful sense as the preservation and expression of Indigenous power and authority had eroded over time (Saemala 1979). Colonial administrative control over the Indigenous Solomon Islanders was systematically dehumanising; enslavement, dispossession, disease, and the repression of *Kastom*. And naturally, any resistance to being 'colonialised' was stamped out; often with extreme violence (Keesing & Corris 1980).

Things were to change however, with the arrival of the Second World War to the shores of the Solomon Islands. Two manifestations of national indigenous awakening during this period were the Malaitan independence movement *Maasina Ruru*, active in the late 1940s, and the *Moro Movement*, a Gule organisation focused on the re-engagement of traditional concepts of spirituality, land and custom in Guadalcanal (Davenport & Çoker 1967; Keesing 1978; Kabutaulaka 1990). According to Dinnen, the *Maasina Ruru* uprising in particular was the Indigenous response to the socio-political recalibration exerted by events during the Second World War (Dinnen 2008b:346; Fifi'i 1988:93-104 Frazer 1990:191-203). The war had exposed the vulnerabilities of the coloniser and dispelled the myth of the superiority of white administrators. The *Maasina* movement was heavily influenced by African American troops, the perception of their autonomy and affluence relative to their own encouraging Malaitans to insist upon greater social and political freedoms from Colonial administrators (Kwai 2017:80). The *Maasina Ruru*, originally known as the Native Council Movement, was founded in 1943 by Aliko Nono'ohimae in Araiou, Malaita. It was a movement seeking to improve the lives of Indigenous people, particularly workers' representation and wages within the Colonial administration.

By 1946 the movement had established nine districts on Malaita based on the existing linguistic and administrative areas and began expanding its membership and gaining traction outside of Malaita, particularly in Ulawa, San Cristobal and Guadalcanal (Laracy 1983:196). Regions controlled by the *Maasina Ruru* movement operated along customary lines utilising a tiered system of chiefs who controlled several divisions in each district. The *Maasina Ruru* system controlled the recruitment of labour as well as the creation of new villages and gardens that drew in hitherto scattered populations together into larger communities. Another important project undertaken was the conservation of family histories and records in order to establish or confirm the ties of communities to their land (Laracy 1983:20-1). The Colonial authorities reacted relatively quickly; by 1948, most of the movement's leadership were imprisoned. Nevertheless, the damage was done so to speak; it was a watershed moment for Indigenous Solomon Islanders. It was the first instance of widespread resistance to Colonial rule and an assertion of Indigenous rights (Kwai 2017:115).

The other organisation, named for its creator, Paramount Chief Pelise Moro, the Moro Movement was a socio-political pressure group based upon a charter that had evolved from visionary guidance Pelise Moro had experienced while gravely ill in 1957 (Kabutaulaka 1990, Davenport & Çoker 1967:124). The focus of the movement was on the restoration of customary practice as well as co-operative socio-economic enterprises designed to improve the lives of his followers. With its focus upon socio-economic independence for Solomon Islanders and the desire for the codification of traditional customary practice into daily lives, the Moro Movement was a tangible expression of Solomon Islanders' desire to achieve socio-political independence from Colonial administrators (Kabutaulaka 2015, 2008b:110-11). Between 1953 and the early 1960s, there was increasing momentum toward independence with the creation of 24 councils. In 1960, the nation established its constitution, creating Executive and Legislative Councils, then through the Local Government Act of 1963, formed 18 elective councils (Moore 2004:35-7). Despite reservations in the United Kingdom, particularly whether certain colonies could manage independence, the momentum toward independence was irresistible (McIntyre 2001:69-70).

Between 1968 and 1971, efforts were made to engineer a variation on Westminster government. It was essentially a combination of the executive and legislative branches of government under a single council. Popularly described as the Melanesian Way, it was abandoned (McIntyre 2014:180). Under pressure from political activists such as Solomon Mamaloni, the Pacific Dependent Territories Department set in motion constitutional reform, particularly the development of the 1974 constitution (McIntyre 2014:182). Following protracted constitutional talks in London during 1977, the Solomon Islands achieved independence the following year (Moore 2004:34-45). It was observed that the independence process was undertaken with a degree of impatience and carelessness that some have argued contributed to the creation of structural flaws at the constitutional level that undermined national stability ever since (Dinnen 2008b:346; Aldrich 2000:174-6; Nanau 2017). The urgency that Britain demonstrated in extricating itself from affairs in the South Pacific needs to be understood in the context of the shift that occurred in the Post War world during which time British influence in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific was waxing (Gardner 2013; Wesley Smith 2007:197).

By 1973, the UK had joined the European Economic Community (EEC). It was a paradigm shift away from its engagement with Africa and the Asia Pacific (McIntyre 2001:68). In their eagerness to cut the Solomon Islands loose under their accelerated decolonisation program, British administrators had not made much effort to future proof the Solomon Islands as part of their transition to self-governance (McIntyre 2014). Notably, in the years following independence, Australian assistance in training bureaucrats was generally withdrawn before staff were ready to assume their roles in government (Moore 2005a, 2005b:733-4). Dinnen explains that this left only a very small cadre of western educated Indigenous elites that had been groomed to inherit a Colonial-era framework of governance (Dinnen 2008b:347). In fact, prior to 1960, the advisory council for the Protectorate did not have a single Indigenous member (McIntyre 2014:180). Following the handover of the reins of governance to the people of the Solomon Islands, it became apparent that the fledgling nation had inherited shaky institutions of governance, a rudimentary economy and a population that did not understand its processes and mechanisms (Hameiri 2007:418).

Indeed, the tools for independence and statehood were not even fully formed when the nation stepped on to the world stage (Braithwaite, Dinnen, *et al.* 2010:1). It was at this early phase in the nation's story that the seeds of the crisis of the late 1990s and early 2000s were first sown, with successive governments unable to overcome constitutional and institutional issues that have hindered the nation's development. Governments had not appreciated that their nation was still primarily engaged in subsistence economics, living in a world organised along Indigenous traditional norms of leadership and customary law, while having little investment in; or understanding of, the larger mechanisms of state (Dinnen 2008b:352). In this way it is that Solomon Islands can be understood as a European colonial construct overlaying a mosaic of distinct communities with complex interrelationships and interdependencies going back for thousands of years. Under British control, the Solomon Islands were used as a strategic asset by the occupiers with scant regard for their traditions and customs.

Aside from arbitrary efforts at westernisation through education and social reorganisation, the people that made up the Solomon Islands were ill-prepared for independence (Aldrich 2000:176; Moore 2004:43-4). Their conception of statehood and governance had been a construct in the first instance and as a result were an artifice of the coloniser (Wesley-Smith 2007:191-7). This centralised model subsequently produced decades of weak and corrupt governments run by a clique of political elites (Kabutaulaka 2006b:105-7). Centralisation of governance centralised wealth and development projects skewed to benefit ethnic communities and regions of the ruling factions. As a result, communities not connected to the centralised elites experienced no major disruption to socio-economic development (Allen 2012:75-6). This cronyism fuelled ethnic antagonisms which contributed to the ongoing polarisation and sometimes conflict between Malaitan and Guale communities. In an effort to address this tension, activists within the Solomon Islands as well as within academic circles have questioned the appropriateness of a centralised system (Kabutaulaka 2008:96-118). Policy makers have expressed concern that decentralisation would weaken the fabric of the state, increasing the size of government which would in turn increase inefficiency and cost (UNDP 2004:40; Corrin 2007:165-7).

Yet researchers contend that it could entail the opposite: a regionalised focus that encouraged activism amongst people hitherto marginalised (Braithwaite, Dinnen, *et al.* 2010:78-9). This in turn could encourage debate, popular accountability, and engage disparate communities with the political process (Allen 2010:317-19). This is of particular importance when considering the electoral alienation experienced by many voters: women, youth, minority ethnicities and regional communities, as well as a lack of understanding of political processes both contribute to bad governance (Soaki 2017; Scales 2007:187-209). Solomon Island's political elites naturally resist the flow of power out of a centralised system to an invigorated and active Provincial Government and the formalisation of a federalised system of governance. Detractors insist of course that that is precisely why this transition should be encouraged (Kabutaulaka 2006b:113; Timmer 2008:195-7). The State remains stagnant in terms of effective policy making at the grassroots level, suggesting a need to de-centralise power (Cox & Morrison 2004:8). Doing so may assist in re-engaging local level governance and political participation, encouraging structured provincial development programs to devolve power away from political elites (Deves 2014:61-70). Polycentric, decentralised governance could encourage more partisan representation at the parliamentary level. Were all ethnic groups to feel that they have advocacy in parliament and if Provincial Governments had more control over development funding, this may assuage underlying causation of tensions (Powell 2006:55-6).

Self-Governance, Corruption and Crisis

In the late 1980s and into the 1990s, Vanuatu had been shaken by the Santo Rebellion and Papua New Guinea was staving off a secessionist crisis in Bougainville. Australian policy makers and researchers had begun to recognise that Australia's Cold War bi-polar stratagem was ill-prepared for the post-cold war dialectic that saw the prevalence of Ethno-Nationalism and regionalism (Braithwaite, Dinnen, *et al.* 2010:49-50; Wainwright 2003:1-68; Moore 2004:740-5). Australia was also beginning to understand that it was now a regional hegemon. Australian policy makers had to review its role in the region and understand what forces were driving these events and to what extent did Australia involve itself (Campbell 2016; Fry 1990; Ivarature 2013).

In some quarters, an impression had formed that the Southwest Pacific states that ringed the northeast of Australia formed an 'arc of instability' and was in essence a strategic threat to the nation (Dinnen 2008a:2-5; Dobell 2003). The 9/11 attacks on Australia's long-term ally, the United States of America, had impressed upon some think tanks and policy makers that stable neighbours to Australia's north formed a strategic buffer of sorts against unconventional, asymmetric threats from violent non-state actors such as Al Qaeda, Abu Sayyaf, and Jemaah Islamiyah (Moore 2004:738; Kabutaulaka 2004b:4; Abuza 2002:427-465). The Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) for example, played a role in convincing key stakeholders (such as Australia's Foreign Minister Alexander Downer), that the threat posed by terror groups using the Solomon Islands as a corridor into Australia was a very real one (Moore 2005a:738). While Canberra obfuscated on the approach to take in the Solomon Islands, it was eventually decided a regional body would provide the best approach regarding any potential peace-keeping or peace-building intervention.

Since 1971, the Pacific Islands Forum had provided a relatively unthreatening but no less relevant platform for states in the region to communicate and engineer solutions to external and internal issues affecting stability in the region (Ogashiwa 2009; Slatter 2006:27). It would be through this body that the Australian Government would respond to pleas for assistance from the Solomon Islands Government (Moore 2004:20). The crisis in the country had been the due in large part by the economic and political strain of two Mamaloni governments during the late 1980s and early 1990s. The Mamaloni regime had been particularly reckless in its exploitation of natural resources, the government also having racked up debt through the deliberate maladministration of public sector funds (Fraenkel 2006b:127-140). Cronyism and corruption was rife among the political elites who were no match for the appeal of money from Asian logging interests (Fraenkel 2006b:137). Corruption was also seen in the use of Taiwanese provincial development funding, known as Constituency Development Funds (McDougall 2014b:5-7). It was a commonplace that CDF funds were diverted away from their intended purpose and found their way into an MPs or provincial officials home village, community, or their own pockets (Moore 2004:34-5).

Voting is voluntary in the Solomon Islands. As will become clear, attracting voters, and the manipulation of *Kastom* to achieve this underpins many problems confronting the country today. One result of these activities was a perpetuation of underdevelopment, meaning employment opportunities were scarce for communities, ethnic groups or regions not favoured by direct *Wantok* connexions in Honiara (Dinnen 2008b:350-1). Naturally, many members of these communities felt they had no choice but to drift toward the nation's centre of power, where opportunity is most concentrated, in search of work. This follows a pattern since the establishment of Honiara during the Second World War, and the subsequent increase in internal migration to the capital (Moore 2015:419-436; Dinnen 2008b:350-1). Over time, thousands of rural Malaitans gravitated to Honiara under the belief that opportunity abounded in the capital and settled on customary land surrounding Honiara. By virtue of the fact that there is limited flat, arable land outside of this zone, which otherwise tends to be quite mountainous and difficult to cultivate efficiently, conflict has escalated dramatically as development has encroached upon tillable land.

Land that was owned and coveted by generations of Guale customary owners was gradually shrinking, and the growing migration of Malaitans into this predominantly Guale region did not go unnoticed with resentment and discontent increasing amongst ethnic Guale (Dinnen 2008b:351). This was in spite of the reality that inter-island migration had long been an aspect of life in the Solomon Islands, and many of these so-called migrant settlers had been living on Guadalcanal for several generations (Dinnen 2010:286). This process of urbanisation and issues of governance surrounding illegal settlement on customary land in Guadalcanal have continued unabated well past the Crisis Period (Maebuta & Maebuta 2009:118-31). A factor running parallel to these issues was the 'youth bulge' in the population. In the mid to late 1990s thousands of young people, faced with a combination of a scarcity of employment or educational opportunities, led to the development of the *Masta Lui* phenomenon (Braithwaite, Dinnen *et al.* 2010:99-100). The *Masta Lui* were gangs of young men roaming the streets in Honiara carrying out acts of street thuggery and intimidation tactics against local residents and businesses.

The criminality was indeed dire. As early as 1988, in response the lax response to criminal activity attributed to Malaitan squatters, Indigenous Guale called for the government do something about “non-Indigenous unemployed illegal squatters” (Fraenkel 2004:47). At the time, in spite of his Guale heritage, Prime Minister Ezekiel Alebua did little to assuage Guale resentment and anger. However, ten years later Alebua, then premier of Guadalcanal, issued a demand for “S\$2.5 million compensation for twenty-three Guale murdered by immigrants and for the building of Honiara as the national capital on Indigenous land” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2012:69-70). It was the perceived failure to meet these demands that the Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army (GRU), later renamed the Isatabu Freedom Movement (IFM), began to evict Malaitans from farms on Guadalcanal. All told, as many as 35,000 people were eventually forced off the land (Fraenkel 2004:55). Malaitan Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) flooded Honiara from the surrounding plains, while others managed to escape back to Malaita. The result was that desperate and angry Malaitans began to resist the IFM and established the Malaitan Eagle Force (MEF) (Moore 2005a:732-3).

The new Prime Minister Ulufa’alu then set up a taskforce to try and engage with the IFM to find a resolution for the Malaitan IDPs, but to little effect. Faced with the 1997 Asian financial crash, the loss of the Asian logging market, resistance to its reform agenda, as well as militant actions from the Guale and Malaitan militias, the Ulufa’alu administration was facing a crisis it was unequipped to deal with (Braithwaite, Dinnen, *et al.* 2010:152). The government attempt to reconcile the two factions did not reach its intended audience. IFM warlord Harold Keke paid scant regard to government overtures, choosing instead to lead a raid on the police armoury at Yandina in 1998, for which he was arrested (Braithwaite, Dinnen, *et al.* 2010:40). After posting bail Keke, with many loyalists, fled south to the Weathercoast and used the inaccessible region as a stronghold to undertake violent raids and reprisals against the Malaitan Eagle Force, as well as supply raids upon terrified local villagers in order to sustain the militia’s operations (Allen 2005:56-71; Kwa’ioloa & Burt 2007:111-27). The administration’s next attempt, the Honiara Peace Accord of June 1999, (Solomon Islands Government 1999; Braithwaite, Dinnen, *et al.* 2010:25) was far more successful.

It utilised customary compensatory measures to broker a financial settlement to both the people of Guadalcanal in order that they settle financial deals with militants. Malaitans and the Province of Malaita were compensated through financial and developmental incentives. It was observed that while the concept was sound, the execution of the plan was ultimately a failure of governance (Braithwaite, Dinnen *et al.* 2010:26-7). The Ulufa'alu government's attempt at quelling the civil disorder and low level-armed conflict by paying out money as 'customary compensation' to militants, Dinnen points out, was contemporary example of the pre contact Melanesian custom of traditional arbitration (Dinnen 2003:29-30). Both IFM and the MEF managed to extort money from the central government and essentially ignored the Peace Accord (Moore 2004:135) and cynically manipulated the compensatory system for pure financial gain (UNDP 2004:11; Allen & Dinnen 2010:307,311). It was a fundamental breach of cultural norms and values and set the groundwork for a showdown between organised corrupt politicians, criminal gangs, and a government in crisis. In August 1999, Commonwealth Special Envoy Rabuka tabled the Panatina Agreement. It was Rabuka's final attempt at stopping the conflict (Kabutaulaka 2001:17).

The agreement was unambiguous; the police were to focus on law and order. Activities of elite police elements like the Field Force and Rapid Response Unit were to be scaled down. The Agreement made it clear that the militias were to be disbanded (Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2012:71). These events highlight how badly the police had let down the people of Solomon Islands. Undeniably Malaitan in terms of its membership and bias, the police had been compromised and presented a major stumbling block to peace (Wainwright 2003:23-24,39). Late in 1999, a Multinational Police Peace Monitoring Group made up of Fijian and Vanuatuan police elements made another attempt to encourage disarmament. However, the Auki Police Station raid by the MEF in January 2000 scuttled the monitoring groups efforts (Fraenkel 2004:82). In the raid, Malaitan militants made off with a relatively large arsenal of military grade weapons, undertaken with the approval of local and support of senior Malaitan police commanders. For many this meant that any hope that IFM militants would disarm was lost (Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2012:244-5).

The situation on the ground was fluid and unpredictable. So much so that when, in April of 2000 Ulufa'alu requested assistance, the Howard Government was still vacillating as to whether it was prepared to intervene (Moore 2004:132-3; Dinnen 2003:30). By 5 June 2000, Malaitan leadership elements in the capital had moved against the government (Kabutaulaka 2002:12). Andrew Nori, a lawyer, one-time finance minister and then representative (and probable financial backer) of the MEF announced that the MEF (alongside the RSIPF's paramilitary Police Field Force) had seized the main police armoury in the capital and key infrastructure was also seized (Kabutaulaka 2006b:286). Prime Minister Ulufa'alu was kidnapped and subsequently blackmailed into resigning by Malaitan militia leaders and influencers like Alex Bartlett, a member of the MEF supreme council, and Andrew Nori, an MEF spokesperson. This meant that Parliament's hand had been forced, and it would eventually settle on Manasseh Sogavare to lead the government in 2000 (Kabutaulaka 2006b:285-6). The Malaitan militias and their agents within both the police and government had delivered the Malaitan militant cause a significant victory. They were in control of Honiara and its districts and thus were in effective control of the country.

For Malaitan IDPs, their lot was not much better than when they had first been driven off their land by the IFM. Ultimately, the damage that the coup caused economically led to the downfall of all militant groups and vested political bodies and agencies (Dinnen 2003:30-1). Following the 2000 coup, the majority of non-Solomon Islanders had fled the nation, hundreds of jobs in local primary industries and key extractive sites such as the Gold Ridge Mine were lost and the economy was in ruins (Braithwaite, Dinnen *et al.* 2010:32-4). The contraction of the jobs market meant that there were even more unemployed and disaffected youths wondering the streets that became easy recruits to militant groups (Braithwaite, Dinnen *et al.* 2010:32-3). This only increased the already-dire pressure upon local businesses that were being harried on a regular basis. Violence and extortion continued to simmer in the streets of the capital. The Malaitan insistence that they be compensated for their forced eviction remained unanswered (Braithwaite, Dinnen *et al.* 2010:35).

There were mixed results of the negotiations held in 2000. In July, the IFM and MEF representatives as well as religious, political, and economic stakeholders met on HMAS Tobruk. It was an encouraging development save the notable absence of key IFM commander Harold Keke, who later signed separately. However, an agreement on a ceasefire of sorts was reached (Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2012:88-9). One month later, the Solomon Islands Christian Association organised a National Peace Conference held on the RNZN Te Kaha; again, it was not a decisive moment. The organising body, the Civil Society Network made the decision to exclude militants (Allen 2012:72). While arguably a sound decision ethically, in the immediate term it meant that the militants gave the conference scant attention. However, the conference “validated the grievances of both sides and called for a National Truth and Reconciliation Commission and amnesties” (Braithwaite, Dinnen *et al.* 2010:37). There was a turn of events however in the September of 2000 following another meeting on the Te Kaha. The key participants agreed to hold a meeting to reach a settlement via a Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) (United Nations 2000). The TPA generated the framework for a twofold peace process (Hegarty & Regan 2006:60).

There was the Indigenous Peace Monitoring Council (PMC); consisting of eminent Solomon Islanders and mandated to oversee peace processes and demilitarization and was also expected to organise the TPA’s developmental and restructuring recommendations. The International Peace Monitoring Team (IPMT) was the second element of the peace process (Hegarty & Regan 2006:61). The IPMT was a non-partisan team comprising fifty unarmed civilian officials, police and defence personnel from Australia, New Zealand, Vanuatu, Samoa, Tonga, and the Cook Islands. Their role was to undertake the disarmament of the militias as well as to foster confidence building and monitor breaches of the TPA (Hegarty 2001; Hegarty & Regan 2006). The role of the PMC and the IPMT were explicit: they were there to observe the conditions of the TPA although they were given neither the authority nor the means to enforce these conditions (Allen 2010:312). Another important outcome from the TPA was the passing of the Amnesty Act by the Solomon Islands Parliament. It was reported at the time that the weapons surrendered within the terms of the Act were largely antiquated or handmade, but that in terms of public relations it was a coup (Dinnen 2010:292).

During the 2003/2004 period, the author had participated in the collection efforts. By the end of the amnesty, amongst the hundreds of handmade or modified weapons, military personnel had also collected hundreds of semi-automatic and fully-automatic firearms, many of which were entirely serviceable. Also seized were substantial amounts of plastic explosive and detonation cord stolen from the abandoned Gold Ridge mining facility. This was considered of high importance, not only to deny its use by militants, but its use in reef fishing which often resulted in horrific mutilations, particularly children. The Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) was a peace-making endeavour that wholly depended upon the willingness and the ability of its participants to adhere to its tenets. However, the government held under the sway of the MEF, appeared to be in collusion with militants, and their focus was entirely based upon self-interest (Allen 2012:74-5), fundamentally undermining the intent of the Agreement. Contributing to this was the fact that the TPA did not have an effective process for militants to arbitrate and resolve the issues that underwrote the unrest: the protection of customary land rights of Guale landholders, and compensation for displaced Malaitans (Hegarty 2006:61).

The result was that most military-style weaponry remained in the hands of the ex-militants, police and politicians who essentially ignored the efforts of the peacemakers (Allen 2012:73-4). However, some researchers' assessments of the IPMT were that its real success was in giving the community confidence to work within the peace-making process (Braithwaite, Dinnen *et al.* 2010:39; Braithwaite & Dinnen 2008). By mid-2002, the IPMT was withdrawn (Hegarty 2006:61). The PMC, now the National Peace Council, remained under-resourced (Hegarty 2003:10) and the struggle between embedded elites for control of the state under the tillage of PM Kemakeza continued unabated (Moore 2004:180-5). On Guadalcanal, the government's jurisdiction ended a couple of kilometres to the east at Henderson Airfield and at Kakabona to the west. One surprising aspect of this situation was that that whilst the coup had removed the Prime Minister and was essentially a Malaitan construct, large elements of the state apparatus remained intact; both the office of the Governor General and the Judiciary being the most notable examples (Fraenkel 2004:6).

More remarkable still was the effort made by some parts of the public service that, in a desperate attempt to avoid militant predation, worked covertly in secret offices (Fraenkel 2006b:133). This tension between elements of the state highlights unmistakable ethnic dialectic at play. In what was essentially a low-level civil war, ethnically Malaitan militants were still encountering deep-seated resistance to their puppet regime (Kabutaulaka 2006b:125; UNDP 2004:33). The Western Province, Choiseul, Guadalcanal and Temotu all threatened to cede from the state (Fraenkel 2004:6). Indeed, that the state held together at all during this time is remarkable. The Solomon Islands parliamentary system remained chronically unstable at this time: a little over one and a half years after Sogavare had come to power his deputy Allan Kemakeza (from the rival People's Alliance Party) had managed to oust Sogavare by December 2001 (Allen 2012:73-4; Moore 2008c). The Kemakeza regime had uncomfortably close connexions with the Malaitan militias, to the extent that several militants were on his staff (Moore 2004:178; Allen 2010:317).

The government's approach to the crisis differed little from previous patterns. The most obvious example is the \$US25 million Taiwanese aid package that had been earmarked to finance militia customary compensation payments to militia leaders (Hameiri 2007:429). By December 2002, the funds had run out and the Central Bank stopped further advances to the Kemakeza regime. As a result, the relations between government and the militias became increasingly hostile. It was during this period that Guale militant leader Harold Keke had split from the IFM to form the Guadalcanal Liberation Front (GLF). Based in the remote Weather Coast where he was born, Keke remained a thorn in the side of the peace process. During April of 2003, the GLF was to terrorise the larger community, culminating in the kidnap and torture and murder of Melanesian Brother Nathaniel Sado. Keke and his men went on to murder a further six members of the Anglican Religious Community of the Melanesian Brotherhood who were had been investigating the fate of Sado and to facilitate dialogue with the militants (Carter 2012).

This fruitless and savage act by Keke, who had already been showing indications that he was intending on escalating the violence, led the IFM to push him and his supporters to the fringes of the militia group. Despite his isolation politically, the tactical advantage he enjoyed in the remote jungles along Guadalcanal's southern Weathercoast region meant he remained at large despite several joint police/militant operations to capture him (Allen 2012:74). Thus, it was that chaos reigned. The RSIPF had been compromised, militants roamed the countryside at will, governance had stalled, and economic collapse seemed imminent. At the eleventh hour, in July 2003, Kemakeza's pleas for assistance were finally answered. Australian and Pacific Island police and troops arrived in Solomon Islands under the auspices of the Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI). With a considerable show of force, a sizeable international security contingent of 2,200 police and troops, led by Australia and New Zealand, and with representatives from about twenty other Pacific nations landed on Guadalcanal Island, placing itself between the warring factions.

The RAMSI Intervention

The conflict in the Solomon Islands led to the deaths of hundreds of people and displaced 40,000 more - a full *ten percent* of the country's population (UNDP 2004:53). It witnessed the overthrow of an elected government, the hostage taking of a Prime Minister and lasting damage to the economy. While the conflict manifested itself through the ongoing rivalry and antagonism between two dominant ethnic groups, the Guale and Malaitans, there were several contributing socio-economic and cultural factors underlying the ethnic tensions. Individually these factors were not catastrophic, however in the case of the Solomon Islands, it was the accumulated effect of these issues that made the tensions so damaging (Allen & Sinclair 2012; Watson-Gegeo & White 1990). Whether it was issues of uneven economic development, regionalist sentiment, or differential access to state resources, factional politics, declining state effectiveness, and resentment of elite groups over loss of access to wealth due to structural reform: the net result was a collapse of order and the absence of the ability or mechanisms within Solomon Islands society to resolve it (Wainwright 2003:68p; Dinnen 2012:64-5).

By the middle of 2003, the situation had come to a head and a consensus was reached between the Solomon Islands Government and members of Parliament to request the assistance of its neighbours. Australian lead, supported primarily by New Zealand, and with the participation of 14 other Pacific Island nations to reflect its Regionalist credentials, RAMSI was a police-led operation with a sizable military contingent providing security support numbering in its initial stages, 300 and 1800 personnel respectively (Greener-Barcham 2005; Fry 2008; Australian Civil-Military Centre 2012). Its primary mission was to restore law and order (Averre 2008; Fraenkel 2004; Moore 2005b). The expectation was RAMSI would assist the Solomon Islands Government provide in peace building and economic recovery (Hegarty 2006:62; Drumgold & Garcon 2011). Developed and promoted through one of the key regional partnerships, the Pacific Islands Forum, the mission was multilateral, and by virtue of the endorsement of the United Nations, a legal one. In the initial military and police phase on an operational level at any rate, RAMSI had largely been successful (Hutcheson 2014).

As a member of the military contingent of RAMSI, the author observed that a notable factor was the key directive of the military contingent to provide protection to RAMSI police elements, as anti-police sentiment was running high in the community due to the actions of the RSIC. It was common for militants and civilians alike to react violently towards any official wearing police uniform (Dinnen & Peake 2013; Dinnen & Putt 2018). The author recalls working with APS officer Adam Dunning while serving there between October 2003 and March 2004, Adam sadly losing his life after being ambushed and shot in Honiara on 22 December 2004. Prior to this, the author recollecting several occasions in 2003 where orders were given to support police officers being attacked by rioters, including police vehicles being stoned and fire-bombed. Yet, by mid-2003, many militants had surrendered themselves or had been captured and imprisoned by the RAMSI military and police coalition. Large caches of weapons had been surrendered to authorities. Importantly, this included many of the high-powered military style weapons stolen from police compounds during the IFM Yandina raid in December 1998 as well as the MEF raids of Auki and Rove police armouries in January and June 2000 respectively.

Aided by a large multinational aid package as well as the appointment of experts in key positions of the public service and state apparatus, state services resumed, and economic growth gradually picked up (O'Connor 2003; Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2012). The mission was to rehabilitate and, in some cases, rebuild the Solomon Islands' public service. There were a number of anticipated difficulties in coordinating an effective multi-service and multi-national, peacekeeping and government building operation of this magnitude (Braithwaite, Dinnen *et al.* 2010; Wainwright 2005:1-12). In the initial stages, RAMSI was quite heavily invested in an overhaul of law making and law enforcement (Dinnen 2012:66; Hegarty 2004). Australia inserted expatriate specialist staff into key roles in government and public service and rebuilt around these nodes. This caused resentment among the Solomon Islands public service who were not being trained but simply replaced. Yet, the Australian government's position was that if the Solomon Islands wanted peace restored then it had to accept the RAMSI package in its fullest sense (Fraenkel 2014b:77-8). In other words, RAMSI's was a restorative intervention not a transformative one. Addressing structural flaws and systemic issues was outside of its mandate (Dinnen 2004c).

The 2006 Elections and RAMSI Overreach

The 2006 elections led to another period of instability in Honiara with the newly elected Prime Minister Snyder Rini accused of corruption and bribery from both Taiwan and ethnic Chinese in his bid to become Prime Minister. The subsequent rioting, and the aggravated, premeditated targeting of Chinese businesses led to the evacuations of foreign nationals and extensive property damage. In the years since the riots, it became clear that the riots were far from a spontaneous expression of electoral outrage and frustration and more the cynical manipulation by political elites machinating and conspiring to further their interests (Allen 2008b:39-59). The crisis highlighted for many observers that although RAMSI had restored law and order in the initial phase of its operations, there were underlying systemic issues that were unresolved and for all intents appeared to not be part of the intervention's mission focus (Dinnen & Firth 2008).

It was a classic example of ‘mission creep’, an issue hitherto identified by researchers in relation to Australia’s peacekeeping operations (Powles 2006; Hayward-Jones 2014:7). The question was how these matters were to be dealt with as RAMSI wound down (Wallis 2008:81-98; Ayson 2007; Connell 2006:111-122; Fraenkel 2014a:195-204). Prime Minister Sogavare’s second tenure as Prime Minister between May 2006 and December 2007 had been overshadowed by diplomatic stoushes with the Australian Government surrounding the Solomon Islands Attorney General, Julian Moti (Gibbs, Huai & Liosi 2007; Nelson 2008). There were serious accusations that RAMSI had interfered in national politics following their abortive raid on the Prime Minister’s offices as part of the Moti investigations (Nautilus Institute 2008a-g). Unsurprisingly, because of his handling of the Moti issue, Sogavare was removed from office following a vote of no confidence. Prime Minister Gordon Darcy Lilo had proven to be far more resilient than his predecessors and was a key supporter of the RAMSI vision.

A clever and resourceful leader, Lilo represented the nation’s best chance in recent years for it to forge substantial inroads into securing long-term stable development. Under the guidance of RAMSI, the significant improvements in the rule of law were obvious (Averre 2008; RAMSI 2010). There are exceptions to this, particularly the accusation that many high-profile politicians implicated in criminal activity during the Crisis Period remained at large, as well as issues surrounding restorative justice and legal advocacy at the rural community level (Dinnen 2006; Dinnen, Jowitt *et al.* 2003). Justice delivery had been neglected in the years prior to the RAMSI intervention and had not been sufficiently addressed at the provincial level. There is strong evidence to suggest that the centralisation of the law courts and policing prior to intervention removed the circuit breakers at the provincial level, which can be seen as a catalyst for emergent resentment at the provincial level, which led to the crisis in 1998-2003 (Allen 2013). The violence of 2006-2007 undermined the efforts of peacemakers and suggested a lack of effective dialogue among political groups, ex militants, business groups and the broader community. It was clear that the underlying issues that led to the tensions in the late 1990s had at that point not been adequately addressed (O’Callaghan 2008, 2013; Dobell 2012; Wallis 2012).

Land and Resource Management

Land management and development in the Solomon Islands is fraught with issues borne out of the systemic incompatibility with western concepts of development. Postcolonial land distribution law, customary land management, as well as traditional concepts of land ownership and inheritance have all played a part in creating a system that hinders development and creates friction within the community (Kofana 2014). This affects development, mining licenses, tourism, industrial and fisheries and is further hindered by the absence of legal structures to grant rights (Tyler 1990). Colonialism disrupted customary patterns of land ownership. Whether the appropriation of land for commercial use, the establishment of townships and colonial infrastructure, the nature of how this process evolved was at the heart of the majority of land disputes today (Kofana 2014). Establishing title and the legal transfer of this land is highly complex, poorly regulated, and legally ambiguous, particularly in how land title disputes are mediated, particularly the relationship between contemporary jurisprudence and customary arbitration. Negotiating the release of customary land for development is rightly a sensitive one at the best of times.

Complicating the negotiations with developers is that Guale and Malaitan customary land laws are distinct from one another. Guale culture maintains matrilineal inheritance of land in conjunction with male custodianship whereas Malaitan culture maintains patriarchal laws of inheritance (Stege 2008). In Guale culture, other descendants, and migrants are often described as subordinate to the descendants of the first settlers (Monson 2010). Complicating this even further is the intermarriage between Guale and Malaitan communities. In that case, arbitration between disputed claims is almost impossible. In this scenario, development is of the least concern. Of greater worry is the latent potential for land disputes to escalate as they did in the past; it was this very issue that acted as a crucible for tensions between Guale and Malaitans (Wainwright 2003:21), and in recent years the Solomon Islands Government had been working on this issue through the Customary Land Tenure Reform Project. There have been suggestions that a hybrid system be utilised that would recognise custodial arrangements but also facilitate the establishment of legal title to mitigate disputes (Kofana 2014).

The formalisation of land boundaries with local authorities would also go some way in reducing the frequency of legal disputes over ownership of land parcels. In a broader sense it would also remove the fuel for disputes between communities. Monson (2010) has also identified that there were still mixed interpretations of the law in relation to the hierarchy of claims upon land. The lack of a clear and formalised legal framework (contemporary or customary) for lawmakers only confused the arbitration process. Additionally, the massive financial windfalls provided by the logging industry proved too tempting to many stakeholders in government during the 1980s and 1990s (Fraenkel 2006b:137). It was a catalyst for systemic and insidious corruption. The logging firms, whether legal or otherwise stripped vast swathes of primary forest. The lack of legislative action to enforce sustainable practices has now passed the point of crisis and the nation's timber reserves are essentially depleted – suffice to say that the environmental costs are unthinkable. It is for these reasons that extractive resource management such as mining and fisheries are a crucial focus point for post-intervention government agencies.

Failure to address these issues will ensure catastrophic and lasting damage to the nation's environment, impact the nation's economy, and do untold harm to thousands of Solomon Islanders who dependent upon subsistence for their livelihoods (Raynor 2013). The reality of contemporary resource management is that there are no longer any resource frontiers. What that means is that there are no longer resources that are not in some way 'owned'. And due to this, all resources will involve competing claims of ownership, conflict over management the wealth generated (Tyler 1990). While resource conflict is an inevitable and its effects are global in scope for most Solomon Islanders, daily life operates within the confines of small-scale subsistence economics (Hartard & Liebert 2015). It was for this reason that many Solomon Islanders were not affected directly by the breakdown of governance during the Crisis Period (Moore 2004). However, the enduring effect of long term economic and environmental mismanagement would likely engender generational degradation in overall standards (Chand 2005:1-17; World Bank 2010).

The ongoing efforts to define sustainable development implicate greater stakeholder participation during project planning and management to avoid conflicts over the utilisation of renewable natural resources (World Bank 2007; UNCED 1992; Winterbottom 1992). This emphasis on participation is particularly relevant to 'the poor.' There is a growing awareness within rural communities and the private sector of the commercial value of common property resources. How these resources are protected so as to benefit traditional landowners is essential. This issue is an aspect developmental pressure, a feature common throughout the developing world (Warner 2000).

Peace and State Building

During the intervention there was a lack of emphasis upon cultural sensitivity and the integration of culture into RAMSI's peace-building efforts, removing an opportunity to utilize customs and traditions in the peace building processes (Firth & Chand 2008). The validity of local participation in governance cannot be overemphasised as the adoption of indigenous concepts of governance assists in conflict resolution and arbitration (Hegarty 2006). RAMSI had restored a good degree of order, as well as administrative and economic functionality (Warner 2004; Fraenkel, Madraiwiwi & Okole 2014). However, it did not substantially develop peace-building initiatives founded on community-based participatory models (Hawksley & Georgeu 2014). The lack of dialogue between peacebuilders and Solomon Islanders has been lacking and this approach tends to ignore the important roles that local actors engaged in locally owned processes can play (Hegarty 2006:62). It consequently reduces the potential for the international community to achieve more tangible outcomes with minimal interference through providing support to local processes. It would be expected that peace building and subsequent state building models (designed by local actors to meet local needs), would be more compatible to externally derived peace building plans and avoid underlying influences and agendas of the originating country or organisation (Dinnen 2007:255-63). Not doing so risks programs being resisted by the recipient or stifling the voice of marginalised local actors in their implementation.

It is near-inevitable that interventionism will generally remain controversial as they ultimately seek to alter established power relations of a sovereign state (Dinnen 2007:261). In any case, understanding the ability of the state and the conflicting parties within it to be able to reach a sustainable agreement and build a state apparatus to implement these agreements remains. In the Solomon Islands this is a matter of whether the existing apparatus of government is capable of self-regeneration. It also needs to be assessed in terms of how much engagement with the population there is. Is there enough popular willingness to invest in State building? Is the legitimacy of the state recognised by its participants? One suggestion was that agents of peace and reconstruction need to re-conceptualise the word 'conflict' within the context of social change, political restructuring, and social activism (Warner 2000:9). As Warner describes, within a non-violent setting 'conflict' can operate as a force for positive social change (Warner 2000:9).

Development projects, Community based renewable natural resource management and other 'Smart' developmental projects are another approach that can help with the peace building process (Craig 1998; Ndelu 1998). These projects capitalise on the need for stakeholder co-operation within renewable natural resource management. Part of these community level projects is to provide a pivot around which to build cooperation and dialogue (Craig 1998; Ndelu 1998). Such experiences highlight the importance of international peace-building interventions that focus on synergy with locally developed peace processes (Coppel 2012). For example, there is little point developing Indigenous peace processes and reconciliation in relation to land management unless those same stakeholders address structural decision-making at the constitutional level, leading to institutional change. Consensus building around community level projects is an excellent template upon which to develop Postcolonial indigenized modalities (Higgins 2008). An awareness of the local context will determine how best to deliver workable solutions to those conflicts (Hegarty 2006:65).

Corruption and Gift-Giving

In discussions about corruption in the Solomon Islands, the ‘Big Man’ cultural phenomenon is central. Having origins in pre-contact customary tradition, the elevation of tribal elites was inextricably tied to their capacity to generate popular support through demonstrations of patronage and reciprocity (Dinnen 2008c:56; Sahlins 1992:12-25; Waiko 1993:9). Despite indigenised systems being preferable to exogenous ones, the adaptation and subsequent manipulation and exploitation of this ancient tradition in contemporary politics in Solomon Islands is generally accepted as being incompatible with good governance (McDonald 2003; Deves 2014:61-70; Aswani 2008:171-194). A case in point was the abuse of Provincial Capacity Development Funds (PCDF). Developed by Prime Minister Mamaloni in 1993, CDFs were designed to filter funding to constituencies, it was hoped that it would foster development and services throughout the provinces.

True to ‘Big Man politics’ – the CDFs were a power play by Mamaloni designed to consolidate parliamentary loyalties prior to an election (Fry 2000). McDougall noted that CDFs were distributed in accordance with customary ties between MPs and their constituents through the medium of *Wantok* (McDougall 2014b). Larmour notes a trope that exists that holds that definition of corruption in Melanesian societies is more nuanced than European ones and has been a source of misunderstanding and confusion (Larmour 2012:42-59). There are two broad interpretations of corruption; that of cultural misunderstanding between what is thought of as a bribe versus gift, and that of nepotism versus protecting and nurturing one’s family (Larmour 2012:42-59,16-133). Respondents feedback was that no such confusion about giving and bribing existed (see Electoral Fraud and Corruption:147). In other words, if they can, so too can politicians distinguish between giving and bribing. It is instead a product of the inherent temptations associated with clientelist models of politics where they are “enmeshed in networks of social and financial obligation [which] often influences their actions as elected officials” (Braithwaite, Dinnen *et al.* 2010:70). *Wantok* at the supra-familial level is an effective “subsistence and livelihood buffer to one of exploitation and corruption” (Nanau 2011:20), *Wantok* outside of this context becomes politicised, altering the conditions and nature of reciprocity and obligation (see Clientelism:xii).

Regional Constituency Development Funds

Regional Constituency Development Funds (RCDF) are a form of consolidated developments funds (CPA 2016; Solomon Islands Government 2013a). They originally consisted of ongoing tranches of financial aid from Taiwan (Republic of China-ROC) to provincial authorities in the Solomon Islands for the purposes of regional development. Since the 1980s, RDDFs were the leverage Taiwan used to secure Solomon Islands' recognition of its sovereignty. RCDF budgets were allocated to regional Members of Parliament (MP) for regional development projects, who in turn had direct control over the use and misuse of those funds: "MP administered funds have had a variety of names since 1980. Of late the most well-known has been the Rural Constituency Development Fund [...] which has no reporting requirements and is transferred in tranches directly into bank accounts nominated by MPs" (Coventry 2009:10).

How these funds were utilised remained at the discretion of individual MPs, and the "the nature and quality of this expenditure is questionable, being fraught with allegations of misappropriation, unfair distributions, and outright conversion (Solomon Islands Government 2003). This misappropriation, unfairness, and theft of funds meant for their community looms large in the minds of Honiarans (see Ending Corruption:189). While these funds may indeed be used to assist the electorate, there is no oversight on whether these funds are utilised as intended. MPs themselves assert they are merely meeting cultural expectations, that their so-called acts of corruption were in fact the delivery of services to their electorate which met "long-held cultural expectations of them as community leaders" (Hayward-Jones 2008b:5). Because the National Government is unable or unwilling to deliver services, many MPs see the CDFs as giving them an opportunity to quickly implement development projects and meet constituents' needs directly. Again, as there is no oversight on what does and does not receive funding means that there is very little confidence that CDFs are being utilised equitably. As one observer noted "taken together, this makes the impact of MP administered grant funds highly questionable, and dependent largely upon the individual MP. It may also be why only one MP reported on the use of their grants in 2007" (Coventry 2009:3).

Provincial Governance Strengthening Program

Between 2008 and 2014, the Solomon Islands Government (SIG) received assistance from the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) with the establishment of the Provincial Governance Strengthening Programme (Solomon Islands Government 2008; UNDP 2014). The Provincial Governance Strengthening Programme (PGSP) sought to educate Provincial Governments in management, implementation and execution of public expenditure and development. It sought to develop provincial capability in the administration and application of public expenditure. The PGSP project was designed to improve the capacity and capability of central administration, to enable effective supervision of the provincial program. The PGSP consisted of three components. The first was to clarify and then expand the responsibilities and service deliveries of Provincial Governments. The second was to increase funding to Provincial Governments to generate capacity building. The final component was to improve policy making and implementation and expenditure management (UNDP 2014:12).

It sought to reduce poverty in the Provinces, promote local development, infrastructure and services and foster improved provincial governance. Challenges remain, particularly in administrative performance and internal control measures, yet it illustrated that through capability improvements at the provincial level there were improved efficiencies and tangible improvements in the delivery of services (UNDP 2014:14-41). More recently, the Australian Government had tabled the Solomon Islands Governance Program Design Document (Australian Government 2017). Within this program there was a renewed focus upon capacity improvements within the public service, and fiscal management. The document is a neo-Colonial *fait accompli*: it was unapologetic in its desire to see more leadership within the Solomon Islands Government to foster change in the organisational culture within the public sector; the goal to develop a small professional cadre of dedicated public servants. The Australian Government's intent was to stabilise, modernise and focus the structure of governance. It was a template to westernise the bureaucracy and governance of the Solomon Islands, paradoxically bringing the story of governance in the Solomon Islands back full circle to the circumstances of its independence in 1978.

China and the Solomon Islands

A key aim of the PRC in the Southwest Pacific is the 'One China' principle: to induce developing nations to recognise China diplomatically and not Taiwan (PRC 2022b). With its success in the Solomon Islands in this regard, China now has a geo-strategic beachhead deep in the Southwest Pacific and is in an optimal position to exert direct influence. This is becoming more apparent with Chinese interests in land acquisition, particularly the redevelopment of Honiara International Port in light of the new security pact confirmed between China and the Solomon Islands being a notable example (Fildes 2022; Ligaiula 2022; Shoebridge 2022a). China also utilises development as a medium through which to exert socio-cultural, or 'soft power' diplomacy (Nye Jr. 2008:94–109), such as China's assisting Honiara's hosting of the 2023 Pacific Games (Bauer 2023; Cave 2023; Xinhua 2022). 'Stadium Diplomacy' forms an integral part of China's ongoing diplomatic efforts, not only the Pacific, but much of the developing world (Menary 2015:1-8). The security pact includes Chinese access to vital maritime facilities (Dziedzic 2019:np; Wesley-Smith 2008; Johnson 2022:1-24).

Prior to these events, mainland Chinese interests were, generally speaking, economically driven, particularly in logging (Wairiu & Nanau 2011; Frazer 1997). China has long been heavily invested in the Solomon Islands logging industry. While most logging companies are not in fact Chinese, but Malaysian (Porter & Allen 2015), due to the fact that China imports 82 percent of logs felled in the Solomon Islands, the entire industry serve Chinese interests (Down 2018). Asian logging companies tied the nation's evolution since independence. The "logging industry in Solomon Islands has been so tightly imbricated with the evolution of the nation's Postcolonial politics that the two could be said to be mutually constituted" (Porter & Allen 2015:1). However, the rate of logging has also long been carried out at unsustainable levels in the country, with commercial logging "having logged well beyond the sustainable yield every year since 1981" (Porter & Allen 2015:1). Dr. Morgan Wairiu, the current Pro Chancellor at the Solomon Islands National University (SINU), was damning, declaring that logging "*funded political corruption, caused environmental destruction, and brought social instability*" (Wairiu 2007:233-46).

The revenues generated by the industry during the decades prior the Crisis Period held a disproportionately degree of influence over governance in the country (Fraenkel 2006b:137). During the Crisis Period, Associate Professor Tarcisius Kabutaulaka (working as a legal advisor at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the time), emphasised the enormous influence logging interests had within the structures of the nation's body politic. He recalled an adviser to the Department of Forestry had confided to him that he had consistently been approached with bribes from logging firms. The corruption was so insidious and ongoing, Kabutaulaka's colleague reached the point where he had "grown tired of brown envelopes being handed to him" (Kabutaulaka 2001:1). The 1997 Asian financial crash and resulting collapse in demand in timber meant that the rug had been pulled from underneath the nest of corrupt politicians and bureaucrats that dwelt within the government's administration (Braithwaite, Dinnen *et al.* 2010:152). Despite this, and decades of assistance from RAMSI authorities during the intervention period, due to the nature of governance in the country, and the ever-present international demand for timber, there has been little action taken to address the issue.

In 2009, the Solomon Islands Government recognised that the country's existing logging operations remained unsustainable. That same year the World Bank and International Finance Corporation were approached to investigate the impact of the exhaustion of the timber supply and its effect on the economy and the results were not encouraging (World Bank 2009b; Solomon Islands Government 2009). Despite being under the tutelage of RAMSI administrators as at 2015, commercial logging still accounted for approximately 70 percent of the nation's exports and 15 percent of its GDP (Porter & Allen 2015:1). Research has indicated that the current rate of logging reflects this ongoing issue, and estimates suggest that the 3 million cubic metres harvested in 2017 is being overharvested by a factor of 19 times the sustainable rate (Down 2018:np). Down noted the Ministry of Finance itself estimated that if this rate of logging was to continue, timber supply will be completely exhausted by 2036. Even if harvest rates were to be cut by 50 percent, this would only extend the deadline until 2046 (Down 2018:np). The current rate of logging in the country is such that the survival of entire ecosystems are in dire jeopardy (Katovai *et al.* 2021:1-13).

In the introduction to this section on China and the Solomon Islands, a number of soft diplomatic strategies that China deploys were mentioned. Since 1958, the China has utilised what is known as ‘stadium diplomacy’ (Vondracek 2019:62-86). Considered part of ‘Soft Power’ typology, the building of sports and recreational facilities has formed a cornerstone of China’s push for political influence and economic access in the Southwest Pacific region. Since 1983, China either directly funded or provided loans running into the tens of millions of US dollars into projects spanning the Pacific region (Vondracek 2019:62-86; Courmont & Delhalle 2022:1-21; Amaresh 2020). In its intense efforts at diplomatic recognition and access to resources (Vondracek 2019:62-86), China out competed its rivals and was able to “dig into local politics to achieve their goals. It is most blatant in the China-Taiwan feud, but much more persuasive with the USA in Micronesia and Australia in Melanesia” (McElroy & Wenwen 2008:235). There is some ambiguity as to whether the utilisation of Chinese ‘cheque book’ approaches to these culturally based diplomatic efforts can be considered a form of ‘soft’ power (Li 2009).

It has been argued that due to its coerciveness, at least in relation to the undue influence it plays in the country’s politics, it is more of a ‘hard’ form of power intended to bend the political fraternity in the country towards pro-China sentiment (Nye Jr. 1990, 2002). As McElroy describes diplomatic recognition forms “a precondition for economic relations” (McElroy & Wenwen 2008:225-246). Indeed, Vondracek notes that the PRC divides relations between states based upon the durability and consistency of said states recognition of Chinese sovereignty over Taiwan (Vondracek 2019:64). Vondracek describes the categories as: an ‘enduring friend’ (a state that has recognised China and the One-China policy since 1976 without interruption), a ‘stable friend’, a state that has recognised China and the One-China policy since 1977 without interruption, a ‘new friend’, a state that has recognised China and the One-China policy since 1990, and a ‘non-friend’, which is a state not currently recognising the One China principle. He observed that “99 stadiums (70% of all cases) have been directed to enduring friends, 28 (20%) to new friends, and 12 (8.5%) to stable friends; while 3 cases (2.1%) have been directed to non-friends” (Vondracek 2019:71).

However, despite the intensity of effort and funding invested into 'soft power' projects of this nature, the long-term efficacy of such projects is of concern. For one, "it is contingent upon Chinese ideological and cultural values being seen as a positive 'attractive power'... Indeed, certain cultures, ideologies, and values may be repulsive, depending upon the audience" (Vondracek 2019:64). Framed within the context of Postcolonial narratives, negative perceptions of *Waku* economic hegemony, and the history of undue influence of foreign powers in the country's political landscape, is such that while these projects are designed to foster pro-China sentiment, they instead engender innate hostility among Honiarans. The experience of Honiarans with foreign development projects is such that they understand that historically, they have rarely been direct beneficiaries of those projects. This is because, as Windybank (2005:28-33) observed, Chinese 'cheque book' diplomacy undermines organic development. In the 2006 elections, the first since RAMSI's arrival, it was widely reported that Taiwan had been paying political candidates, leading to a diplomatic stoush with Australia (Fraenkel 2008b; Atkinson 2009:48-50).

Desperate for funding to meet the demands of compensation imposed by both IFM and MEF militants, Taiwan's Chen Shui-bian government was blackmailed by the Solomon Islands Government who, threatening to recognise China, compelled Taiwan to deliver a US\$25 million-dollar loan (Atkinson 2009:50). Australia was in a delicate position. Heavily invested in RAMSI, it did not come to grips with the problem of Taiwan, vexed as it was in restoring governance. RAMSI had "raised expectations among the populace that would not be met [and that] most significantly, the core issues of ethnic rivalry and unemployment remained largely unaddressed" (Atkinson 2009:51). After the completion of the 2006 elections, there was a series of political manoeuvres behind the scenes. Based on an alleged prior agreement, Kemakeza stepped aside to make way for Snyder Rini. This decision rankled Australia. It's High Commissioner, Patrick Cole, had met with Foreign Minister Laurie Chan and Sir Thomas Chan, the President of Snyder Rini's party, and received assurances that the anti-RAMSI Rini would not be the candidate for PM (Skehan 2006).

The pro-Rini camp did indeed nominate Snyder, a decision that was to have disastrous consequences for Honiara (Atkinson 2009:54-55). As the clock ran down, Rini needed funds to ensure he could secure enough votes of members from other factions (Alasia 2008:175), and it had been suggested that the timing of Taiwanese naval vessels in Honiara, arriving “just as the vote buying was due to begin” (Atkinson 2009:54-55) had been orchestrated by Rini’s associates. With his close association with the government’s caretaker Foreign Minister, Laurie Chan, Rini would be well placed to engineer such an arrangement. Thus, Snyder Rini, a man known to be financed by the Chans, with associations and connexions to Taiwanese money, was proclaimed PM on the 18 April 2006 (Atkinson 2009:53). Anti-Kemakeza and Rini elements of the crowd attending, egged on by statements by Rini opponents regarding his connection to Asian finances, erupted in protest. They directed their anger at Chinese businesses, which culminated in more than 74 buildings being burnt to the ground in Chinatown and its immediate environs (Atkinson 2009:57). In what was to become known as the ‘Black Tuesday’ Riots (Alasia 2008:176-8), the unrest had a devastating impact on the country.

The capital was in chaos and there was a distinct possibility the crisis could escalate. It was an embarrassing development for Australia and the RAMSI mission suffered a number of public relations blows. For one, its reluctance to take tangible steps to curb Taiwanese influence upon the electoral process was seen as negative (Atkinson 2009:52-4). Another was the sluggish response in restoring law and order and the handling and use of incendiary intelligence and diplomatic material (Skehan 2006; Kealty 2006; Nautilus 2008a). The controversy surrounding the appointment of Julian Moti as Attorney General by Prime Minister Sogavare, Moti’s subsequent disgrace, and Australia’s interference and overreach in the fiasco, had an enormously negative impact on Australia’s (particularly RAMSI’s) relationship with the Sogavare administration (Nautilus 2008b-c). Another implication was that while the RAMSI effort had made progress in some respects, the elections exposed a lack of effort in tackling corruption (Wallis 2006:81-98). It was concluded that the “apparent reluctance of RAMSI to pursue prosecutions against Kemakeza—and the practicalities of trying to dislodge a well-entrenched incumbent—potentially handed the opposition an otherwise lacking focal point for the 2006 campaign” (Fraenkel 2008b:159).

The anger of protestors was to some degree a result of frustration at RAMSI for its apparent unwillingness or inability to arrest the “Big Fish” for their roles in the tensions from 1998 to 2003 (Allen 2006:194-201). Over time it became clear as evidence surfaced that the riots had been engineered or at the very least, political actors had played an active role in fomenting unrest (Solomon Islands Government 2007a-b, 2009c; Atkinson 2009:59-61). They were the same individuals who were implicated in the escalation of the unrest during the Crisis Period: Nelson Ne’e, Charles Dausabea, David Dausabea and MEF Militia leader, Alex Bartlett. Pointedly, Charles Dausabea had been elected to office based on anti-Chinese and anti-RAMSI narratives and had been “considered one of the ‘prime architects’ of the Solomon Islands Crisis” (Fraenkel 2008b:59). Atkinson makes the point that the riots were not surprising in their attack on Chinese businesses. He was of the opinion that this is a truism for the Pacific Island states, and that riots were simply engineered for political purposes and held no direct ethnic focus *per se* (Atkinson 2009:47-65).

Interestingly, the so-called ‘anti-Chinese’ rioting and property destruction appeared to be very selective; evidence pointed toward long standing Chinese (i.e. Chan) families’ businesses being spared, while those of recent Chinese migrants were not (Allen 2008:39-63). The race for sovereign recognition between China and Taiwan would continue for some time. Simmering along during this period was the ongoing influence of Taiwan, its main strength being its aid funding in the Solomon Islands’ Provinces. During this period the PRC was also engaging with opposition politicians (Fraenkel 2008b:161). Indeed, it was known that Sogavare had been mulling the China issue for some time (Strong 2019). President of the Democratic Alliance Party, John Usuramo said it best: “in order to satisfy everyone...we said that we’d have a review of that particular relationship...that doesn’t mean we’ll break our relationship with Taiwan” (John Usuramo, cited in Wasuka 2019b). He then signalled that change was on the way when he conceded it was “something of an open secret that there has been lobbying behind the scenes for a switch to China. It is known that political parties have had dialogue with certain individuals that have come here to Solomon Islands” (John Usuramo, cited in Wasuka 2019b).

The tipping point of this momentum for change occurred in the months following the divisive 2019 elections, where the China/Taiwan contest for the Solomon Islands would reach its apogee, heralding a paradigm shift in how we would view the Solomon Islands and its future in the region. On the 24 Apr 2019, legislators appointed political veteran Manasseh Sogavare as Prime Minister for the fourth time (Dziedzic & Wasuka 2019). Post the departure of RAMSI in 2017, the elections were a litmus test of the country's ability to conduct free and fair elections. The lead up to the election was not promising, with indications that the usual electoral skulduggery of intimidation and threats were at play (Solomon Times 2019b). The capital was under strain due to the upheaval generated in the week prior to the election in March, when tens of thousands of citizens head back to their home islands to vote (Ewart & Wasuka 2019). This is the logistical nightmare that results from the clientelist *Wantokism*, which dominates Solomon Island's politics (see Electoral Fraud & Corruption:147). Reports also indicated that the bribery and corruption in the evening prior to the vote known as 'Devil's Night', where candidates rally, entertain and bribe voters, was in full swing (Wasuka 2019a, 2019b).

Despite a government crackdown on 'Devil's Night' by banning campaigning for 24 hours before the vote, "there's no reason to think this [Devil's Night] will be different in 2019 [...] Strong candidates bought votes in the 2014 elections, but only two MPs lost their seats because of it...hardly a deterrent" (Wasuka 2019c:np). Thus, it was unsurprising that tensions and the potential for unrest was in the air, as this was now a normalised aspect of electoral politics in the country. The polling period was in fact relatively calm, with a sizable security presence in the city, and although RAMSI had officially wound down, the Australian and New Zealand governments provided several hundred military personnel, as well as land and sea assets to support the electoral process and assist with law and order (Wasuka 2019a). Democratic Party head, Matthew Wale had opposed the victory on the grounds that the eligibility of the Sogavare's political party was questionable, as it had registered late.

That is, due to Mr Sogavare, having been late in registering his political party, he may not be eligible for the nomination (Solomon Times 2019c). Chief Justice Palmer held that Wale's claim abused court process, finding that Wale's arguments had no legal basis. Justice Palmer asserted that it was not up to the judiciary to fix broken legislation (Solomon Times 2019c-d). Ultimately the manoeuvring by Wale to delay the ballot was stymied by Governor-General Sir Frank Kabui who exercised his prerogative and allowed the vote to proceed (Kabui 2019). The outcome was that Sogavare won a majority vote with 34 of 35 votes cast in the ballot being in his favour. Mr Wale and dozens of supporters had, by this point, already walked out of the chambers (Dziedzic & Wasuka 2019). Shortly after the announcement of Sogavare's victory, protests broke out in parts of Honiara, with police using tear gas to dispel angry crowds near Chinatown and in a settlement in the city's east (Dziedzic & Wasuka 2019). Wyeth (2019) suggests that the complex and unclear process of how the selection of the Prime Minister bred popular suspicion and resentment.

Now in the position of opposition leader, Wale accused Sogavare of being in the service of China and lay the responsibility for the rioting squarely at Sogavare's feet and accused him of "using money from China in a national fund to prop up his political strength before the vote" (Needham 2021:np). Surviving a no confidence motion on this basis (Kekea 2021) Sogavare in turn accused both Wale and Malaita Province of being at the beck and call of Taiwanese interests (Needham 2021). This seemed to be the case, with Malaita's Premier Daniel Suidani banning Chinese companies from the Province and consistently opposing Honiara's switch to China. Resistance to Sogavare appeared to be on decline however, when Suidani himself failed to survive a no confidence motion. Malaitan officials were then indicating it would toe the line in relation to Honiara's engagement with China (Needham 2021; Craymer 2023). The usual post-election tropes of protestors focusing their anger on Honiara's Chinatown district to express their rage at Chinese economic interests (Wyeth 2019). Yet, as in previous elections, the evidence again suggested that it was another example of politicians manipulating *Wantok*.

In this case, Mr. Wale used his Malaitan support base to mobilise supporters to disrupt the political process, leverage opinion and undermine his opponents. In Honiara during the election period, it was well attested within the Malaitan community that political operators working for Wale had organised and paid young Malaitan male supporters to incite unrest after the results were announced. They were given a yellow dump truck full of rocks and were deliberately deployed to create as much chaos and property damage as possible. This was based on an eyewitness account given from a reliable individual who works within the country's legal system [name withheld, 2019, *conversation with author*, 19 May]. They had witnessed the organisation and deployment of the mob, and in fact identified a number of participants by name and noted they were local men from Honiara's predominantly Malaitan east. This was corroborated by local staff members of the (Chinese owned) Pacific Casino Hotel who witnessed theft and vandalism as well as burning of several vehicles by these same youths. Despite this, the narrative fed to the media was that the unrest was a spontaneous outpouring of discontent and that Chinese businesses were targeted due to perceptions that China was interfering (Dziedzic & Wasuka 2019; Wyeth (2019).

Yet, the evidence on the ground suggested that many rioters in fact had no such motivation. Their motivation in this was that they had been paid to deliberately target the area and incite unrest under the orders of Wale's associates or Matthew Wale himself. Despite this, there remained concerns regarding Sogavare's move to diplomatic recognition of China. On 20 August 2019 sixteen MPs issued a statement warning of the implications of Chinese recognition:

We are aware of important lessons from many countries [...] who are locked in a serious debt trap as a result of their giving in to China's lures. We are aware of examples of governments which have compromised their religious freedoms, surrendered their land rights, compromised the rule of law, and even their people's cultural heritage, as a result of succumbing to the infiltrations of these ideologies in their societies (Fox & Knox 2019:np).

Indeed, evidence of the effects of Chinese debt traps are well known (Var & Po 2017; Saeedy & Wen 2022; Shoebridge 2022b). Yet pressure to confirm the switch to China was intense with MPs from both Malaita and Guadalcanal who had been “promised significant help from China to develop infrastructure in their Provinces” (RNZ Pacific 2019). The MPs delivered an ultimatum giving Sogavare until November of 2019 to confirm the switch to China, warning that he would otherwise face a motion of no confidence (RNZ Pacific 2019). On 20 September 2019, Sogavare relented and confirmed his government’s decision to end diplomatic recognition of Taiwan, adopting the ‘One China’ principle. The statement he made inadvertently highlights the grave concerns that Solomon Islanders were having about China’s influence. Sogavare felt it necessary to assure his fellow Christians that:

Contrary to the media reports that falsely accuse my government of neglecting our Christian faith, our nation will remain a country that practices freedom of expression including the freedom to practice our Christian faith (Manasseh Sogavare cited in Solomon Times 2019e).

No other foreign power had hitherto been framed as a threat to the religious beliefs, practices, and freedoms of the Solomon Islands. It seemed that Sogavare felt that such concepts were sufficiently in the public’s mind that he was compelled to deny this assertion in a formal public statement. Sogavare’s statement indicated that concern among Solomon Islanders regarding China’s influence was not just about economics or politics but was also about ideology and spirituality; that is, *Kastom*. Sogavare therefore held his ground and maintained a conciliatory, yet firm approach to the country’s allies and partners, in order to lower the concern on the issue. On 6 December 2021, he reassured parliament, that the “Solomon Islands as a sovereign democratic state reaffirms its decision and stands by its traditional bilateral partners [...] in recognising the People’s Republic of China as the legitimate government of China” (Kekea 2021:np). Literature indicates that there are three key developments that have real implications to the sovereignty of the Solomon Islands (Herr 2006; Wesley-Smith 2008), and the strategic balance of the Southwest Pacific.

These developments are China's re-development of Honiara's International Port, the recently signed bi-lateral Security Cooperation Agreement, and evidence of Information Warfare operations by the CCP in the Solomon Islands to generate false narratives favourable to China. In late March 2023, it was announced that the Honiara Port Development contract, the tender process of which had been managed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) (Hurst 2023), had been awarded to the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC). The port reconstruction contract forms the main component of the \$170 million ADB-funded project to improve Honiara's roads and wharves. This is the aforementioned ADB's 'Solomon Islands Land and Maritime Connectivity Project' (ADB 2020). Mike Qaqara, an official at the Solomon Islands' infrastructure development ministry said, the Port project "will see the rehabilitation of the old Honiara international port and construction of the Honiara domestic port and two provincial ports" (Rahman 2023:np). Notably, it was reported that although the ADB tender process was crowded with other contractors, the CCECC was the only proposal submitted during the tender process (Needham 2023).

The CCECC, besides the port itself, had also been awarded the ADB contract for the road component of the Connectivity Project (Hurst 2023). Evidence collected by ANU academic Peter Connolly indicated ADB infrastructure in the region has often found to be "dominated by Chinese state companies who offered the lowest bids" (Connolly, cited in Needham 2023:np). It is a truism that a tender proposal, for it to be commercially viable for both parties, needs to be commercially feasible, meet the requirements of both parties, and pass the survivability test of rigorous cost benefit analysis. If Chinese contractors are being subsidised by the PRC (enabling tender proposals well below the cost that contractors not underwritten by sovereign guarantees can match), it is small wonder that the Honiara Port project received only a single Chinese proposal from a so-called crowded tender pool (Hodges 2018:782-804). While it was reported that the United States and its regional partners had held concerns over the potential of China establishing a naval base in the region, notably following the security pact the Solomon Islands struck with Beijing in 2022 (Rahman 2023), the collective response of these Pacific powers was lacklustre in comparison.

When Sogavare met the Vice Chairman of China's International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA), Tang Wenghong, it was to sign on to the Global Development Initiative, a UN program developed by China (United Nations 2021) to address global sustainable development (Rahman 2023). In contrast, Sogavare's meeting with a roving US Delegation, consisting of a brace of the Biden administration's most effective diplomatic operators in the Pacific, (including representatives from the US National Security Council and State Department among others) (Campbell 2016; Rahman 2023), amounted to vague discussions about "a range of issues important to both sides, including protection of maritime resources, economic development and education, [a] technical assistance workshop, [and] an education initiative" (The White House 2023:np). At a time when China's diplomacy had led to tangible development opportunities, a savvy political operator like Manasseh Sogavare must have been bemused by this contrast between the results-based diplomacy of China and the vague signalling of the West.

Indeed, the building where the delegation met was a fitting one - it is itself a manifestation of postcolonial virtue signalling. Paid for by the US Government in memory of US soldiers killed during the Battle of Guadalcanal, the nation's centre of government was constructed under US supervision by the Kitano Construction Corporation, a Japanese construction firm (Kitano Overseas Works 2023). Despite Solomon Islands Infrastructure Development Ministry official Mike Qaqara commenting that the Solomon Islands and China denied that their security pact would allow a naval base (Rahman 2023), fellow Pacific Island States held grave concerns about the development. Samoa's Prime Minister Fiam Naomi Mata'afa was clear that obvious strategic implications could be inferred by the development. Mata'afa said that while "this is a commercial port...I think the fears are [in the region] that it might morph into something...dual purpose" (Fiam Mata'afa, cited in Hurst 2023:np). So concerned was the region by these developments that ten Pacific Island states had refused to sign any regional security or trade agreements with China (Rahman 2023:np), indicating that other Pacific states had heeded "the private warnings of security agencies in recent years about the danger of China establishing a military presence in the Pacific" (Coorey & Tillett 2022a:np).

As the port development agreement indicated, two Provincial ports form part of the overall project. It is important to note that there is evidence that China had potentially been conducting reconnaissance prior to this 2023 agreement and outside the parameters of the 2023 port agreement (Hayward-Jones 2014:7; Braithwaite, Dinnen *et al.* 2010). Moore observed that several sites outside the parameters of the Honiara Port development appeared to be within the sites of the Chinese authorities. He notes that a Chinese company sought to lease a former plantation at Yandina, in the Russell Islands, as well as Tulagi, “immediately after Solomon Islands’ diplomatic switch from Taiwan (Moore, cited in Packham 2022:np). Tellingly, it was understood that “associates of Mr Sogavare were currently negotiating the sale of the Yandina site, which has its own port and airfield, to a Chinese corporation” (Moore, cited in Packham 2022:np). In 2019 it had been discovered that a delegation from the China Forestry Group Corporation had visited the joint Taiwanese and Australian plantation facility that blanketed Kolombangar Island (McGuirk 2022np).

Ostensibly there to discuss forestry operations, Kolombangara Forest Products Ltd (KFPL) executives noted that the Chinese delegates were instead far more interested in the “length of the wharf and depth of the water [showing] little interest in the trees” (McGuirk 2022np). KFPL felt compelled to provide this intelligence and warned the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs (DFAT) of the potential strategic risk the Chinese takeover of the Kolombangara operation posed to Australian interests (McGuirk 2022). The response delivered to KFPL’s board was that DFAT would not be ‘intervening’ in the matter (McGuirk 2022). This was by no means an indication that the Australian government was disinterested. If for example, the information reinforced an established evidential narrative of Chinese interest in maritime facilities, then DFAT’s lack of urgency in the information and its intention not to intervene, being logically implausible and therefore not probable, *ergo* is unlikely to reflect the mood, nor the intent of the Australian authorities. China for its part certainly seems to be focusing on incrementally consolidating physical control of the land that will form the projected footprint of the port development (Packham 2022).

Evidence suggested that two potential sites for Chinese military bases in the Solomon Islands (Davis 2022) were already owned by Chinese interests. The Leroy Wharf Port at Lungga port on the eastern edge of Honiara (owned by ethnic Chinese Honiaran, Lee Kwok Kuen) was a likely candidate. It currently operates as “an informal international port, much to the dismay of the Solomon Islands Ports Authority” (Moore, cited in Packham 2022:np). Moore also cites the current Chinese holdings at the Gold Ridge mine, which covers 3000 hectares, as forming the most likely place for a large scale Chinese military facility. He argued that because it is owned by mainland Chinese corporate concerns it was “already available to Beijing as a ‘de facto’ base of operations” (Moore, cited in Packham 2022:np). Moore observed that the mine was owned by the China Overseas Engineering, China Railway Shanghai Engineering Bureau Group, and Wanguo International Mining Groups, and that “local guards at the site, inland from Honiara, already wear uniforms bearing the Chinese flag” (Moore, cited in Packham 2022:np).

A draft Security Cooperation Framework Agreement between China and the Solomon Islands was leaked onto social media in March 2022 (PRC 2022a:4-8), which was confirmed shortly thereafter (Shoebridge 2022a; Weaver 2022). The draft framework evidenced a bi-lateral quinquennial security agreement; and contained an *ad perpetuum* continuation clause, as well as a six-month Advance Notice of Termination clause (PRC 2022a:7-8). The language was careful to emphasise that activation of any steps within the agreement had to be through mutual agreement of both parties. ‘Article 1 Scope of Cooperation’ states that the Solomon Islands may request China send “Police, armed Police, military personnel and other law enforcement and armed forces” to the country in the event of social disorder, for the protection of life and property, humanitarian aid, and disaster relief. What China expected in return for their assistance was that the Solomon Islands, with their consent, would allow China to deploy “the relevant forces of China can be used to protect the safety of Chinese personnel and major projects in the Solomon Islands” (PRC 2022:4-5). However, this is a broad remit and allows China considerable scope and flexibility in this regard. For example, the agreement stipulates in Article 4 that:

“Solomon Islands shall provide all necessary facilities and assistance, including but not limited to the border entry of personnel and weaponry, intelligence and information support, logistical support, and legal status and judicial immunity of the relevant personnel” (PRC 2022a:6).

When one considers the history of attacks upon ethnic Chinese and mainland Chinese interests during electoral unrest framed in terms of a *casus foederis*, it becomes clear that the Solomon Islanders themselves hold the keys as to the likelihood and nature of Chinese police or military intervention. In conjunction with the port development and security pact, information operations form the third element in the CCP’s plans for the Solomon Islands. CCP information operations actively attempt to generate alternate narratives surrounding controversial events (e.g. 2021 riots) and as discussed previously, to influence civil society and steer opinion toward pro-Chinese narratives. These operations have been investigated by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute’s International Cyber Policy Centre.

Their report evidences the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) of the PRC actively attempting “to influence public discourse in Solomon Islands through coordinated information operations that seek to spread false narratives and suppress information on a range of topics” (Johnson 2022:8). One of the key findings of the report was that China has an “emerging and continuously developing [...] state information capability” (Johnson 2022:5) which the CCP deploy to support China’s program to undermine the Solomon Islands’ relationship with Australia and the US” (Johnson 2022:6). The report also found that CCP official-led articles “including opinion pieces, press releases and other quote-based articles” (Johnson 2022:6), were intended to propagate CCP narratives within local online news media platforms. As these platforms are the most accessed source of information for Solomon Islanders, the CCP’s operational reach and impact is considerable. However, the research indicated that “Party-state media articles produced by outlets such as the Global Times and the People’s Daily” (Johnson 2022:6) were less impactful and more likely to be received negatively.

It appeared that local media outlets preferred “content from Western media sources independent of state control, such as the Australian Broadcasting Corporation” (Johnson 2022:6). This is a positive result as it suggests that, for the time being, editorial independence appears to be relatively intact in Solomon Islands’ media. This may not last, however, as evidenced by reports that “Solomon Islands decision-makers and journalists were found to have connections to the China – Solomon Islands Friendship Association” (Johnson 2022:6). It was found that a number of those journalists and public figures had subsequently “shared messages in the media that align with the CCP’s narratives” (Johnson 2022:6). The report also found that there was a decline in anti-Chinese commentary and an increase in pro-China rhetoric “in the weeks following the Honiara riots and the leaked China – Solomon Islands security agreement” (Johnson 2022:5). This would suggest that pro-China information campaigns are capable of yielding results under the right conditions. Another example of their effectiveness was measured by the increase in language and terminology used in CCP narratives finding their way into popular discourse, competing relatively equally with the language utilised by local politicians.

China’s information campaign was not only focused on swaying public opinion through news and social media, such as pro-China Facebook pages of dubious origin and ownership; the report also indicated that the Chinese Embassy has developed “strong connections to several media outlets in Solomon Islands” (Johnson 2022:6) and suggests that similar efforts are likely occurring out of China’s diplomatic missions across the Pacific region. Literature in the years following the conflict period in the late 1990s and early 2000s, makes it clear that civil society essentially disintegrated under the weight of high unemployment, internal economic migration leading to land disputes, all the while the entire bureaucratic apparatus was riddled with corruption, and political infighting led to a failure of governance (Connell 2006:111-122; Dinnen & Allen 2013; Bush & Le Mesurier 2004). As one of the key areas of contention – land access and rights – is based on customary laws and tradition, and those in turn are by their nature ethnically based, it is inevitable that the conflict will be drawn along ethnic lines. But it does not imply that ethnicity was the basis of the conflict.

Rather, the basis of the conflict was the failure of governance in mediating and resolving customary land issues that had plagued the country since independence (Fraenkel 2005a; Evans, Goddard & Paterson 2011). In the Howard government's operational approach to the intervention in the Solomon Islands, it drew much of its inspiration *prima facie* from suggestions within the foreign policy academic community, particularly the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, and the Lowry Institute. The idea was nurtured that an 'arc' of stable Melanesian states could act as strategic buffer to protect Australia's maritime approaches against terrorists infiltrating into the Australian mainland (Ayson 2007; Kampmark 2003). It should be emphasized that as an analyst who worked within the Australian Intelligence Community at the time, the general consensus among analysts was that while this view was understood as an easier pitch for the Howard government to deliver to the Australian public than the idea of military intervention – there appeared to be no evidential basis for the theory (McDougall 2006; Abigail 2008; Abigail & Sinclair 2008).

Broadly speaking, regional counter-terrorism efforts were very much focused on the activities of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and Abu Sayyaf (ASG) primarily within the Indonesian archipelago and Southern Philippines, and the conjoining waters in which they inhabited and operated (Abuza 2002:427-465; Banlaoi 2006:247-262). Any legitimate and actionable concerns about terrorism were invariably concentrated within those geographic confines. Concerns in the Southwest Pacific (Hegarty & Polomka 1989) were focused on controlling and protecting the Coral Sea trade routes through the Bismarck Sea, and on into Southeast Asia, as well as interdiction of illegal migrants, narcotics, and weapons smugglers. It focused on operations to deter illegal commercial fishing, and human sex trafficking in the region by Southeast Asian and Japanese organised crime syndicates, facilitating the flow of human lives into the Asian sex market (Lindley & Beacroft 2011:1-7). The *strategic* concern, however, was the ongoing effect of Taiwanese economic and political influence in the Solomon Islands, and the growing influence of the People's Republic of China (Congressional Research Service 2007).

There was little credence in the concept that weak Melanesian governance would somehow encourage or incubate JI Sunni or ASG Wahhabist terror cells (Strokirch 2004:370-381). Yet by couching the intervention's basis upon a counter-terrorism narrative, RAMSI provided an opportunity for the Howard administration to benefit domestically by tapping into post-9/11 angst in the West (Kabutaulaka 2004; Moore 2005a:732-48). In addition to this, RAMSI could also be pitched as a metaphor of the benevolent neighbour helping a country restore and rehabilitate itself. From the point of view of analysts such as myself working in the region at the time, endemic corruption and economic exploitation were seen as vulnerabilities that needed to be addressed. They were 'points of entry' for state actors like Taiwan or the PRC to create anchor points within the political and economic life of the country. The longer those vulnerabilities existed, the firmer the foothold would become. RAMSI certainly could, in theory, go some way in addressing those vulnerabilities. RAMSI presented an opportunity to consolidate Australian interests in the region and discourage the PRC's growing interest in the country (Crocombe 2007).

It also presented an opportunity to dampen Taiwan's hold on the nation's socio-economic and political life through the 'cheque book' diplomacy of Consolidated Development Funds (CDFs) (see Regional Constitutional Development Funds:33). It also offered the opportunity for the Australian Howard government to demonstrate to its Pacific neighbours that Australia was a responsible actor in the region (Dinnen & McLeod 2008). The multi-national nature of RAMSI's operations with participants from across the Pacific region was very much intended to reinforce that message. RAMSI consisted of members from Australia, New Zealand, Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Niue, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu (Nautilus 2023). RAMSI was also considered an opportunity to remind Beijing of Australia's role as the senior member of the Southwest Pacific family of nations, and the United States' most durable ally (Lum & Vaughn 2015:14-21; Camilleri 2015:52-76). It was far easier to justify a major military intervention politically if it was based upon the 'bogeyman' of terrorism, and the attempt to end civil conflict, than on the grounds that it was part of ongoing efforts to curb the expansion of PRC interests in the Pacific.

Twenty years ago, the as a member of the Australian Intelligence Community, it was considered a truism that the PRC was intent on involving itself in the region, and the evidence of such was preponderous. It was unfortunate that the Australian government had elected to ignore those assessments for so long (Huisken & Thatcher 2007). It was perhaps an intentional oversight. After all, the political friction encountered domestically while expanding defence budgets and aid packages, reduces greatly when a tangible and measurable threat exists. If the Australian Howard administration had made its intention to untangle the Solomon Islands from Taiwan and China during the RAMSI period a clear and public one, it is likely to have done no more than force China to advance an inevitable timeline (Yang 2011:127-141). In the present day, the half-hearted and vague diplomacy of the Australian government is best illustrated by the forlorn visit by the Australian PM to the Solomon Islands in 2019 (Ligaiula 2022). This was during the lead up to the announcement of China's diplomatic success in the Solomon Islands. For all intents, it seemed Australia had sent it's PM to persuade the Sogavare administration away from China.

Yet, according to the Australian government, this impromptu visit during a seismic shift in the nation's political environment, was according to Foreign Minister Marise Payne "not a bid to head off a potentially greater Chinese presence in the region, but to reinforce the government's Pacific Step-up, which is aimed at building on Australia's ties with its neighbours" (Marise Payne, cited in Solomon Times 2019a:np). She continued that the Prime Minister Morrison was "saying to our family in the Pacific, our neighbours in the Pacific, this is where Australia lives, and this is what is important to us" (Marise Payne, cited in Solomon Times 2019a:np). It was a diplomatic damp squib and a tacit admission by the Morrison government that they were not capable of opposing China's diplomatic master-stroke. The time to 'step up' had been during the decades of effort by RAMSI, NGOs, and researchers to restore good order, governance and stability. It appeared that the Australian government only takes seriously the idea of engagement with our 'family in the Pacific' after it was outmanoeuvred by the Chinese, and not in anticipation of it (Carroll & Hameiri 2007:410-430; Sas 2022:np).

That the Morrison Government seriously believed the Solomon Islands would be convinced by this belated elevator pitch about increased Australian engagement was an affront to the Sogavare Administration and likely added impetus towards Sogavare's decision to recognise Chinese sovereignty over Taiwan. The misappropriation of foreign donor aid by politicians is, in a broader sense, more corrosive to the democratic process than vanity projects like Stadia. For many years, the Taiwanese government funded regional development in the country via Regional Constituency Development Funds (Regional CDFs) (Solomon Islands Government 2013a, Solomon Star 2014, Coventry 2009:10). The Solomon Islands has been provided tens of millions of dollars in CDFs to MPs over the years to aid in regional development. As has been noted, the CDFs had been the subject of ongoing popular criticism (Wasuka 2019). As Respondent David I. describes foreign donor funding was used by politicians to buy votes: "Politicians are being given free handouts to their supporters [...] the money used for such handouts comes from the RCDF given by the Taiwanese government."

Indeed, since the inception of Constituency Development Funds, MPs have either stolen or utilised the funds in such a way that benefited their allies, and themselves, rather than using them for their intended purpose – to develop infrastructure and employment opportunities in provincial communities (Coventry 2009:10). As Wilson B. concurs and notes that "many donors have been given to develop our country, but sadly our economy won't develop." Gerald G. believes the funds are not only being used to further individual MPs' political careers but are stolen simply for personal financial gain: "The government is full of corruption which the members are corrupted for example RCDF which money what should use to develop the country is use for their own desired that want." The recognition of China (PRC) has put paid to the existing constituency funding arrangements. As of the 2020 SIG fiscal report, both the PRC and ROC were instead contributing "Donor Funding Development" (SIG 2020:15). As of September 2021, it was announced that of the \$342 million 'constituency development program', almost a third, at \$90 million, is now wholly PRC funded (Wade 2021).

For context, the Australian government provided \$161 million in Official Development Assistance in the 2021-2 period (DFAT 2021). Here we encounter a situation whereby the nation's security interests likely devolve into a bidding war between state actors keen to maintain or improve its strategic position. Those funds, earmarked to help communities across the country develop, will inevitably end up misused or misappropriated, irrespective of their source (Batley, Wiltshire, Ridolfi & Rogers 2019a:2; McDougall 2014b; Coventry 2009:3). When the Sogavare administration severed ties with Taipei, it was based on an aid deal that could be as much as \$730 million dollars AUD (Whiting, Zhou & Feng 2019), illustrating the seductive power of cheque book diplomacy. This new source of vast sums of money has regional actors deeply concerned as unsustainable loans from China are often bundled up within large scale aid packages to developing states (Dziedzic 2019:np; Var & Po 2017:np).

The US made its position clear when the US Ambassador to Australia accused China of utilising 'pay day' diplomacy (Rajah, Dyant & Pryke 2019). Ambassador Culvahouse Jr emphasised his point by referring to China's "predatory lending tactics in several other countries including Sri Lanka and Cambodia" (Dziedzic 2019:np). A cursory glance at the effect of China's financial instruments at work in those countries (Var & Po 2017; Saeedy & Wen 2022) reinforces the gravity and substance of Ambassador Culvahouse Jr's warning to the region. The Ambassador, reflecting the US administration's acceptance of the reality of an uptick in Chinese hegemony in the Southwest Pacific, conceded that China had a "role to play in the region" (Dziedzic 2019:np). The West's failure to curb China's growth of influence means that Culvahouse's pleas that China 'play' in abidance with international norms, and not utilise corruption carried little weight (Dziedzic 2019:np). The outcome of this of course was a destabilised body politic being torn between competing alliances dividing the country between pro and anti-China factions (Needham 2021; Craymer 2023).

Chapter 3. Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the current literature on the history of the Solomon Islands as well as contemporary analyses of social, political and cultural issues. The review of the literature highlighted a critical gap which this thesis addresses - the lack of Honiaran perspectives on the governance of the Solomon Islands. To establish this, key areas were examined. One was literature regarding customary leadership and the notable corollary between the absence of traditional authority and an increase in instability. To frame this historically, literature about colonialism and its effects were examined, upon not only governance, but how colonialism shaped perceptions of foreigners and their influence, effected a transformation on social organisation as well as the definition and practice of custom. In this regard, the role of Christian denominations and leadership in traditional cultural practices and social organisation was studied as it is intrinsic in understanding leadership models in the Solomon Islands, the church having subsumed many functions and roles once held by traditional leadership.

The historiography of how cultural practices evolved in the post-colonial period was also examined. This is because modified systems of traditional patronage (clientelism) shapes how politics functions in the Solomon Islands. Literature surrounding the manipulation of custom by political elites to win and consolidate personal power demonstrates this. It also illustrated how clientelism (being fundamentally self-interested), was linked to uneven development and corruption, which leads to economic crisis and conflict. Literature of the subsequent RAMSI intervention was examined to demonstrate how this and other systemic flaws in governance led to decades of socio-economic mismanagement, under-development, ethnic tension and corruption. Literature on the long term effects of interventionism which hinders the nation's political development were examined and lastly, literature about the post RAMSI period was analysed in order to illustrate the pathology behind the long term issues that the nation continues to confronts challenged as it is by a globalised economy, a reorientation of its relationship with Australia and the dramatic shift to China's sphere of influence.

Pre-Contact and Colonialism

Roger Keesing and Robert Tonkinson were among the pioneering contributors to contemporary understanding of Melanesian belief systems and their evolution in the post-colonial period (Keesing & Tonkinson 1982:297-399). Keesing and Tonkinson explore the dynamic nature of Melanesian belief systems and their adaptability and fluidity and that *Kastom* became in many ways an expression of symbolic contrarian resistance to colonialism and anti-British resistance. Akin's (1913) study on the rise of Malaitan resistance in the 1940s is an excellent example of how customary practices were integral to the formation and ideology underpinning the *Massina Rule* movement. Moore in his studies of the development of Malaitan customary traditions reflects this, noting though forming the basis for resistance to colonialism, custom was also informed and influenced by the colonial experience (Moore 2017:550p).

As noted by Ishimori (2007:33-52) and Hviding (2011:45-83), the role of Christianity can hardly be overestimated, nor can the experiences of Solomon Islanders as indentured labourers on Australian plantations. While the brutality and alienation they experienced had a lasting influence, it was the development of Solomons Pijin on Queensland plantations as a Solomonian *lingua franca*, that was to have an enormous influence on contemporary customary identity (Moore 2015, 2007b). Keesing and Corris offer an example of the deep roots of the use of post-colonial customary belief as a form of resistance to colonial control, examining the campaign of resistance to British control by Basiana and Kwaio peoples (Keesing & Corris 1980). The brutality of the colonial authorities in stamping out indigenous resistance was so traumatising that it engendered an ongoing existential distrust in western institutions and practices which continues to inform Malaitan cultural identity into the contemporary period. Quanchi (2004) offers an excellent historiography of the long-standing interest and relationships between Australia and the British Solomon Islands Protectorate during the colonial period and reflects the romanticisation of the Southwest Pacific in the Australian psyche. While not under Australia's direct control, Australian plantation owners and missionaries were in effect an extension of imperial colonial control.

Indeed, the issue of labour in the South Pacific remains an issue in the Solomon Islands into the contemporary period. As Moore, Munro and Leckie noted (1990), the issue of labour supply in a globalised economy and how the South Pacific region factors into this, remained a compelling problem to the nation's stability. Moore, Munro and Leckie noted that to a large degree, the unrest in the Solomon Islands that emerged in the early 2000s was due a demographic bulge, leading to a high population of unemployed, restless and disenchanted youth. When combined with simmering ethnic and cultural tensions conflict became all but inevitable (Moore, Munro, & Leckie 1990). White (1991), in his study of the cultural traditions of Santa Isabel also found that once again, traditional ideas were fluid and readily adapted to changes around it. The people of Santa Isabel whose cultural traditions were formed around the experiences of head-hunting raiders during the nineteenth century and impact of the conversion to Christianity at the beginning of the twentieth century, illustrate that cultural traditions are by definition a by-product of the awareness that other cultural traditions exist. In other words, cultural traditions are often emergent as a result of the opposition or contrast to others where concepts of identity and the "awareness of difference do reflexive understandings of culture become externalised and objectified." (White 1991:3). White also describes the role of paramount Chiefs during the contact period as agencies for socio-cultural adaptation and change within their communities, explaining that chiefs were integral in the successful introducing of new ideas and practices, a factor to consider when examining the interface between contemporary and customary forms of leadership and governance White (1991).

Post Colonial Period

Recognition that concepts of centralised power being anathema to traditional conceptualisations of power and authority came not long after the nation's independence, with observers like Bennett (1987:327-330) noting that in the period immediately preceding independence, several districts, particularly what is now Western Province, sought to cede from centralised control. The establishment of provincial governments in 1981 was designed to ameliorate this. However, the diverse ethno-linguistic insular cultures that formed the Solomon Islands remained an obstacle in coalescing confidence in centralising authority.

Fry suggests that governance in Pacific states like the Solomon Islands has often been based on terms of reference that were invariably negative and often unflattering in the assessment of indigenous administrative ability (Fry 1996:1-40), invoking the enduring narratives grounded in colonial stereotypes used to classify and conceptualise the “other” in the Pacific. The dominant narrative of western models of governance being inherently superior to indigenous models was such that over time it was to form preconceptions such as the assumption that western style linear development is universally achievable or even desirable in non-western societies. Fraenkel (2004:262p; 2005b:119-140) in particular has been at the forefront of research into the rapid social, demographic and economic changes confronting the Solomon Islands in the 1990s, the stagnation of its economy and deteriorating social services, mass unemployment and resentment. He describes the gradual amplification of instability as land disputes associated with the mass migration of Malaitan settlers into Guale customary lands as they sought to find opportunities in the nation’s capital (Fraenkel 2004:262p).

Fraenkel ultimately lays blame at the feet Honiara’s political elite for the collapse of the Solomons as a state and cited chronic corruption and cronyism, masked through the manipulation of customary practice ultimately played a role in the breakdown of social hierarchy and law and order (Fraenkel 2004:262p; 2011:303-326). Fraenkel cautions that the breakdown of governance in the Solomon Islands illustrates that; just as there was the possibility to shape and redesign custom to improve governance, so too can custom be manipulated, undermining governance (Fraenkel 2008a:1-12; 2004:9-11). Clive Moore has also generated substantial literature in this regard, particularly as it pertained to the Solomon Islands leading to the Crisis Period (Moore 2004, 2007b, 2008a, 2008b). Moore examined post-colonialism and its effect on culture, ethno-centrism, as well as the manipulation of *Kastom* (Moore 2004), and how traditional forms of identity (based on regional and ethnic factors), supersede contemporary concepts of national identity (Moore, 2004:63; 2017:453-460; 2008b:389-393). Moore also identifies central causes of dissatisfaction and dissent in the Solomon Islands such as the ownership and use of land and resources, the manipulation of customary practices by political elites, as well as endemic economic and governmental underperformance (Moore 2004:52-55, 68-92).

In his investigation into the historical origins of the crisis, Moore found that the migration of Malaitans to Guadalcanal was a product of the large scale labour market during the colonial period (Moore 2007b:211-232). Due to its high population, Malaita Island had long been the main source of labour for the South Pacific region (Moore 2017:83-138,335-62; Frazer 1990:191-203). An important aspect of this was that while the male population of Malaita was used for development in other areas of the Solomon Islands, almost no development of this type was undertaken on Malaita itself (Moore 2007b:230-232). This resulted in increasing inter-island migration as Malaitans and other Solomon Islanders gravitated to the nation's nascent capital in search for opportunity, a trend that continued in the post-war period as Honiara was developed as the nation's new capital, the labour undertaken by labourers sourced from Malaita (Frazer 1990:191-203). Honiara was to become predominantly Malaitan, adding another layer of complication in the administration of land in Guadalcanal as Malaitan and Gule customary practices and traditions blended, overlapped and clashed.

Dinnen (2008c:51-78) suggests that in the context of Melanesian customary identity and its development, any institutional approaches based on social and economic organisation grounded in Western models were bound to have difficulty in a non-Western environment. Dinnen argues that this was the result a lack of understanding of "the idiosyncrasies of local politics [which] have perplexed many observers and...contributed greatly to the frustration experienced by external state builders" (Dinnen 2008c:56). Dinnen suggests that these idiosyncrasies are the fusion of indigenized colonial era practices, including weak party systems, "big man" personalised political behaviour and resistance to colonial power (Dinnen 2008c:56). Successive governments have been inherently unstable due to this, the overwhelming interest of political leadership being concerned with "fending off votes of no confidence and trying to sustain chronically unstable coalitions than implementing national policy objectives" (Dinnen 2008c:57). Corbett proscribes to the same findings as Dinnen and criticised the tendency for commentators on the region proscribing to well-worn historiographical narratives and not challenge presuppositions that have become unquestioned truths (Corbett 2017:198-215).

As Corbett describes it, the narrative that modern ideas of governance are at odds with customary ones has become the “dominant rubric through which commentators and analysts have conceptualised the relationship between the state and society in the Pacific region since independence. (Corbett 2017:10). Corbett argues there is an assumption that traditional cultural practices such as collective land tenure and culturally based reciprocity run contrary to contemporary ideas about individual liberties and rights (Corbett 2017:10). This assumption, Corbett suggests, is taken as fact and is used to underwrite the idea that traditional hierarchies and traditions run contrarily to contemporary democratic practices. Wesley-Smith suggests that this narrative can be traced to the last decades of the de-colonialisation process at the end of the Second World War where Pacific states like Solomon Islands found themselves denied a chance at organic self-determination (Wesley-Smith 2006:182-208). Wesley-Smith argues that the process of achieving statehood was hi-jacked and subsequently botched by the international community during the Cold War. Wesley-Smith sees statehood in the Solomon Islands as an ongoing process of conflict between modern state models and a nation consisting of thousands of small autonomous communities that for thousands of years had survived without a formal state structure. Wesley-Smith understands political development in the Solomon Islands as best viewed as a dynamic interplay between national self-determination, colonial legacies, Melanesian indigenous practices of self-government, sovereignty and state formation (Wesley-Smith 2007:29-46).

9/11 and Interventionism

Anti-terror narratives were at the forefront of foreign policy concerns for International Relations in the post-Cold War period and the historiography of the Pacific Region reflects this (Hegarty 2004:5-7, Abuza 2002:427-465, Banlaoi 2006:247-262; Fraenkel 2005a:339-355). Dobell described Australian defence doctrine as being overly influenced by the anti-terror narrative and suggested that this took attention away from partnering effectively with the Solomon Islands in state building (Dobell 2003:16-23). Patience asserted that Australia, hitherto having neglected the region, only reengaged following US pressure for Australia to realign its security responsibilities in the region following the World Trade Centre attacks on September 11, 2001 (Patience 2004:1-18).

When considering Australia's perceived responsibilities as a regional power in the South Pacific, Dobell recalls that Australia's own constitutional formulation was a reaction to colonialism in the region, and the political development of the Solomon Islands similarly developed in reaction to external powers (Dobell 2012:33-45). As Herr and Frazer describe, Australia is geographically outside the bounds of the region but remains an influential partner (Herr & Bergin 2011; Frazer 2006:1-23). Shaw suggests that for this reason, one could expand upon how regionalism in the Pacific was defined. Instead of 'arbitrary' lines of geography, race or culture, the focus should be instead on "multiple networks for multiple foci" (Shaw 2006:145). The logic upon which this is predicated requires a considerable stretch. The premise that the very factors that are used to define regionalism is (i.e. race, culture, religion, ideology or geography) were discretionary would mean any foreign state could in theory be entitled to consider themselves part of any region upon any basis they saw fit (Fry 2008:110-19; O'Connor 2013).

Observers believe the plan would not have engendered any tangible improvement to the regions already interwoven network of cultural and economic ties, nor tangibly improve Australia's security in the region (Powell 2005:218-239; Patience 2004:1-18; Hegarty 2004:14-17; Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat 2014:1; Rolfe 2006:83-101). Kampmark (2003:6-9,20) was clear in the belief that the entire policy of regional interventionism was born out of the desire to establish Australia's position as a pro-active regional power in the US dominated post-Cold War world. The approach Australia was to take was based on an enduring geo-strategic concept of an 'arc of stability' (Ayson 2007:215-31; Fraenkel 2005a:339-355). The doctrine is based upon the historical precedent set during Second World War where the island archipelagos to Australia's north acted as the defensive screen or bulwark against mainland invasion. Therefore, the South Pacific had long been conceptualised by Australia as geo-strategically and economically vital, and its constituent nations subsequently of natural interest to major powers like Australia (Camilleri 1987:284p; Connell 2006:111-122; Wallis 2012:1-12). That is to say, during the Cold war unstable small states presented as much a threat to regional security than direct threats from powerful neighbours (Wallis 2012:1-12; Campbell 2016:432p; Alpers & Twyford 2003:277-307; Hegarty 2004:7-9).

A key paper that underpinned the Australian government's decision to intervene in the Solomon Islands was Wainwright's 'Our Failing Neighbour: Australia and the Future of Solomon Islands' (Wainwright 2003). Wainwright's argument for interventionism placed emphasis upon Melanesian states bordering Australia as a security buffer and early warning zone to protected land and maritime approaches. Wainwright's argument was that the security of the Melanesian region affected our own security, *ergo* failing states or failed states, are vulnerable to external actors, state, and non-state, who will manipulate and exploit this to the detriment of Australia's national interest. Thus, fuelled by tensions with Indonesia over East Timorese independence, then the threat of terrorism in the 2000s, the arc of stability doctrine again became the cornerstone of strategic thinking and planning in the lead up to the Australian led RAMSI intervention (Abuza 2002:427-465; Kabutaulaka 2004b:1-8; Fry 2008b:72-86; Banlaoi 2006:247-262).

Strokirch explored the maritime aspects of the war on terrorism and its relationship with Australian intervention in the region (Strokirch 2004:370-381). It was suggested that a 'failed state' abutting against Australia's maritime border could facilitate an easier passage of clandestine terror networks infiltrating into Australia. For Strokirch, that the strategic threat was not terror but economic. As he explained, weakened states are vulnerable ones, if Australia did not exert its influence, then one of its regional rivals such as South Korea, China, Japan, or Taiwan could establish a firmer foothold within earshot of Australia's maritime borders (Strokirch 2004:370-381). Kabutaulaka (2004b:1-8) agrees with this assessment and adds that the Howard doctrine of regional engagement and the concept of pre-emptive intervention in the Solomon Islands smacked of neo-colonialism as a result, Kabutaulaka concluding that RAMSI encouraged aid dependency and not with long-term recovery, reconciliation, and rebuilding.

The RAMSI Period

In the enormous amount of literature surrounding the RAMSI intervention, the term “failed” and “failing” was used repeatedly to describe the nature of the Solomon Islands crisis (Fraenkel 2006b:127-140; Kabutaulaka 2004b:1-8; Wesley-Smith 2008:37-53, Fry 2008b:72-86; Patience 2004:1-18, Reilly 2008:12-22). Wesley-Smith is inclined to frame the crisis more as a story of a failure in governance and leadership, not the state itself. The tendency for western powers to view indigenous administration of the Pacific states as being in crisis works to their advantage (Wesley-Smith 2006:121-26). Wesley-Smith’s core contention is that failing, and failure are easy labels and the reality of the deterioration of the Solomon Islands was due in large part to reckless fiscal policy, rising public deficits, corrupt systems of patronage amongst the political elite. Dinnen agrees, arguing that references to the Solomon Islands in terms of ‘failed or ‘failing’ is altogether too simplistic and fails to explain long-term issues that have gnawed away at the good governance and social security of Solomon Islanders since the late 70s (Dinnen 2008b:339-55).

The view of Boege, Brown *et al.* (2008:1-21) regarding the process of post-colonial governance in the Southwest Pacific also rebuts the narrative of the ‘failed state’ when analysing the challenges facing Pacific states. They suggest it more appropriate to concentrate on these states as emergent forms of hybrid governance that are in an ongoing process of negotiation between elements of the introduced Western models of governance and elements based in indigenous tradition. Dinnen & McLeod (2007:295-328) explain that the civil conflict being witnessed regionally in the Solomon Islands, Fiji, Vanuatu, and Papua New Guinea, are all based in unique cultural and historical circumstances that Australia must be mindful of in its interventionist policies. Dinnen and McLeod suggest the success of capacity building missions in these countries depends on appreciating and accommodating these factors in their approach. They argue that these Pacific states are young nations with a very recent history of colonisation and decolonisation. Dinnen and McLeod therefore critique the application failed or failing state in this context as it fails to appreciate that political development in the Melanesian context is vastly different to the European one, rendering comparison meaningless.

Moore notes that intervention in so called failed states was seen internationally as a “practical not neo-colonial or unwelcome invasion of national sovereignty. In the six months after intervention in Solomon Islands, the Australian government took on a more active role in the South Pacific, a new phase after almost 30 years of a hand-off approach to uneven, periodic unrest in the Islands.” (Moore 2005a:744). Yet, in his examination of the political machinations behind the timing of the intervention, Moore was scathing of the Howard government’s timing in the crisis, attributing the timing to the Howard campaign to secure the 2004 elections (Moore 2005a:732-48). Additionally, Moore asserts that as Australia was also heavily committed to Iraq and Afghan campaigns at the time, the Solomon Islands intervention formed a convenient excuse not to escalate those commitments. Dinnen identified the broad criterion often used to assess whether a state is failing or failed, including chronic political instability, breakdown of essential government services, economic collapse, endemic corruption, loss of authority, and the collapse of law and order (Dinnen 2014:67-75).

Dinnen cautions that despite the apparent similarities between internal issues confronting the Solomons and those in PNG and Fiji for example, these are mostly superficial. Dinnen believes that although all of these nations are all shaped by the colonial and post-colonial journey to statehood, the processes of transformation for each vary due to the geo-political and cultural differences between them. For Dinnen, the challenge is balancing pre-colonial and postcolonial concepts of governance and integrate the transformative forces of regionalism and globalisation (Dinnen 2014:73). Boege, Brown et. al. (2008:1-21) add to this and suggest that political processes should be best understood as a negotiation between customary governance and introduced Western forms of governance. Their findings suggested that constructive interaction between state and customary institutions needs to develop governance not based on exogenous structures but based on structures that are literally grounded in the indigeneity of the region. Hameiri makes several excellent observations in relation to the concepts of the failed state and its use and abuse in literature and policy making around the Solomon Islands issue (Hameiri 2007:409-41).

According to Hameiri, that if they had inherited better designed and stronger governance institutions, then the development trajectory would have been entirely different (Hameiri 2007:418). Others, Hameiri argues, instead suggest that the state structures needed to be blended in with traditional forms of governance that have proven resilient, and likely would have improved the ability of the state's ability to engage in the work of national governance (Hameiri 2007:418). Dinnen concurs and found that this lack of synergy between indigenous and exogenous forms of governance was the combined result of post-colonial institutional legacy, the ineptitude and greed of post-independence governments, and the challenges adapting to a globalised economy (Dinnen 2004:27-40). RAMSI had failed to appreciate the existential harm that rampant competition amongst political elites, criminality, corruption, and manipulation had continued to present as a serious threat to the social and political stability of the Solomon Islands (Dinnen 2002:285-98). Instead, as Braithwaite, Dinnen and others observed, RAMSI planners fell back on pre-existing templates in terms of peace building and set out to build on institutional reform and the machinery of government (Braithwaite, Dinnen *et al.* 2010:151-166).

However, they neglected issues such addressing land administration and justice, issues understood to have led to the Crisis (Braithwaite, Dinnen *et al.* 2010:151-166). For example, they noted that the ability of tribes and clans to register customary land holdings had remained on the list of 'Demands by the Bona Fide and Indigenous People of Guadalcanal' from 1988 to the present day. Hameiri recognised that superficially, RAMSI had worked. It has ended violent conflict and restored the economy (Hameiri 2009:35-52). Hameiri also noted however that the failure to appreciate the importance of integrating Melanesian cultural mores and traditions into its state-building project would undermine RAMSI's effectiveness (Hameiri 2009:35-52). Hameiri suggests that RAMSI was not an exercise in state-building but an experiment in socio-political engineering that seeks to alter the existing relationship between politics and society with the Solomon Islands. But because of their control over the political process, RAMSI had stymied the engagement and participation of Solomon Islanders in their own governance (Hameiri 2009:35-52).

Observers were also mindful of aid dependency (Mosse 2004:639-671; O'Connor 2003:24-32; Anderson 2008a:62-93, 2008b; Dinnen 2004b:76-80; Lenga 2005:42-55). The provision of aid must be aimed at strengthening state and non-state actors which are crucial in a functional pluralist society, not undermine them (Wood 2018:481-494; Carroll & Hameiri 2007:410-430). Foreign intervention, while it may create a nominally functional state will not address the underlying issues that led to conflict, nor develop a lasting peace (Hayward-Jones 2008a; Kabutaulaka 2004a:303). As Kabutaulaka explained, it will not be the efforts of interventionism, but Solomon Islanders themselves who must “come to terms with the challenges of building a nation state out of culturally and ethnically plural societies, and reflect on the social, political and economic challenges for the future” (Kabutaulaka 2004d:401). This echoes Governor General Sir John Lapli who noted that there must be “good beneficial reasons for people of diverse and scattered islands of Solomon Islands to want to belong to this country” (Kabutaulaka 2004d:403).

Dinnen and McLeod offer another perspective on the shortfalls in the RAMSI intervention concerns the lack of understanding of the socio-economic complexity of the Solomon Islands and the challenge in implementing reforms where contemporary and traditional perceptions of governance are at odds (Dinnen and McLeod 2008:23-43). Along these lines, observers also challenged the perception that greed and criminality underpinned the motives of those participating, arguing that uneven development creates points of grievance between communities (Allen 2005:56-71; Allen 2013a:187-209, Moore 2005b:56-77). As Braithwaite and Arkwright explain, the crisis should be understood as being less about personal greed, and more about restorative justice to address historical wrongs (Arkwright 2003:177-194; Braithwaite 2003:35-44). The conflict was amplified by the manipulation of customary compensatory tradition by both political élites and militants (Siota, Carnegie *et al.* 2021:34-48; Hameiri 2007:429). It was also fuelled by uneven development which was in turn was plagued by land disputes between Malaitan settlers and amongst Guale landowners (Fraenkel 2004; Foukona 2007:64-72; Kali`uae 2005:18-41). Land issues in Honiara were a crucible: illegal encroachment on customary land, unequal distribution of royalties and squatting fuelling tensions (Bush & Le Mesurier 2004:7-12; Hayward-Jones 2008a:22p).

Furthermore, compounding the tensions was years of stunted economic growth borne out of long-standing resistance to large-scale resource development, a cultural tendency originating in the Moro Movement (Allen 2012:163-180; Allen & Dinnen 2013:69-84; Allen 2013b:152-161, Akin 2013). Allen, Dinnen and others believe it is within these traditions of Malaitan resistance to foreign or centralised authority, articulated through customary practice, that resistance to RAMSI must be understood (Allen 2009:1-18 Dinnen, Porter & Sage 2010:11-19). Opposing RAMSI was therefore as much about asserting cultural identity as it was about political power. Researchers also identified issues surrounding natural resources and land pressure and saw a need for more effective systems be involved in addressing dispute resolution (Pacific Islands Forum 2004; Hartard & Liebert 2015:). The inability of the government to arbitrate the grievances arising from land disputes from the Malaitan settlement of Guadalcanal led to Malaitans living on Guadalcanal being induced or manipulated into a militant response due to the neglect of clan leaders failing in the responsibilities to arbitrate between aggrieved parties (Kwa'ioloa & Burt 2007:111-27; Filer, McDonnell & Allen 2017:1-56).

Aggravating the tensions further was the endemic corruption among politicians who enriched themselves through pandering foreign companies in return for lucrative commercial opportunities at the expense of marginalized communities (Bush & Le Mesurier 2004:7-12). This over centralisation meant that government services, employment, investment and development opportunities were still inordinately focused on Honiara, which continues to contribute to grievances between rural and urban areas (Dinnen 2004b:76-80, Dinnen 2004c:1-10, Bush & Le Mesurier 2004:7-12). Moore also identified the crisis as exposing the parlous state of the “introduced modern centralized process of government and its services, the export-led economy, and the infrastructure of urban life” (Moore 2007a:170). Moore describes the issue as one of conflict between two distinct and in many ways contradictory forces working upon the Solomon Islands; the introduced system of unitarian, centralised governance and the existing indigenous social structure, hierarchies, laws, practices, and obligations which left many Solomon Islanders uneasy about “what they see as the imposition of first-world values on their pacific state.” (Moore 2007a:178).

This aligns with Goldsmith and Dinnen's belief that this lack of attention to the socio-cultural milieu within which efforts are being made undermines the process of developing policies and practices that address these core issue (Goldsmith & Dinnen 2007:1091-1109). Allen & Dinnen reflect that any endeavour in peace building must accommodate local cultural contexts if it hopes to see any positive transition toward long term peace (Allen & Dinnen 2010:299-327). Hegarty adds that practitioners must also have a clear understanding of the key motivators, actors and dilemmas that drive crisis, and avoid proscriptive tropes and stereotypes (Hegarty 2004:11-14). Hegarty and Regan further elaborate and develops upon these key concepts drawn from the experiences from Bougainville, the Solomon Islands, and Fiji, and found that one shared factor between these otherwise very different states was the reluctance of both peace builders and stakeholders to acknowledge and integrate customary practice in political structures and decision-making processes (Hegarty & Regan 2006:57-68).

Wainwright concurs and points out during the early RAMSI period that there needed to be a tacit admission that some things were not achievable via peacekeeping or state building efforts by RAMSI and suggested "key questions of national identity should remain outside the realm of state building operations" (Wainwright 2005:10). In an analysis of the broader issue of interventionism, Wesley-Smith reminds observers that that the international legitimacy of an intervention into a state in crisis does not necessarily mean that this legitimacy is recognised or understood as legitimate within the affected societies. and that interventionism ran the risk of evolving into a form of neo-colonialism, or sub-imperial 'shared sovereignty' (Wesley-Smith 2008:37-53; 2007c:29-46; 2007b:182-208). For most, it is self-evident that the reality of geo-politics in the South Pacific is such that the region will always be of cultural and political significance to Australia, and that the cultural exchange between Australians and Pacific Islanders should be at the centre of Australian strategic policy in the region (Moore 2007a:169-196; Abigail & Sinclair 2008:2-6; Abigail 2008:43-54,75-77, Dobell 2008:84-85). Abigail and Sinclair hold that Australia must commit to long term engagement through negotiated bi-lateral agreement between states.

The RAMSI Drawdown

The RAMSI Intervention was subject to intense scrutiny as the mission gradually drew down. The Parliament of the Solomon Islands charged the Foreign Relations Committee with assessing the RAMSI mission found that while RAMSI had been effective in restoring law and order, stabilising government finances institutions and infrastructure at the height of the crisis, the legal framework establishing RAMSI was judged to have been unconstitutional or at the very least was not clear in its constitution (Solomon Islands Government 2009b). More grievous however, was the opinion of the Committee was that RAMSI has subverted the role of the Solomon Islands Government and in the process compromised the sovereignty of Solomon Islands. Dinnen, Porter and Sage commented on the tendency to view conflict as inherently pathological behaviour, which led to responses from internal and external actors that did not address the underlying societal stresses that lead to conflict and undermine any constructive change. Peace builders and those in power in the Solomon Islands needed to develop a method of channelling these grievances into institutions that can arbitrate and resolved these disputes (Dinnen, Porter & Sage 2010:61-71).

Observers assessed that RAMSI had failed to take the opportunity to address the root causes of the ethnic tension between 1998 and 2003 and were not being engaged in nation building, nor dealing with the issues at the heart of the conflict, with a notable lack of indigenous participation in socio-economic development (Powles 2006:9-14; Sodhi 2008:1-19; Fraenkel, Madraiwiwi *et al.* 2014:21-26, 83-90). Carroll & Hameiri suggested that AusAID and RAMSI's premise that good governance acted as the most direct path to improved socio-economic conditions was a flawed one (Carroll & Hameiri 2007:410–30). That is to say, RAMSI's efforts had been in strengthening the public sector and governance with far too little attention being given to stimulating the private sector, nor smaller scale reforms more likely to gain traction and deliver a tangible impact on governance, with ongoing civil unrest suggesting conditions leading to conflict remaining (Powles 2006:9-14; Sodhi 2008:1-19; Hayward-Jones 2014:1-24). Hayward-Jones evidenced that RAMSI's financial allocation on governmental reform and better economic governance was minute, with the majority of RAMSI's expenditure being on the delivery of law and justice (Hayward-Jones 2014:4).

For other observers, the de-centralisation of reforms in the Solomon Islands had long been considered of key importance in the years leading to the crisis (Premdas & Steeves 1985; Nanau 1998:183-199), with de-centralisation focus for reform that continued for the duration of the intervention (Dinnen 2012:61-71; Saunders 2013:41-46; Scales 2005:140-148). Fraenkel, Madraiwiwi and Okole, in a review of RAMSI on its tenth anniversary of operations noted that there has been plethora 'root causes' of the conflict in the Solomon Islands and framing of these issues as an overarching 'root causes of the tensions' denies the possibility of being able to work through to a pragmatic approach to resolving them (Fraenkel, Madraiwiwi & Okole 2014:1-112). Fraenkel, Madraiwiwi, and Okole assert that singly, none of the issues are insurmountable and that the weaknesses of governance generally occur in multiple facets and while many factors created tensions and potential for conflict, none of these of themselves should have triggered state collapse (Fraenkel, Madraiwiwi & Okole 2014:1-112).

If the Solomon Islands Government had the legislative and electoral support and the ability to implement tangible policies designed to tackle these issues, none of these issues singly would have been insurmountable (Fraenkel, Madraiwiwi & Okole 2014:1-112). Hayward-Jones' assessment of RAMSI supports this and that inter-departmental and inter-agency cooperation was problematic during the mission which had led to the inefficient handling of projects (Hayward-Jones 2014:1-24). Hayward-Jones suggests that working with local agencies and departments and not simply imposing parallel interventionist bureaucracies was crucial. Other commentators agreed and believed that any attempt to simply rebuild the same state structures that collapsed during the tension was illogical, particularly when measured against the extant and longstanding grievances with those organisations the effectiveness of the state system. Instead, it was more important that the focus be upon political decentralisation and provincial autonomy, the nexus being to develop and improve the networking between rural communities and the state (Dinnen 2012:61-71; Wilikilagi 2009:6-12; Phillips 2020a:1-2, 2020b:1-2; Solomon Islands Government 2008:4-5, 7-9; UNDP 2014:10,14-37).

The 2006 Black Tuesday Electoral Riots

The 2006 elections were typically ‘Melanesian’, whereby a large number of candidates fought over seats that were won by very small ‘majorities’, and the majority of parties and independents involved had weak or incoherent policy platforms (Allen 2008b:39-63, Alasia 2008:119-147, Kabutaulaka 2008:96-118). Researchers argue that an electoral system with party politics setting groups up against each other based upon the premise that ‘better’ decisions are made through political antagonism was anathema to Melanesian cultural mores (Moore 2008c:509; Kabutaulaka 2008:99). Kabutaulaka suggested that an absence of regulatory bodies to mediate this adversarial style of Westminster politics, combined with weak political parties means that the political process is a divisive and confrontational process, and that the lack of integration of traditional leadership roles into the political system during the colonial period created a divide between government and people particular to the Solomon Islands (Kabutaulaka 2008:96-118).

Kabutaulaka cites for example the experiences of Francis Saemala, who felt that a ‘committee system’ was favoured over the conventional Westminster system because of its unifying features that was more in keeping with Melanesian systems of consensus that had developed in customary tradition. It was clear that “in a culturally diverse Solomon Islands (there was the potential) of creating divisions along island, district or linguistic lines” (Kabutaulaka 2008:99). Wood and Hawkins have suggested that party politicking in the Solomon Islands is further undermined by the First Past the Post electoral system, which often fails to produce candidates that received the majority of the votes cast in an election (Wood 2014:1-14; ACE Project 2005; Hawkins 2020; Solomon Star 2016). Kabutaulaka and Fraenkel have also made this observation and argue as to the validity of a government where the choice of the majority of voters was not reflected in the final outcome (Kabutaulaka 2008:96-118; Fraenkel 2006a:43-67). Researchers also describe the lack of absentee vote provisions, and the related issue of voters registering in multiple locations: voters regularly lodge votes both in Honiara, but also where land and kinship connections (Fraenkel 2008a:43-67, 2008b:63-85; Batley, Wiltshire *et al.* 2019b).

As it stood, by the time of the 2006 elections were conducted the Solomon Islands, Government and RAMSI had yet to address even “the most basic tasks to modern statehood, including internal security, essential services and economic management” (Dinnen 2008a:3). The dysfunctional political processes in the post-independence period had only fuelled ongoing popular resentment, localism and division (Dinnen 2008a:1-28). As a result of these factors, scholarship and reporting of the 2006 election focused upon potential causes or motivations that led to the subsequent riots (Atkinson 2009:47-65; Kabutaulaka 2008:96-117). Observers believed that the riots were relatively spontaneous, with some evidence suggesting former Malaitan militants had orchestrated attacks against Chinese businesses in Honiara as form of customary compensation (Van Meijl & Goldsmith 2007; Dinnen 2003:29-30; Hameiri 2007:429; Allen & Dinnen 2010:307,311) for their perception that they were not in receipt of the ‘rehabilitation’ the Townsville Peace Agreement had promised (Allen 2008b:48; UN 2000).

The possible role of Taiwanese interference during the 2006 elections was widely reported, with assertions Taiwan had been paying political candidates and the rioting and subsequent targeting and destruction of Chinese owned businesses following Rini’s election as Prime Minister was due to Taiwanese interference (Atkinson 2009:47-65; Herr 2006:78-95). Fraenkel was far less inclined to the accusations that the Taiwanese and Chinese were involved in the unrest, an accusation made by the Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police at the time. Fraenkel considered the idea that the Taiwanese be in cahoots with the Chinese was irrational (Fraenkel 2008b:161,177). The Solomon Islands Government’s narrative of the 2006 unrest was one that framed RAMSI as having mishandled or entirely neglected its duties in undertaking risk assessment leading up to the election and worse still, that RAMSI had removed the Solomon Islands Government’s ability to independently control its law enforcement agencies prior to the unrest (Solomon Islands Government 2007b:7-8). The Solomon Islands Government’s Commission of Inquiry into the riots declared the of violence was not in fact the result of anger and resentment surrounding corruption, nor the desire to break the Chinese influence on political groups, and that such assertions were contrived (Solomon Islands Government 2007b:8-9).

Instead, the Commission suggested that the 2006 civil unrest was to some degree orchestrated by elements within the government and certain political organisations with a view to regime change (Solomon Islands Government 2007b:1, 6-7), and that “an identifiable group of politicians who saw corruption and anti-Chinese sentiment as an opportunity to justify the use of bully-boy tactics to force their way into power, after they had lost the election for their choice of prime minister” (Solomon Islands Government 2007b:14). Subsequent evidence indeed pointed to four key players having a hand in the riots, and with the original 2003 crisis: MP Nelson Ne’e, Charles Dausabea, David Dausabea and MEF leader Alex Bartlett. Of particular relevance was the fact that Charles Dausabea; “considered one of the ‘prime architects’ of the Solomon Islands Crisis” (Atkinson 2009:59), had won his election to office through leveraging popular anti-Chinese and anti RAMSI sentiment. This is in keeping with Allen’s view that RAMSI and the Chinese were targeted due to long-standing resentment of perceived socio-economic inequality, mistrust in RAMSI for failing to prosecute ‘big fish’ (Allen 2008b:48).

Atkinson also points out that there was an expectation that MEF militants were due compensation based in traditional Kwaio Kastom for “securing the capital” during the conflict (Atkinson 2009:50; Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2012:69-70). Lending credence to this narrative was the fact that the anti-Chinese riots and property destruction appeared to be planned, and very selective, with evidence pointed toward long standing Chinese families’ businesses being spared, whereas those of recent Chinese migrants were not (Allen 2006b:194-201). Wallis summarised the situation well, describing RAMSI efforts in the restoration of law and order in the Solomon Islands as remarkable, however the 2006 election illustrated that RAMSI had failed to adequately address systemic issues with the nation’s political system leading to endemic issues of corruption, unstable political parties, civil unrest and social division (Wallis 2006:81-98). Worse still, Dinnen reflected, was that mission creep had meant the intervention had become “profoundly political in that it deliberately set out to challenge and transform existing power relations.” (Dinnen 2007:261). Dinnen explains that the loss of sovereign independence experienced by the Solomon Islands under *de facto* Australian control had dramatically retarded the nations

journey toward a “shared sense of political community that is such a critical foundation for rendering states accountable and responsive to their citizens” (Dinnen 2007:263). This was to have predictable consequences for Solomon Islanders as RAMSI wound up in 2017 and the nation was left to its own devices. The coming 2019 elections in the Solomon Islands, Australia would find that its already waning influence in the post-RAMSI period would sustain even graver injury as Chinese diplomacy and money filled the vacuum left by RAMSI’s withdrawal.

The 2019 Elections and the Switch to China

The historiography of the 2019 elections continued to reflect the pattern of politicking seen previously, ongoing problems in voter registration, logistical chaos caused by a mass exodus of voters from Honiara to their home provinces to vote (Batley, Wiltshire, Ridolfi & Rogers 2019b:1-2; Ewart & Wasuka 2019:np; Wasuka 2019c:np). But it was the rampant electoral fraud that drew the attention of observers (Ewart & Wasuka 2019:np; Wasuka 2019a:np, 2019b:np; Batley, Wiltshire, Ridolfi & Rogers 2020b:12-15). It was the nation’s most corrupt with twenty-eight separate claims of improper conduct made against electoral candidates and officials (Solomon Times 2019c:np; Economist Intelligence Unit 2020:np). Tensions were running high as the election count concluded, with protests erupting following the announcement of the election results, gathering momentum following the walk out of MPs after their injunction motion failed to pass in Parliament (Dziedzic & Wasuka 2019). Following this, outbreaks of unrest and rioting in the capital erupted (Solomon Times 2019d:np; Dziedzic & Wasuka 2019:np; Wyeth 2019:np). However, the struggle for influence in the Solomon Islands between China and the West dominated reporting (Yang 2011:127-141; McElroy & Wenwen 2008:225-246; Fildes 2022:np; Lum & Vaughn 2007:14-21), charting the diplomatic efforts of Australia and the United States to dissuade the Sogavare government’s eventual switch to China, ending decades of Solomon Islands’ diplomatic recognition of Taiwan (Coorey & Tillett 2022b:np; Sas 2022:np; Strong 2019:np; Solomon Times 2019e:np; PRC 2022a). Factions had coalesced, with MPs from Malaita and Guadalcanal reported to have given Sogavare six months to make the switch to China, observers noting that China had offered those same MPs significant help to develop infrastructure (RNZ Pacific 2019:np).

Other MPs keen to maintain the *status quo* demanded that Taiwan increase constituency payments lest they too lose their support (Dziedzic 2019:np, Fox & Knox 2019:np). Taiwan had enjoyed diplomatic recognition of the Solomon Islands for decades, was Taipei's largest Pacific ally and had provided tens of millions of dollars in fiscal support (Wasuka 2019c:np; Batley, Wiltshire, Ridolfi & Rogers 2020a:1-3). Yet the relationship was controversial in the Solomon Islands with overwhelming evidence that Taiwan's financial contributions had underpinned decades of corruption and political interference (see Regional Constitutional Development Funds:33). The reality was that despite this relationship with Taiwan, the largest export market for the Solomon Islands was China, which made the deepening of that relationship a foregone conclusion (Wasuka 2019c:np; Wade 2021:np). The switch to China raised immediate concern regarding China's broader strategic intentions in the region in the light of the security pact with the Solomon Islands and the implications this had for broader regional security (Weaver 2022:np; Shoebridge 2022a:np; Rahman 2023:np; Packham 2022:np; Needham 2023:np; Coorey & Tillett 2022a:np; PRC 2022a:).

Observers also held concerns regarding Chinese 'payday loan' diplomacy, (Whiting, Zhou & Feng 2019:np; Var & Po 2017:np; Saeedy & Wen 2022:np), leading to concerns about China undermining the sovereignty of those states in the longer term (Shoebridge 2022b:np; Vondracek 2019:62-86; Menary 2015:1-8). The Australian Government signalled the importance of the Pacific to Australia with PM Morrison's marking his election victory with an impromptu visit to the Solomon Islands (Solomon Times 2019a:np). Despite Australia's Foreign Minister Payne protest to the contrary, the Morrison visit was to address Australia's relationship with the Solomon Islands, as any increase in China's profile in the South-west Pacific naturally came at the expense of Australian and US interests (Fildes 2022np). It was reported at the time that a US State Department official visiting Australia was reported to have accused China of destabilising the Pacific by subsuming Taiwan's allies in the region (Dziedzic 2019:np). Despite Australia and the United States' efforts, China's expert use of financial inducements and soft power diplomacy proved too tempting for the Sogavare government. (Dziedzic 2019:np; Bauer 2023:np; Courmont & Delhalle 2022:1-21).

Governance and Jurisprudence

Allen, Dinnen, Evans, and Monson (2013:84p) explored aspects of change that can be observed in the changes in the relationship between the application of justice in contemporary versus traditional legalistic structures. They found that recognition of the validity of traditional jurisprudence will likely improve legal processes at the local level. Moore, Fraenkel and Wood point out that customary practice has been abused or neglected in the past (Moore 2004; Fraenkel 2004; Wood 2018:481-494), and like Corrin agreed that the validation of traditional legalistic structures and processes will drive better legal processes at the local level (Corrin 2001:167-177; Corrin & Zorn 2005:144-168). As an example, Dinnen and Allen found that in relation to policing and community engagement, law and order had been a hybrid, combining state and non-state “co-providers” of policing and justice, where communities understand the judicial processes, respect its outcomes and subsequently take ownership of those legal structures (Dinnen & Allen 2013:222-242).

Corrin in particular, has identified the issues generated where the state legal system and customary law interface with one another, particularly in accommodating customary law in formal common law court processes, typically driven by the western adversarial system which does not align with customary practices of arbitration and reconciliation (Corrin 2011:1-25). Corrin also raises an important but much neglected issue within this area is how best to approach the proof of customary law in courts. A threshold question that arises is whether it should be treated as law or fact (Corrin 2011:1-25). Few countries give any legislative guidance on this issue, nor has it been the subject of extensive consideration by the courts themselves (Corrin 2009:31-71). The application of justice along exogenous legal precepts, grounded in adversarial and judgmental concepts of arbitration and resolution, is incompatible with Melanesian traditions of jurisprudence like avoidance of conflict and giving offence, relationships and agreements reached through customary reciprocity and compromise (Braithwaite 2003:33-43), or traditions such as customary forgiveness, compensation and peacemaking (Jalal 2009:11-15).

Dinnen argues that these customs should not be seen simply as an alternative to building the capacity of state institutions, they can instead be an important way of enhancing the effectiveness of state institutions (Dinnen 2003:1-34). Dinnen highlights the richness of regulator traditions and practices reflects the complex social and political landscape within Melanesian communities, noting that many aspects of dispute resolution in many Melanesian communities shares several qualities often attributed to modern restorative justice practice (Dinnen 2006:401-21). Dinnen and Peake suggest that this can be achieved if non state actors such as traditional leaders and customary systems of justice administration were taken more seriously and integrated into the system to address the disparate and fragile nature of legal and justice issues in pluralist social systems like the Solomon Islands (Dinnen and Peake 2013:1-15). Scholars like Dinnen and White argue that regional communities preferred arbitration through customary systems exercised by local leaders or chiefs, and it remained the preferred option for dealing with most local disputes (Dinnen & Haley 2012:vi, White & Lindstrom 1997:569-574).

Yet, as Corrin notes, while constitutionally protected, customary law is not sacrosanct and must account for the changing realities in contemporary Solomon Islands and begin a formal process of integration into contemporary justice systems (Corrin 2011:1-25). Dinnen and Haley (2012:vi) also found that locals often described colonial style administration being more effective in terms of delivering justice and policing, particularly the pre-independence office of Area Constable (AC), raised as a topic of considerable interest among communities. According to Evans, Goddard and Paterson, this view of the colonial policing system was common (Evans, Goddard, & Paterson 2011:40-42). Rather, the native court system had been an effective system of arbitration blending colonial administration with customary leadership (Evans, Goddard, & Paterson 2011:40-42). It demonstrated that the concept that customary and contemporary jurisprudence were diametrically opposed was inaccurate, with evidence suggesting that many local courts certainly do integrate custom successfully into what would be considered western legal practice, illustrating that hybrid courts utilising a fusion of cultural and legal concepts was entirely achievable (Evans, Goddard, & Paterson 2011:40-42).

Governance and Customary Tradition

There has long been interest amongst researchers about the roles of Chiefs in Pacific States, whether as figureheads or active participants in regional political discourse, or as cultural interlocutors between people and government (McLeod 2008:10p; White & Lindstrom 1997:569-574; Baines 2014:1-8; McDougall 2014a:13p, 2014b:10p). Indeed, the issue of traditional leadership and governance has been an ongoing one within the Solomon Islands, with provision having been made for traditional leadership to be integrated formally into the nation's system of governance in 1978 (Mae 2010:1-34). A key aspect of hybrid governance of this type is the relationship between customary law and constitutional reform (Corrin 2001:165-177, 2007:143-168, 2008:305-333; Fraenkel 2010:277-302; Nanau 2002:1-18). With its origins in British systems of governance that had very little to offer the Solomon Islands in terms of structural compatibility (Corrin 2001:165-177, 2007:143-168). Corrin relates that the Solomon Islands Government itself in the 2005 'White Paper on the Reform of the Solomon Islands Constitution' noted that the constitution was a 'relic' and has "hindered the social, economic, constitutional transformations the country should have undertaken within the last 27 years" (Corrin 2007:146).

Corrin and Zorn suggest that contradictions and conflicts between individual right and the state and the cursory application of customary law makes constitutional reform essential. Customary law is fundamentally important culturally, yet issues remain as to its degree primacy in relation to contemporary jurisprudence, particularly in relation to constitutionally mandated human rights (Corrin 2003:53-76; Corrin & Zorn 2005:144-168). White and Lindstrom (1997:569-574) in particular contributed to this understanding the role of chiefs and their impact on power structures and identity and describe the significance of chiefs and the discussions and disagreements that surround them are an intrinsic aspect of debates about identity and power in Pacific states. White (2006:1-17) questioned whether traditionally appointed leaders' customary authority would diminish if it were formally bound to the state, creating a structural divide disconnecting chiefs from their communities. White notes there is the issue of articulating cultural practice and the running of a state being difficult to legislate (White 2006:1-17).

Melanesian concepts of customary leadership are not homogenous, and reforms must account for this (White 2006:1-17). Research suggests that this complexity had dissuaded RAMSI from direct political intervention which instead focused upon economic, structural and bureaucratic reform (Fraenkel, Madraiwiwi & Okole 2014:21-26, 63, 78-90). RAMSIs reluctance to account for Melanesian societal and cultural mores, nor Melanesian kinship based social organisation meant that any meaningful integration of customary practice into governance remained unrealised (Fraenkel, Madraiwiwi & Okole 2014:78, Dinnen 2012:71). Raynor offers a fascinating insight into the potentiality of customary tradition in contemporary governance in a study on the relationship between food insecurity and structural violence and found that traditional leadership and customary practice in the Solomon Islands remains incredibly potent (Raynor 2013:127-47). Raynor found that despite the almost complete absence of state welfare and supervision, the regional communities were provided equal access to food and essential services through traditional customary practices, contrasting starkly with Honiara's urban poor who struggle with food insecurity and fundamental essential services (Raynor 2013:127-47). Briggs explains that this is an example of how concepts of identity in the Pacific are far more relational than in the west, with community derived traditional governance reflecting the kinds of social organisation and leadership seen above (Brigg 2009:148-161). Brigg argues that only through meaningful integration of customary practice into governance can the Solomon Islands work towards relevant, effective, stable governance (Brigg 2009:156-59).

Governance and Corruption

The issue of corruption in governance in the Solomon Islands is an enormous subject with substantial scholarship having been committed to establish its causes, nature and extent (Larmour 2008:225-239, 2012:20-59,134-150; Walton & Hushang 2021:42-45; Wood 2018:481-494; Fraenkel 2006b:137; McDougall 2014b:5-7; Nanau 2011:20; Hayward-Jones 2008b:5; Dinnen 2002:285-98; Bush & Le Mesurier 2004:7-12). Arkwright and Lamour provide extensive insight into the pre-colonial forms of social organisation and customs that governed the relationships between people and place.

These relationships were more valuable than ideas of material wealth (Arkwright 2003:177-94; Lamour 2012:116-133). Indeed, wealth was measured in the breadth and strengths of an individual's relationships within their communities, and material wealth such as food and shell money were used to facilitate those relationships (Arkwright 2003:177-94). This changed only recently due to the introduction of cash economy and that contemporary Solomon Islanders are as a result bound to concepts of personal status through the accumulation of personal wealth (Foukona 2017:2; Corrin 2003:53-76; Christensen & Mertz 2010; Sodhi 2008:1-19). A fusion of contemporaneous forms of status identification combined with customary concepts of status which can be observed in the 'big man' phenomenon (Sahlins 1963:285-303; Waiko 1993:9), whereby customary modes of patronage are articulated via western concepts of wealth and status (Siota, Carnegie & Allen 2021:34-48). Politicians utilising the 'big man' principle through preferential beneficence to their kinship groups to 'buy votes' is where conflicting interpretations of corruption come into play (Steeves 1996:115-138, 2011; Corbett & Wood 2013b:1-2; Deves 2014:61-70; McDougall 2014b; Wood 2018:481-494).

Broadly speaking there are two broad interpretations of corruption; that of cultural misunderstanding; bribe versus gift or nepotism, versus protecting and nurturing ones family (Lamour 2012:1-19). Corruption in governance in the Solomon Islands is systemic and is a form of governmental extortion and exploitation (Larmour 2008:225-39, 2012:116-133). Culture has often been used to explain or *excuse* acts of corruption. Sir Peter Kenilorea, the nation's first Prime Minister, maintained that corruption had "become embedded in our way of life so much we don't not even realise that our actions are corrupt" (Larmour 2012:17). Audacious assertions such as this undermines the centrality of gift giving, customary reciprocity and patronage within Melanesian customary practice and to conflate, or assume it is conflated with acts of corruption, nepotism, interference and vote buying seen in governance in the Solomon Islands is to pander the notion that non-Western cultural traditions were incapable of telling right from wrong (Lamour 2012:116-133). Timmer offers excellent insight into Melanesian customary dynamics and identifies what are often seen by observers as being contradictory; that of gift giving, and that of commodity (Timmer 2014:482-484).

Timmer's study of the Tolai people of New Britain found that the Tolai are struggling with the customary tradition of interdependence. In much the same way as it occurred in the Solomon Islands, the social obligations to provide mutual support for one another has been manipulated and unsustainably exploited by predatory members of their clans. Notably, the Tolai describe these individuals as "Big Shots". Whereas a "Big Man" in Melanesian society is considered such due to their observance of customary practices of reciprocal interdependence, a "Big Shot" is reserved for those who are essentially criminally exploiting customary practice in order to elevate their social position (Timmer 2014:482-484).

Parties and Politicking

In terms of political practices in the Solomon Islands, the focus of researchers tends to coalesce around constitutional and political party reform, and the decentralisation of power (Fraenkel 2006a:43-67, 2008a:12p; 2012:106-120; Kabutaulaka 2006b:103-116; Corbett & Wood 2013a:320-334; Corbett 2017:198-215). Fraenkel in particular cautions that any analysis between European and Pacific models of governance misreads the causative precedence of both regions current political status quo *ergo* any analytical outcome will be misleading as a result (Fraenkel 2013:195-204). The Eurocentric neo-colonial lens through which many academics, politicians and advisers view governance generates a tendency to not consider 'non-European' forms of governance. This was not entirely the case however, such as the proposed 'Governing Council' system alleged to be more suitable for a 'Melanesian' context being adopted by the Solomon Islands but was overridden by a number of political elites who instead campaigned instead to adopt of full-scale Westminsterist system (Fraenkel 2013:198). Moore also identified the weakness of the political process in the Solomon Islands was that "ideologies are not strong and that new alliances form constantly, often based on the lure of better positions or 'invisible' financial baits (Moore 2007a:179). As Moore sees it; by slavishly adhering to the Westminster style of politicking Solomon Islanders will continue operate in a mindset that treats politics in the Solomon Islands as "a type of business out of which personal profit is expected, with little sense of loyalty to the nation." (Moore 2007a:181).

Fraenkel & Aspinall (2013:17) add to this and note that “lack of strong ideological cleavages” between political parties in the Solomons is a result of localism whereby the interests of political candidates is tribal, kinship based and ultimately self-interested. The core ideology in the Solomon Islands is pragmatism (Fraenkel & Aspinall 2013:17). Fraenkel & Aspinall believe that for politicians in the Solomon Islands a career in politics in the Solomon Islands is “a route to economic prosperity...and an ability to provide jobs for kinsfolk” (Fraenkel & Aspinall 2013:29). Scholars illustrate how this translates into political machinations and fluid political allegiances with political parties themselves that were weak, loose associations (Kabutaulaka 2006:43-69; Fraenkel 2006:43-69). As a result of this inconsistency, parties cannot hold onto an enduring constituency as they were “not sufficiently strong in binding the loyalty of elected members to ensure that the party controls their legislative behaviour” (Kabutaulaka 2006b:104). The willingness of MPs to cross the floor or otherwise forego the party line results in a high turnover of governments severely impacts effective governance and policy continuity (Fraenkel 2006:43-69; 2012:106-120)

A high turnover of governments engenders chronic political instability, with the electoral process and weak party system encouraging local mandates as opposed to the national interest (Deves 2014:61-71). Identity-based parties are divisive and exclusivist, and two party adversarial systems clash with Melanesian customary law and tradition (Moore 2008b:386-407, 2007a:179, Kabutaulaka 2006:43-69; Fraenkel 2006:43-69). Fraenkel and Aspinall note identity-based politics in the Solomon Islands means that a candidate’s personal tribal allegiance is of more concern than party allegiance (Fraenkel & Aspinall 2013:2). Fraenkel and Aspinall explain that political parties are simply “a matter of short-term pragmatism and a product of the legal requirement that candidates must be nominated by a national party” (Fraenkel & Aspinall 2013:2). Policy makers must address this through comprehensive and coherent political party systems reform (Fraenkel 2008a:155-64). Fraenkel explains that these reforms will increase political stability by reducing the need for fragile coalitions, minimise floor crossing and bind political parties, stronger parties being useful in stabilising popular government as well as reducing abuses of votes of ‘no confidence’.

However, this may “remove the ability to dislodge a corrupt administration or entrench an unpopular government” (Fraenkel 2008a:166). It must be recalled that political parties in the Solomon Islands are essentially vehicles for ‘big men’ to get access to the top job (Fraenkel 2008a:155-64). As per the dictates of clientelism, while direct plebiscites would ensure the election of the most popular official, this will always favour the more populous group which is anathema to the stability of such a diverse ethno-insular polity (Fraenkel 2008a:155-64). Reilly suggests the frequent turnover of government indicated democratic processes in the Solomons were quite mature but was overshadowed by the absence of economic prosperity, which Reilly describes as ‘Africanisation’ (Reilly 2000:261-268).

Federalism

The literature regarding concepts of de-centralisation of power includes federalised models of state-based governance alongside constitutional devolution and remains an area of interest for many observers (Saunders 2013:41-46; Nanau 2002:60; Wilikilagi 2009:6). Nanau describes the nation’s ongoing identity crisis and that the concept of national identity was tenuous at best, the absence of this unifying national identity hindering the ability of the nation to identify the appropriate structures of governance (Nanau 2002:1-18). Allegiance to kinship or tribal groups predominate, which is reflected in the not unreasonable perception that “elected government is a device for representing local rather than national interests” (Reilly 2000:265). Powell and Reilly examining ethnic heterogeneity, constitutional devolution and the feasibility of federalised governance in micro-states found ethnic fractionalisation undermined the performance of the Solomon Islands since independence (Powell 2004:49-63; Reilly 2000:261-268). Reilly found that and that there was a “strong and statistically significant negative correlation between fragmentation and prosperity” (Reilly 2004:481). However, Reilly contends that due to the fact that the government sector is larger than the private sector (where opportunities are minimal) in the Solomon Islands, and because a centralised state apparatus controls access to wealth derived from foreign aid and domestic revenue, “there is a tendency to view the state itself as the main avenue for accessing wealth” (Reilly 2000:266).

Reilly suggests that as a result; most political activity is not about governing and democratic process, but a competition between rivals over access to wealth. “The democratic process of elections...are a primary means of accessing goods, services and other resources” (Reilly 2000:266). Nanau asserts this centrality of this power and opportunity has meant that autonomy has been a topic avoided by Honiarian elites who feared giving more autonomy to distinct groups and administrative entities would lead to succession (Nanau 2002:17). The result is an “unstable executives, an unrepresentative legislature and a fragmented and personalised political party system which lacks roots in the community” (Reilly 2004:481). An example of the effect of centralisation can be observed with the suspension of Area Councils by the Ulufa’alu government in 1999 where the apparatus of governance widened, leaving communities with an even more pervasive sense of disengagement from governance (Mae 2010:6). This naturally has created an environment of strong distrust in central government, which is “viewed as being run by an elite whose interests run opposite to the people at the grassroots” (Scales 2005:140).

Communities are “sceptical that the central government can ever deliver because it is remote and seen as inherently corrupt” (Scales 2005:142). While the pro-federalist position is being based on the assertion that the provinces were more in step with their communities, “many think that state government will also be inscrutable and corrupt” (Scales 2005:142). Researchers like Powell, Eriksen and Kabutaulaka identify ethnic fragmentation as a major issue in state performance and suggest decentralisation via federalism could improve institutional cohesion and relevance (Powell 2007:5; Eriksen 2010:70-94, 174-197; Kabutaulaka 2001:1-19). Powell (2007:5) postulated that a contemporary counter to fractionalisation is to utilise that diversity through a form of federalism that devolves constitutional power to ethnically homogenous groups that have achieved internal cooperative equilibria. Powell believed a federal system of government with a high ratio of constitutional districts to national population may be appropriate for nations like the Solomon Islands where heterogeneity is high there is a low level of economic integration between those communities (Powell 2006:53-69).

Saunders raises concerns regarding this, cautioning the relationship between ethno-insularity and devolution and the potential for secession or separation whereby increasing the autonomy of provinces could indeed engender an environment of ethno-separatism (Saunders 2013:41-46). Another issue raised by Reilly when examining the effects of ethnic diversity on a state's performance, was the issue of what ethnicity and identity actually is and how it is measured (Reilly 2004:479-493). Reilly notes that ethnic identity is not static and is likely to evolve or even be re-invented to suit a particular problem or purpose, presenting a major problem for research examining ethnicity and de-centralisation (Reilly 2004:479-493). Scales argues the point is mute, noting that were the Solomon Islands to experience succession, demographic imbalances between new 'states' would likely lead to inter-island/state conflict, and in any case, the burden of autonomous self-administration would be fiscally impossible (Scales 2005:140-48). Powell concludes that ultimately that monocentric governance (essential for the Solomon Islands to receive international recognition, defence and diplomacy) and polycentric governance (crucial for national integrity, ideally integrating customary institutions) are both vital to good governance (Powell 2007:7). Scales aligns with this view, emphasising the better use of the existing local government (Scales 2005:140-48). Scales argues that, quite simply, improving the relationship between customary based organisations and systems with the state "may do more for development though broad-based participation than federalising" (Scales 2005:140).

Women in Governance

The participation of women in governance in the Solomon Islands has been the focus of researchers, particularly the role women played in socio-cultural organisations and associations, and their relationship with the state and governance (Scheyvens 2003:24-43; Batalibasi *et al.* 2019:28-36, 47-49; Corbett & Wood 2006:101-128; Soaki 2017:95-114; Wiltshire, Batley, Ridolfi & Rogers 2020a:3-5). During the Crisis Period, Pollard (2003:44-60) found that despite civil conflict and the near total collapse of the nation's economy, women's groups and associations continued to provide services to women, particularly those in Honiara, supplementing and in some cases replacing government services, particularly in health, education and family services.

Scheyvens (2003:24-43) also highlights the enormously important role that Church based women's organisations play in the lives of many indigenous women and suggested that the lack of academic interest in Church based women's groups is best described as an aversion to the perception that religiously based women's organisations' conservative underpinnings. Indeed, women's groups also engage in strategic activities for the empowerment of women, including popular protest, political engagement, as well as workshops focused on women's affirmation and education (Scheyvens 2003:24-43). The evolution of women's roles and rights from the pre-independence to the post-independent periods and the effects of customary practice upon this process (Corrin 2006:101-28; McDougall 2014a:199-224; Monson 2010:1-6; Maetala 2010:35-72; Jalal 2009:5-23). Monson noted the devolution of the role of women in land management and identified customary practice, the State and Christianity colluding between customary and state law to allow a male minority to dominate land ownership in Honiara (Monson 2010:1-6; Maetala 2010:48-51).

Maetala also noted this paradox where despite most land inheritance in the Solomon Islands being matrilineal, the administration, transactions of and use of that land was male controlled (Maetala 2010:51-58)., McDougall's observation was that while many applaud the adoption of traditional or customary modes of governance, customary tradition as it is currently practiced tends to reinforce male dominance (McDougall 2014:199-224). Because the state's use of western style legal adversarialism is more akin to Melanesian concepts of warfare and confrontation, males assume that this competitive system falls within the purview of the male warrior archetype and as such outside the remit of females (Maetala 2010:45-55). According to Monson traditional customary practice would have allowed for females to have a role in arbitration 'behind the scenes' in a western legal sense, however, these efforts are in vain as the system only recognises "those negotiations that occur inside public arenas such as land acquisition proceedings or court hearings" (Monson 2010:2). McDougall cautions policy makers to reappraise custom as it relates to the rights and entitlements of women in contemporary Solomon Islands, particularly the fact for women living in Honiara, the social goal posts have changed (McDougall 2014:199-224; Jalal 2009:5-8).

Monson notes that men are increasingly listed as the customary landowner in land registers, a trend likely to increase as “more land will be held by families and handed down from father to son, rather than being held by a tribe and handed down the matrilineal line” (Monson 2010:4). Despite these challenges, researchers note the role of women in governance continues to evolve and grow. Waring illustrates this process, highlighting the lifelong challenges women face in Honiara, where the barriers to achieving educational and employment goals is exponentially more difficult due to gender related economic and cultural factors (Waring 2010). Perceptions of females in leadership roles and female participation in the political process indicate a broad acceptance of women in political office (Batalibasi 2019:14, 22-33; Wiltshire, Batley, Ridolfi *et al.* 2020a:3). Cox observes that women are also challenging the dominance of men through exerting soft power, such as in one community where women challenged male dominance in the education system through the establishing a community educational centre “over which men had no control” (Cox 2017:75). Through the expression of soft power, and the successful delivery of positive tangible outcomes for the community, women were able to achieve a degree of emancipation and community leadership that was recognised and supported by the men in the community (Cox 2017:69-94). However, overall, there remains considerable impediments to female participation in public life: conservative customary values regarding female education, the resilience of traditional gender roles, and that modern concepts of women’s rights and ideologies of female socio-political autonomy are seen by women in the Solomon Islands “as foreign concepts, opposed to *kastom* and to the teachings of the church” (Soaki 2017:97-98).

Development

The historiography of development in the Solomon Islands is bound to land. Allen notes that conflict usually manifests in the Solomon Islands and other Melanesian states on the basis of issues such as land ownership and management, ethnicity and nationalism, and at the core of these conflicts was resource-based economics (Allen 2013:152-61). Development, social-economic inequality, identity, ethnicity and socioeconomic justice are all fundamentally connected to how land is administrated (Allen 2013:152-61).

Christensen & Mertz observed a lack of study into the socio-economic and ecological processes of small island societies at temporal and analytical scales (Christensen & Mertz 2010:278-87). Scholars such as Sage, Nanau and Frazer postulate that cultural diversity found in the Solomon Islands presents a challenge to centralised governance, as well as exploring how to utilise this diversity in working towards equitable development outcomes among communities (Sage, Menzies *et al.* 2008:1-34; Nanau 1998:184; Frazer 1995:95-109). Tyler agrees, noting that in a post-colonial globalised economy, all resource management involves competing claims of ownership. Tyler found that this often led to conflict between communities (Tyler 1990:263-280). As Haque noted, the issue the Solomon Islands faced was to address the material greed of individuals or communities (not cultural practice or belief), and to overcome the 'perverse' material incentives involved (Haque 2012:1-16). As Allen, Fraenkel and others found, this was observed in the Solomon Islands during the tensions, where militants and politicians manipulated compensatory practices for their own aggrandisement (Allen 2005:56-71, 2008b:54-57; Fraenkel 2004:9-11; McDonald 2003:1-95; Deves 2014:61-70; Aswani 2008:171-194).

Allan noted that this was most apparent latter stages of the conflict: businessmen, politicians, and ex-militants were all clearly benefiting from the instrumentalisation of violence and disorder (Allen 2005:56-71). Nanau and Allen also recognised that during the lead up to the Crisis, respect for Kastom in relation to moving through, settling or developing land also began to erode, with the failure of these customary protocols being adhered to severely polarising the already deepening chasm between Guale landowners and Malaitan settlers (Nanau 2011:46-50; Allen 2012:163-80). Localised grievances around land and settlement were politicized and broadened in scope, weaponizing distinct competing narratives, both of which are seeking establish what they consider their legitimate claim to property rights (Allen 2012:163-80). As Kofana explains, traditional ideas of legal claim to land can vary wildly compared to western concepts of ownership. Kofana clarifies that landowners in the Solomon Islands were 'genetic tenants on land', and recognising one's genetic points of origin was at the heart of an individual's sense of identity (Kofana 2014:32-33).

Allen notes that misconceptions in relation to land tenure reform in the Solomon Islands reflect a broader misunderstanding of Melanesian customary land tenure (Allen 2008:1-5). Scholars like Bourke and Allen determined that while this very complex system of genetic right to land underpins customary practice, it inhibits institutional investment (Allen, Bourke, Evans *et al.* 2006a-e). As Allen, Bourke, Evans *and others explain*, despite the fact that large scale commercial agricultural operations could be successful in the right circumstances, there is a lack of understanding by development practitioners that customary landholdings remain the backbone of the subsistence economy, and commercial development puts severe pressure on the livelihoods of Solomon Islanders, and will certainly be resisted (Allen, Bourke, Evans *et al.* 2006a-e). Chand and Aqorau suggest that it was the failure of RAMSI to address these issues had retarded the ability for the Solomon Islands to claw its way back to its pre-crisis economic position, despite millions of dollars in aid (Chand 2005:1-17; Aqorau 2008:246-268). Many of the solutions to this problem have been 'people focused', whereby the customary land tenure system be taken advantage of by its traditional owners (Aqorau 2008:246-268).

But reform must encourage genuine economic development (Aqorau 2004:113-22; Kofana 2014:29-40). This is why it is essential that customary management practices open up customary land for sustainable commercial development, further enhancing the developmental opportunities open to traditional landowners (Bryant-Tokalau 2018; Roughan, Tagini *et al.* 2011:1-14; Welchman 1994). This applies Honiara and its peri-urban zone, which is an admixture of state and customary and private land holdings. Honiarans use urban market gardens to grow cash crops like betel, fruit and vegetables to supplement meagre incomes. Maebuta and others argue that this needs to be supplemented with income generating enterprises, as well as land management in keeping with customary practice (Maebuta & Maebuta 2009:118-131; Maebuta & Dorovolomo 2011:263-74). Fraenkel, Matthew and Brock cite an example of an oil-palm plantation operation in the northern plains of Guadalcanal where communities balance large-scale agricultural development with customary subsistence (Fraenkel, Matthew & Brock 2010:64-75).

Kali`uae suggests long-term leasehold tenure of customary land should be made available to individual tenants commercially and a framework for this purpose be drafted without undermining the cultural political, religious and historical dimensions of customary land (Kali`uae 2005:18-41). Williams agrees, noting inefficient land management had cost the nation millions in lost revenues which would be ameliorated through the codification of customary law pertaining to land ownership and usage (Williams 2011:1-6). AusAID found that in Honiara, customary systems of tenure are subject to intense pressure from a globalised economy, as well as technological changes, population growth, and shifts in lifestyle aspirations all placing developmental pressure on land-owners (AusAID 2008). As Chand and Yala note: regardless of ownership, the informal nature of these developments, with an absence of basic services, crime, conflict, and poverty, leads to slumification (Chand & Yala 2008:85-107). Filer, McDonnell, and Allen found struggle over land access was more intense in urban and peri-urban areas, with Chand noting population growth and density being the main contributing factors (Filer, McDonnell & Allen 2017:1-55; Chand & Yala 2008:85-107).

Filer, McDonnell, and Allen argue it is the result urban spaces in Honiara being a patchwork of title claims, some are covered by formal land titles, some are occupied by their customary owners, and others whose legal status remains uncertain (Filer, McDonnell, & Allen 2017:11). Corrin in particular offers excellent literature on the legal aspects of customary land tenure, its status in common law (Corrin 2009:1-39; 2011:1-25) with Corrin & Zorn noting the institutional issues surrounding the application of customary law to common land titles and other contemporary concepts of land ownership (Corrin & Zorn 2005:144-168). Corrin posits that despite customary law being acknowledged constitutionally by the Solomon Islands, changes have been introduced through the written law that undermine customary legal precepts through inaccurately interpreting and representing customary concepts in common law (Corrin 2008:305-333). The dynamics between the globalised marketplace and customary ownership of land needs to be framed in the context of globalised economics as being unavoidable realities.

And as Slatter, Wairiu and Kabutaulaka noted, the income they generate remains essential to many communities (Slatter 2006:23-42; Kabutaulaka 2006a:239-258; Wairiu 2006:409-416). Naitoro cautions however, that resource policies must “take into account key tribal interests and goals, including collective landownership, kinship systems and cultural rights” (Naitoro 2000:132) to avoid the potential for conflict and socio-economic instability. Studies into the mining industry in the Solomon Islands reflect this dilemma between development and traditional Melanesian customary values, where conflict between Weberian western institutions and traditional Melanesian customary values hinders development, and that reforms must bridge the divide between sustainable development and customary rights and values (Tagini 2014:17-28; Tolia & Patterson 2005:149-59). As Tolia and Patterson explain, the iniquitous distribution of mining royalties to customary landowners (Tolia & Patterson 2005:149-59), highlights what Naitoro and Tagini would describe as the exploitability of the ambiguous status the rights and entitlements customary land holders have in relation to large scale resource extraction (Naitoro 2000:132-142; Tagini 2014:17-28).

Aqorau describes this process in effect with the nation’s maritime sector, particularly the global tuna industry. The global tuna supply, while controlled by Japan, the US and the European Union, most tuna sourced is from Pacific nations like the Solomon Islands. Aqorau found that the challenge facing traditional custodians of maritime resources is regulating, managing, and protecting its maritime resources in the face of intense commercial pressure (Aqorau 2004:113-22). Aswani found that, promisingly, typical characteristics of ‘customary sea tenure’ (CST) overlap with contemporary science based approaches to fisheries management (Aswani 2005:285-307). It was also found that CST was flexible formed into a variety of dynamic institutions and processes which can be highly effective (Aswani, Gurney *et al.* 2013:1402–1409). Aswani cautions there is a limited understanding within communities of the long-term effects of marine resource extraction (Aqorau 2003:35-6). Aswani believes the hybridisation of CST required communities receive marine conservation and rehabilitation education to address this (Aswani 2011:14–30).

Aswani also believes communities need to better articulate and coordinate maritime development in these communities to improve their commercial competitiveness (Aswani 2011:14–30). Wairiu identified another key issue for scholars and observers of resource extraction in the Solomon Islands are the long-term effects upon stability caused by the rampant corruption surrounding the awarding of commercial contracts, particularly in the logging industry (Wairiu 2007:233-46). As Pauku noted, the nation's forests are an essential part of customary land tenure, a system that has successfully supported a robust village-based subsistence gardening system for generations (Pauku 2009). However, Pauku found that customary land ownership and management constrained large-scale development, with issues of the legal status of land ownership and use as well as what Pauku described as the inevitable conflict between landowners, developers, and government institutions (Pauku 2009).

Describing the history of the logging industry and the commercial practices of the industry at around the time of the tensions, Frazer (1997) found that mishandling of the logging industry by the Solomon Islands government due to nepotism and greed amongst government officials being so rife that confrontation between landowners and government authorities erupted on a number of occasions (Frazer 1997:39-72). Despite logging on Guadalcanal being at a lower level than other regions, it remains a serious issue affecting customary landowners within the last remaining timber reserves (Wairiu & Nanau 2011:1-15). Decades of forest rehabilitation will be required to restore this hitherto sustainable resource (Katovai *et al.* 2021:1-13). However, Aswani and Racelis caution that the very motivations that underwrite such project can create tensions between communities, particularly as to the distribution of wealth generated as well as the status and use of customary land undergoing reforestation (Aswani & Racelis 2011:26–38).

Governance and Religion

Studies on religiosity in Melanesia are an excellent pathway toward understanding how belief systems and spiritual practices form a central pillar of customary identity in the Solomon Islands, particularly the mythology underpinning the ethnogenesis of Melanesian identity (Scott 2007:24-36, 2011:1-32, 2013:49-77; Oroi 2016:183-201). Christianity has evolved from its origins as a colonial device to westernise Melanesians to become a central aspect that defines their culture in opposition to contemporary western ideas and practices (Daichi 2007:33-52). Religious practice thus forms an ideological or spiritual bulwark against perceived failings of the globalised world, serving as the source of ways people can solve problems seen as originating from foreign powers (Daichi 2007:36). McDougall & Tomlinson argue that this intense religiosity forms the conceptual basis through which many Solomon Islanders conceptualise national and global politics (McDougall & Tomlinson 2013:1-22). Indeed, religious practice and spiritual belief has always been an essential element of Melanesian cultural heritage.

In a post-colonial environment, these cultural narratives act as powerful forces around which communities coalesce (Hvidsing 2011:51-89; McDougall & Tomlinson 2013:2-13; White 2013:171-197; McDougall & Kere 2011:141-162). McDougall highlights this phenomenon amongst communities in Western Province and noted that social organisation varied between congregations which reflecting the leverage the church had over how communities functioned (McDougall 2008:1-20). McDougall and Hviding believe that this is an indication that communities are exploring alternative forms of governance and self-regulation and influencing broader cultural and political practice in the process (McDougall 2008:1-20; Hviding 2011:51-89). White's study into the relationship between customary leadership, church and government illustrated that Christian churches were also actively involved in public political debates about the governance with their congregations (White 2013:171-197). Maebuta and Carter both suggest this is unsurprising, citing the role Christian denominations played as arbitrators and peace envoys during the crisis and post-conflict period, illustrating the *gravitas* and respect religious leaders and organisations elicit from within their communities (Maebuta 2011:1-14; Carter 2012).

Maebuta describes the incredible efforts of Christian denominations with assisting the government in implementing post-conflict reconstruction programs aimed at community-based reconciliation and family development initiatives (Maebuta 2011:1-14). Wairiu explains that in daily life, governance is a fusion of Church, customary and institutional bodies combining *ad hoc* to develop management capacity (Wairiu 2006:411). Kuschel, Takiika, `Angiki and Upton found this blurring between government, education, church and NGOs meant projects and policies can become disjointed and uncoordinated (Kuschel, Takiika & `Angiki 2005:211-54; Upton 2006:16). Wairiu found this uncoordinated approach is further hampered by popular mistrust of government, with many believing it was innately in opposition to *Kastom*, and the source of alienation between “people from their family or tribe, land and culture” (Wairiu 2006:409). Upton notes this contrasts with church and community associations aligned with “traditional methods of organising (and) contributed more directly to peoples well-being that do institutionalised systems of formal government” (Upton 2006:1-17). Unsurprisingly, observers suggest it is essential that all agencies’ delivery of services be presented a unified, consultative and coordinated way for this dilemma to be addressed (Wairiu 2006:410; Kuschel, Takiika & `Angiki 2005:211-54).

Chapter 4. Methodology

Applied Ethnography

This project is an analysis of the factors Honiarans perceived to impede effective governance in the Solomon Islands. It utilised an empirical epistemological framework that placed the experience of governance by Solomon Islanders living in Honiara at the centre of the research. It investigates what changes, particularly regarding customary authority, would be necessary to produce effective governance. This centralisation of Indigenous experience (Tomaselli, Dyll & Francis 2008) draws upon concepts of ethnographic research by non-Indigenous researchers whereby they must “recognise the power dynamic which is embedded in the relationship with their subjects” (Tuhiwai-Smith 1999:173). Researchers are privy to ideas and information that are precious and personal and must be regarded as such. Further, there is the risk that the researcher interprets information within an exogenous theoretical framework that influences their interpretation of factual data.

Data, instead of being interpreted within cultural context, will be interpreted through conceptual principles that have no cultural application or relevance. As a result, any assessments or judgements drawn from that process will likely distort, exaggerate, misinterpret, and assume. The central tenet of this project is that it was to be a series of narratives driven by Honiarans themselves and their relationship with governance. This project is a collaboration between researcher and subject where the researcher is a conduit between the ideas and opinions of an Indigenous community and the global community, by way of a series of interpretations. In this regard, this work is sympathetic to ideas that place Indigenous experiences of Postcolonialism at the centre of research (Smith 2003). This study is attentive to key methodological approaches that describes the means by which a non-Indigenous researcher can perform quality research that is respectful of Indigenous concerns (Tuhiwai-Smith 1992). This model locates the Indigenous experience at the centre of the research (Smith 2003:14). In this process, ideas, and issues about governance that Indigenous participants most want to emphasise directly informs the structure and emphasis of the project.

By design it reflects the emphasis that the community itself places on those issues, and importantly, offer beneficial outcomes to their community (Smith 1992). In this process, the role of the researcher is to provide a platform through which Indigenous concerns about governance can develop and formulate solutions to poor governance that reflect the outcomes that those communities envision. It asked the Respondent how effective was the central government in the provision of community services? Did Respondents feel that the electoral system works? Are issues of familial obligation and loyalty to *Wantok* working for or against good governance? Has the existing system of governance, and long-standing points of contention such the justice system, police, and land management bodies, made efforts to address community concerns? Or are issues that fed the crisis in the 2000s, such as land disputes, unemployment, and corruption still undermining community cohesion? There have been efforts in the past to interact in such ways with Honiarans, but these efforts were closely bound up with the Crisis Period, its aftermath, and their views on the RAMSI mission (RAMSI 2010).

Methodologically this process is sympathetic to the *Emic* anthropological model (Murchison 2010:26-7). The *Emic* approach is where interpretations of cultural phenomenon come from within the culture itself. The information gathered from these Respondents was collated and codified to generate prevalence modelling and utilised as a basis for suggesting what structural elements of governance needed review. This aspect of the research draws upon *Etic* aspects of anthropology, and as such, the methodology is an intersection between Indigenous experience and exogenous codification of those experiences for analytical purposes. Yet, the researcher needs to be mindful not to overemphasise *Emic* versus *Etic* and be considerate of the interplay of both (Murchison 2010:27). The method of analysis is a hybrid approach utilising elements of Grounded Theory particularly substantive interview data coding and interpretive anthropological approaches where all data can be codified and analysed comparatively (Thornberg & Charmaz 2012:44-67; Corbin & Strauss 1990:3-21; Strauss & Corbin 1994:273-285; Glaser 1992).

‘Self’ in Ethnographic Research

The anthropologist Clifford Geertz noted that the ethnographer “does not, and...largely cannot, perceive what his informants perceive” (1974:30). Though this observation is logically redundant (as no sentient being can perceive the perceptions of another), it is a simple way to remind oneself that any researcher, even one from within a culture, cannot truly understand the perceptions of an informant. Thus, positioning oneself as the researcher in contrast to those being researched is an essential aspect to any research involving traditional or customary practices and beliefs. This project is a particularly interesting intersection of ideas in this regard, as the author was a direct participant in the RAMSI mission to restore law and order and witnessed the efforts to establish good governance in the Solomon Islands. Twenty years later this project seeks to assess those efforts; from the perspective of Honiarians. This resonates with more recent developments in autoethnography, a Postmodern philosophy where the researcher themselves form part of the subject/object of the research and reflexivity is at its core (Edwards 2013).

Autoethnographies are highly personalized accounts that draw upon the “experience of the researcher for the purposes of extending sociological understanding” (Sparkes 2000:21). Naturally, at the centre of the process, is the self: “Despite their wide-ranging characteristics, auto-ethnographic writings all begin with the researcher’s use of the subjective self” (Wall 2006:8). Critics of the theory often cite self-indulgence, narcissism, introspection, and lack of rigour as key concerns (Atkinson & Coffey 1999), though pursued with rigour, the method can contribute to knowledge (Wall 2006:8). The author’s experience of the Solomon Islands and the motivations behind this project need to be understood as a personal narrative framed by the larger story of the Australian Government’s official involvement in the restoration of law and order in the Solomon Islands. In 2003, the author deployed to the Solomon Islands as an Australian Regular Army intelligence specialist and linguist as part of Operation Anode, the Australian Defence Force’s contribution to the RAMSI. My role was to work with the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and other participating agencies with the capture of key militant leaders of the MEF and the GRA. We were very successful in our capture of key leadership elements, as well as the disarmament of militants.

Collectively, fellow participants sincerely expected that removing key antagonists would diffuse the immediate conflict, and that in time, order would not be long coming. However, as an armed peacekeeper, standing between two 'sides' to prevent violence, it became quite apparent the Solomon Islands was more fractured than first imagined. The immediate impression was that it was a clash between Indigenous and western ideas and customs. Walking east from Honiara city was to experience a transition from ex-militants and Rastafarian gangs smoking marijuana in urban ghettos, to traditional Guale villages whose inhabitants subsist using traditional farming and fishing practices. The overarching impression was of the vulnerability of communities. Not simply in the immediate sense of their exposure to militants at the time, but in an existential sense. There was simply no sense of safety or longevity. How would they protect themselves? Did the traditional customs and rules they impose on their lives make any difference when armed gangs ranged through the area? Would it make a difference after we helped them disarm and disband the militants?

The mishandling and neglect of policing and the law as well as the enormous disparity between urban and rural populations was stark. The thin line between order and chaos was particularly confronting in one encounter. In mid-2003, the author was contemplating a swim with some local children at Kakambona, a quiet beach adjacent to a primary school. The youngsters went on to explain quite nonchalantly that this was where people had been herded into the sea and machine-gunned. Startled, and intent on investigating this crime, when the author queried as what had been done to find these people, they shrugged, disinterested. It was a deeply disturbing image of the veneer between order and chaos. This informed the lasting perception in the author's mind that the structural changes that had been applied to the Solomon Islands since the conflict two decades ago would remain only as long as the sitting government had the inclination and capability to enforce those changes. However, the ongoing socio-political instability the nation experienced suggests that if anything, RAMSI's fundamental shortcoming was its attempt to restore institutions of governance that had proven to be (and were very likely to remain), manifestly inadequate for the Solomon Islands in the twenty-first century.

These experiences of violence and chaos, optimism, and resilience underpin perceptions developed during the Crisis Period between 2003 and 2004. Believing that an individual will not subconsciously draw upon stereotypes and a particular array of sense data from their experiences would be dishonest (Wevers 2006). Furthermore, as a non-Indigenous researcher, one must be accountable for how the research problem is developed and remain cognisant of the effect upon those being researched. This study endeavours to be attuned to the processes of 'decolonising' research currently underway within ethnographic practice and "when undertaking research, either across cultures or within a minority culture... [to] recognise the power dynamic which is embedded in the relationship with their subjects" (Tuhiwai-Smith 1999:173-6). This resonates particularly in my role as researcher in the Solomon Islands. In this case, the researcher is a western white male, and a former soldier, one who had spent considerable time in their nation as a peacekeeper. For the participants these factors, depending upon their gender or age for example, can influence the perceptions of the researcher, good and bad, drawn from their individual experiences (Dinnen, Sloan *et al.* 2019).

It is important to find a balance between accounting for these perceptions and biases, and the recognition that in many circumstances the researcher can also be conceived of as, simply put, a fellow human being. Indeed, being overly conscious of intercultural meta-narratives obscures the view of the researcher, as it dehumanises the relationship between themselves and the people they are communicating with. Understanding 'self' within the research within the Solomon Islands in this study is not one of 'power dynamics', or Postcolonial narratives. The experiences are intensely personal and evolved over two decades. It is defined as much by conflict as it is by interactions such as 'Uncle Aaron' swimming in a pool with Lucky, the young son of family friends. In his eyes, the author represents nothing more than one of his parent's mates; his 'seahorse bike', so named for the key role as Lucky's pool wrestling buddy. Thus, the project was informed about the current state of inter-ethnic relationships in the community through playing rugby late in into the night with one of the local clubs, as well as testing the litmus of ethnic tension through directly seeking that information.

In this context, 'Inter-ethnic tension' was a concept that became spectacularly complicated to pin down when playing rugby with a team consisting of Guale, Malaitan, Tongan, Fijian, Australian, Belgian, and Maori locals in Eastern Honiara living, working, and playing together. Twenty years ago, as a peacekeeper, such a scene would have been nigh impossible. Now, it occurs every Thursday night. Understanding one's role as researcher comes from friendships, connections, and experiences both old and new. It is not paternalistic, jingoistic, nor romantic sentimentalism. It is a relationship borne over many years between human beings from different cultures learning about each other; one's intentions, ideas, and feelings. The intrinsic element is the desire to understand and care, not simply for the dignity of the individuals, but also the dignity of their ideas, stories, fears, and angers. To do so, one truly intent on conducting good research must focus first on the humanity of themselves and others. The antagonism between Postcolonial international interventionism and latent nationalism and xenophobia is in itself a fundamentally relevant aspect to the process of understanding the role and impact of governance in the Solomon Islands (Dinnen 2008:51-78). This project will go some way to clarify the extent to which these ideas of 'Postcolonialism', 'Interventionism' and 'ethnicity' play into the lives of Honiarans, by asking Honiarans themselves.

Data Collection Process

Supported by UniSQ HREC approval (H16REA227), the data for this thesis was collected in late December 2018, and between 15 May 2019 and 23 May 2019. Based in Vuhokesa ward in central Honiara and Kukum Ward in eastern Honiara, neighbouring communities were surveyed no further than one day's return drive from the city centre (see Figure 1:102). An aspect of this project was that it was conducted prior to, and just after the 2019 General Elections in April 2019. These elections were the first to be held since the end of the RAMSI mission in 2017. This offered a unique opportunity to survey Honiarans during the midst of an enormously important period of the nation's political history. The survey and interview process was conducted simultaneously. Assisted by local contacts and key community leaders, a conscious effort was made to visit as many ethnically distinct areas within the peri-urban and urban areas as possible.



Figure 1. Honiara City and Peri-Urban Zone, Solomon Islands Department of Lands and Survey, 2006.

The aim was to generate as broad a representation as possible of the communities in Honiara and its surrounding areas. The key concern regarding the data collection field phase was the accurate codification of biographic, multiple-choice, and free-form data to ensure all three forms were bound together to retain contextual relevance of the information, preserving the integrity of the data when certain parameters are removed or altered when the data was being tested. This was of key importance when introducing data from the fourth key source, the historical record (i.e. Literature Review and Background). Recent work in the region regarding narrative and identity inform the theoretical backdrop to this work. It encourages renewed focus on revealing interpretations of Indigenous people's understanding of their role in how governance affects them and how they can affect governance in turn (Gounder 2015; Keown 2007; Corbett 2017). The approach was to set the baseline of enquiry as an anthropologist focused entirely upon the need to look for interpretations from outside the dialectic driven by dominant narratives, whether NGOs, the existing apparatus of governance, or domestic and international state and non-state actors. To achieve this in a practical sense was relatively straight forward.

It simply required a focused campaign within targeted communities to gather un-sanitised responses from interviewees in their own words as to their own understanding of governance and what they think does and does not work for them and their society. The incentive to participate was driven by engaging with individuals individually and to make it clear that the survey and interview were designed to help them have a say about their country and how it is governed. Data was collected from the urban and peri-urban populations of Honiara. The approach was to construct a body of data that correlated with key replicable demographical categorisations (Appendix B:281). These categories include familial and community roles and status (including traditional hierarchical manifestations), socio-economic roles and status as well as ethnicity, religion, gender, and age. This was supplemented by demographic data previously collected by local governmental bodies and NGOs. Interviews and surveys were conducted over a single field phase and an attempt was made to capture as broad a cross-section of the many ethnic groupings as possible. The ethnic communities expatriated either under duress or through economic necessity from their original island communities afford special insight into life as a minority ethnicity for example. On the socio-economic front, it was crucial that both rural and urban populations were approached. The importance of recording the experiences of both population groups should not be underestimated as the disparity with the distribution of government resources and the prevalence of ethno-centricity within government during the Crisis Period was such that it remains an area of special interest.

Interview Process

Interviews were typically conducted at roadside market stands, within the homes of Respondents, on the grounds of university campuses, and occasionally within workplaces. Conducting surveys in the street was found to be very effective as this often drew the interest of passers-by, who would in turn participate. Interview formats were semi-structured and conducted in English, though the process was often explained in *Solomons Pijin*. The project utilised the “case interview” format as opposed to the “key informant” approach, though upon particular occasions, key informants were utilised. This method should yield better results in the context of statistically testing a hypothesis.

In this case, the preferred style of governance among Honiarans. The work done by Peltó in the use of case interviews informs the core approach within this study who notes that unlike key informant interviews “case interviews have a core of semi-structured topics that are the same for all cases” (Peltó 2013:158). The reason semi-structured interviews were preferable for this study is that this project is seeking to record what the Honiarans think about governance, and semi-structured interviews encourage this. The interviews were conversational and encouraged the participant to freely engage with the question within the context provided by the researcher. It ensured that the results of the study were based in Indigenous experience and not solely arrived at through interpretative bias. In the process of the semi-structured interview the researcher and the participant were involved in a collaborative effort to build mutual understanding of the issue or matter being discussed. In this way “meanings and understandings [were] created in an interaction, which is effectively a co-production, involving the construction or reconstruction of knowledge” (Mason 2002:62).

An important consideration regarding unstructured interviews is that they are usually based on a longer-term relationship between the ethnographer and the participant and that the interview is only a chapter in a longer-term relationship (Davies 2008:94-95). It is a shared relationship between the researcher and the participants which is expected to continue beyond the interview phase (Davies 2008:94-95). Whereas completely unstructured interviews were an organic and unplanned occurrence, the semi-structured interview contained element of control, such as a set time for a dialogue, and an element of direction, such as thematic questions or prompts. There is less of an expectation of a long-term relationship underpinning a semi-structured interview and for this reason, a semi-structured format was the more pragmatic choice for this research. Fact checking opinions of events against public records, news reports and so on was also a useful approach in verifying the cogency and accuracy of opinions and issues raised during these interviews. When these diverged, it provided an opportunity to investigate what underpinned a Respondent’s bias and how this in turn led to a desire to minimise or exaggerate or mislead.

English and Solomons *Pijin* is commonly used in the Solomon Islands, particularly the peri-urban settlements of Honiara. As a trained linguist, the incidental use of Solomons *Pijin* was translated, with definition and explanation provided as required. In the interviews, principles developed in CRT that encourage Respondents to share their own counter stories and narratives about their conceptualisation of governance were utilised. Therefore, when quoting Respondents, transcriptions are verbatim, replete with grammatic idiosyncrasy, to ensure minimal interference in intent and meaning. Where it was felt necessary to clarify a quotation, an [explanatory note] or [alternate word] was provided. Semi-structured interviews allow an environment where Respondents were at ease to engage with the interviewer in an unrestricted format. There was also the requirement to furnish initial 'trigger' questions to guide the Respondents. This included quite simple questions such as: what do you think of your local government? Does the government help you? The rationale behind the relatively unstructured interview process and minimal guidance on the Respondents' focus was in keeping with the methodological focus on Indigenous interpretations and experiences through a counter narrative approach.

Survey Area, Process and Questions Asked

Respondents were interviewed in the central district, the peri-urban settlements of Honiara, Guadalcanal Island, Solomon Islands. Bracketed by the Tanaghai River to the west, the Lungga River in the east, and bisected by the Mataniko River, Honiara is divided into twelve administrative divisions known as Wards. From west to east, these Wards are West Nggosi, Nggosi, Mbumburu, Cruz, Rove Lengakiki, Vuhokesa, Mataniko, Kola'a, Kukum, Naha, Vura, and Panatina (see Figure 2:106). The Ward is the most immediate political subdivision for Honiara's residents and during elections, it is these divisions that determine a citizen's ballot location. It had been planned to utilise the Ward system during the survey phase, as it was believed that as it was a primary interface between citizens and their elected officials, it would offer some insight into voting patterns. However, during the field phase, it became more apparent that wards, particularly urban wards within Honiara, were essentially arbitrary lines for administrative purposes.

There was no relationship in any meaningful sense in an ethno-cultural sense overlay of the area and as a result, a redundant consideration in relation to the overall focus of the project.

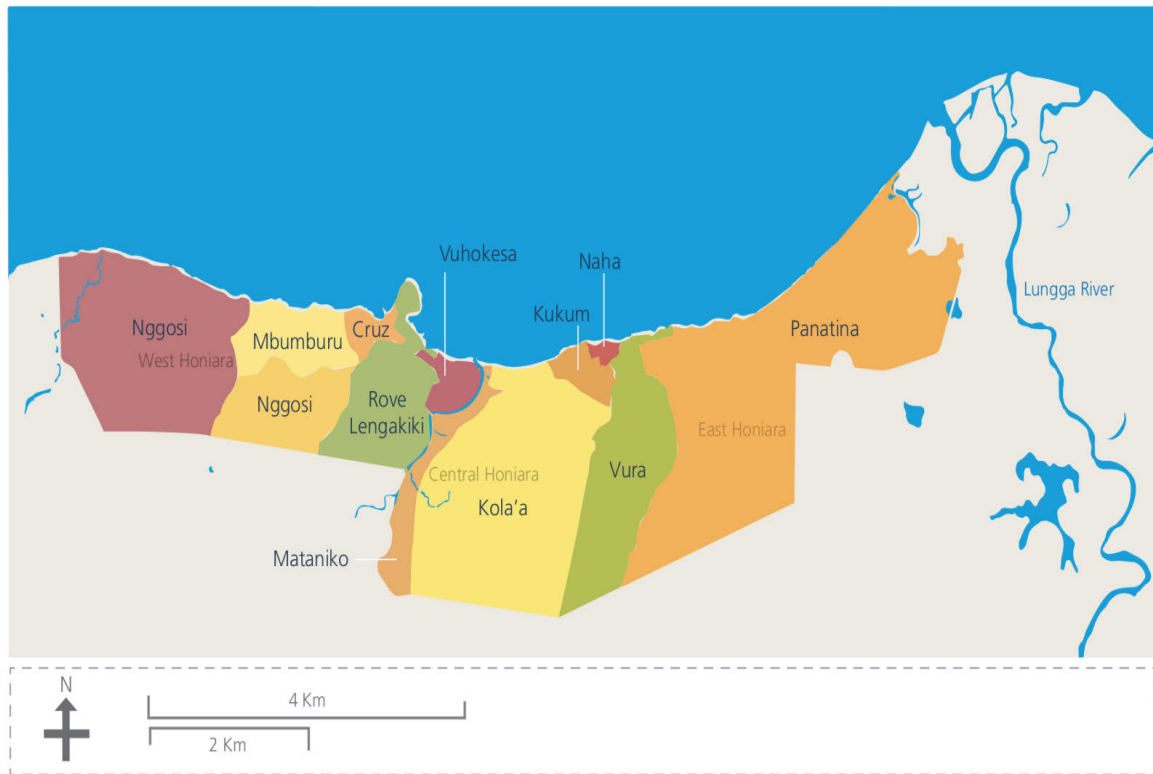


Figure 2. Honiara's City Council Wards, Solomon Islands Government, 2009.

The research did find that there is certainly an endemic issue with voters' cherry picking where and for whom they vote. Several locals were asked as to their motivation in this. The consensus was that regardless of it being illegal to do so, their intent was to remove their vote from whomsoever they believe was either corrupt, an ineffective incumbent, or one that they believe serves interests other than those of the electorate. On average, the combined interview/survey process with Respondents took between 15 and 30 minutes to complete. The survey and interviews began with questions about the Respondents themselves; their age, gender, religion, place of birth and languages spoken. This data established the demographic profile of the survey Respondents. The survey proceeded to a series of questions about Respondent's experiences of governance in their daily lives. It was designed to encourage Respondents to focus on key themes and develop their thoughts on broader aspects of governance and its effects on the Solomon Islands.

Themes and topics selected were based on their prevalence within academic and government scholarship on the socio-political climate and history of the Solomon Islands (Chapter 2 & 3), as well as key topics of ongoing friction, debate, and public interest. These are Corruption, Political Reform, Electoral Reform, Social Reform and Economic Reform. It was from these elements that the survey questionnaires were designed (Appendix E:297). Respondents were asked to describe their interaction with the political process, such as 'Have you voted in Provincial elections?' and 'If your family is from another region, do you return home to *vote* or do you remain in Honiara?'. They were asked to consider certain aspects of life, and their relevance or importance when casting votes such as 'What role do the following factors play in your decision to vote for a Provincial or National candidate?' Those factors included ethnicity, trust, law/order, jobs, housing, *Wantok*, environment, and the economy. Respondents were asked to consider effectiveness of governance from a variety of positions such as 'Do you think National or Provincial government is doing an effective job?'.

In order to draw the Respondent back to reflect upon on their personal experience, they were asked 'Which type of government is MORE effective in dealing with issues that affect you?' and 'Which type, or system of government has the biggest impact on your life?' Corruption is well cemented in popular discourse in the Solomon Islands and thus it was important to understand how Respondents perceived corruption in governance. They were asked 'How confident are you that National or Provincial government is free of corruption?' The role of customary tradition and *Wantok* is a central aspect of governance in the Solomon Islands. It was essential to develop an understanding of this, from the point of view of Honiarans themselves. Firstly, the role of customary tradition in their broader lives was established: 'How much does *Kastom* help guide your decisions in your daily life with the following issues? This included job security, infrastructure, health, safety/security education, corruption, land management, family matters, relationships, and business. Respondents were asked to consider the role of customary tradition in contemporary governance: 'Do you think traditional laws and *Kastom* should be used in government decisions?'

The results were collated and analysed, and the statistical, qualitative data utilised to determine the projects' structure. For example, the section titles within Chapters 5 and 6, such as 'Lack of Trust in Politicians', or 'Customary Land Management' are based on the prevalence of both qualitative and quantitative data gained during the survey process. The survey and interview process concluded with two key open-ended questions designed to allow Respondents to express their broader views on the country's issues with governance and offer them a platform to explain what they think needs to change to improve governance. The answers to these questions are drawn upon as primary sources, married with evidence from other primary (i.e., historical records) and secondary sources (i.e., academic research and government reports) to inform and narrate the results.

The first question was for Respondents to explore what they believed was a better form of governance and forms the basis of 'Chapter 5. Results and Interpretation: Centralism or Federalism.' They were encouraged to offer their opinions on the form of governance they believe better suited their needs as citizens. They were asked whether they thought *Provincial or National government better suited their needs and concerns as citizens*. The second question was broader in scope and forms the basis for 'Chapter 6. Results and Interpretation: Contemporary or Customary Authority.' It asked Respondents what they would like to change about governance in the Solomon Islands. The plethora of responses from Respondents included the role of customary and contemporary forms of authority in their lives, and how customary practice informs their view of governance. Respondents offered their thoughts on customary arbitration in common law, redesigning edifices of governance, understanding corruption, and the relationship between devolution of power from centralised governance and sustainable development in regional communities.

Survey Structure and Treatment of Collected Data

Surveys focussed on anonymous demographic data collection and were designed to provide key data nodes such as issues affecting political belief or hierarchies of need in relation to governance. Ethnographic research must be mindful of representative sampling using both qualitative and quantitative data.

Any attempt to extrapolate broader trends in a population “from which a sample was taken adds to the importance of careful sampling” (Pelto 2013:141). Therefore, there needs to be a focus on the sampling framework. The researcher should utilise randomisation wherever possible when selecting participants within a target area and develop random samplings, which validates the research from a quantitative sampling perspective (Pelto 2013:142). The intention is that this information can, in future be juxtaposed against statistical analysis of development programs and the projects currently in play in the provinces whether by RAMSI, central and Provincial Governments, or non-governmental organisations. Surveys to measure local satisfaction with intervention programs have been conducted in the past, but it was expected that this information would yield more accurate insights into governance and its effectiveness. This rationale behind the direct collection of information about governance as well as utilising frequency and trending methods, was that it was deemed the most accurate way to evaluate the scale and hierarchy of relevance of key issues. Data collected from both surveys and interviews will be stored in digital and hardcopy format at the University of Southern Queensland. The results of the data will be available to interviewees upon request. The data provided will be the final aggregated data and will be anonymous. Interviewees will be asked if they wish to receive a copy of these results. They are then able to provide a physical postal address or an email address to the researcher for receipt of correspondence.

Identifying and Recruiting Participants

The focus was on counter narrative and semi-structured interviews. Respondents were not guided any further than being offered a chance to outline of their thoughts on central governance and how government affects them in their everyday lives. Thus, the focus was on working with individuals in the context of their communities’ needs. They were often initially approached in an informal encounter and were introduced to the project. They were simply asked whether they would like to be involved, and the survey and interview conducted. Generally, this occurred where they worked, such as at a market stand, or more often, at the frontage of roadside allotments, where family members sell surplus food and other products grown and made on their property.

Using local contacts, less accessible parts of the region be approached, such as communities living along the shoreline well away from the density of urban Honiara or in the shanty's developing in the foothills south of Honiara. Through a network of local relationships, areas generally not open to outsiders were accessed and time was spent within family homes and market gardens, preparing food, where the research was conducted organically. Interactions were often spontaneous through conversation with individuals at hotels, bars, restaurants and roadside. Other interactions were formalised and involved contacting community leaders such as university administrators or directors of NGOs to organise interactions with staff members, labourers, and adult students. A particularly important aspect in this process came from gathering further insight from community leaders about their community. In doing so, an awareness was developed as to not only the best approach to take when contacting and recruiting participants from their community, but some background to how that community understands itself in relationship to other communities, and to the state of their nation.

Considerable insight was also gather from representatives of a number of Christian denominations as to the ongoing strength of religious practice within the community (McDougall & Tomlinson 2013). Those community leaders made it very clear that the government was not capable in offering the safety net citizens need in times of crisis, and that church organisations play a key role in filling in that gap as best as they can. In some cases, church organisations replaced the role of the State in some communities entirely (Hviding 2011; McDougall 2008). Employment training, family welfare and emergency assistance were areas of community life where this relationship between religious organisations and their communities was observed directly during the survey phase of this project. To those familiar with the Crisis Period, this is unsurprising, as priests, ministers and nuns of many denominations were instrumental in the de-escalation and disarmament process. The fate of the Melanesian Brothers at the hands of Keke and his militiamen is a stark testament to their commitment to their faith, as well as the natural authority they carry within society, a fact reflected in the esteem those communities hold in them (Carter 2012; McDougall & Kere 2011; Maebuta 2011).

In a number of conversations with key legal officials working within the country's justice system, the precarious nature of jurisprudence was explained, particularly constitutional law and the ad hoc reactive efforts being made by the Solomon Islands Government to reform the country's legal structures. A great deal of insight into governance from the perspective of so called 'socio-political elites' through conversation with an immediate relative of former PM Snyder Rini. These insights, gathered informally, were essential in formulating the approach in engaging with participants because the focus placed the individual at the centre of the research. It also developed more awareness of the context in which they were developing their answers to questions being asked, and "working collaboratively with, and placing control in the hands of, the people living the research topic, rather than researchers" (Edwards 2013:20).

Interview and Survey Protocols

Consent forms were presented to participants, prior to the commencement of interviews (Appendix C:294). In situations where Respondents were not literate, audio/visual consent recording were utilised. Respondents reserved the right to opt out of interviews and surveys. Interview protocols varied, as they were designed to be semi-structured to allow for open engagement from the respondent. As a rule, the approximate length of interview was 30 minutes to 1 hour. Respondents were advised of the purpose of the research and advised as to how the information gathered will be stored, utilised, and disseminated. An additional translator was on hand to assist as required, particularly when encountering communities that utilised local dialects. Overall, however, as a former linguist and analyst in the Australian Defence Force (ADF), the use of a translator in most situations was unnecessary due to the author's working knowledge of oral and written Solomons *Pijin*. Transcripts were codified and compiled to allow for re-translation and re-interpretation as required. Data analysis software (e.g. Nvivo) was used in to process the large volumes of survey data and transcribed interview material.

Representation of Findings

The interpretation of responses regarding governance came from utilising a multi-tiered analytical framework to test the respondent database. The database was a hybrid of three distinct data nodes. Each node could be combined, tuned by manipulating multiple x/y axis points, measured, and tested. The three data nodes were biometric (Appendix B:281), multiple-choice thematic (Appendix A:269; Appendix E:297) and free-form thematic (Appendix E:300). Note that due to the enormous number of responses generated by the free-form questions, quotations were utilised from those responses on a discretionary basis. The full data set is not contained within the thesis proper. The overall thesis was also informed by the fourth data node external to the Respondent database. This is the historical thematic data node (Chapters 2 and 3). Thus combined, the investigation will be undertaken using four analytical approaches: biometric, sentiment, prevalence, and context. Biometric analysis was applied through the manipulation of the biometric database to measure the effect of age, gender, ethno-linguistic and socio-economic indicators. Sentiment analysis measured trending patterns developed by recording responses to the multiple-choice thematic survey questions. Prevalence analysis looked for key trends via metadata analysis of written content of responses using text frequency analysis tools provided by UniSQ. Finally, contextual analysis was the researcher's interpretation of the responses based on findings developed out of the research and analysis conducted both prior to and following the field phase investigation.

Recruitment of Participants

Initially, one week in late 2018 was spent in Honiara conducting preparations for the survey phase. Following this, from 15 May 2019 and 23 May 2019, two hundred and nineteen (219) participants were recruited. Recruited participants (hereafter referred to as Respondents) were furnished with Participation Information Sheets (PIS) for the interview and questionnaire (Appendix D:295). The process was dictated by factors such as the time of day, concentration points or areas where people congregated, and whether they were in a position in their day to be surveyed. The stratagem was to focus surveying efforts in market areas, university grounds and peri urban villages, and compounds known as 'roadhouse' villages.

These are semi-communal dormitories where extended families share a home, grow food and cash crops at the rear of the building, the produce sold direct to passers-by. The great ally of survey recruitment in the Solomon Islands is the humble betel nut. Much like a morning espresso, betel nut is at the core of almost every social exchange. It was quite common to see large numbers of locals pausing to select their daily betel-nut and sometimes to spend some time chewing and talking with friends. It found this was an excellent time to spend time surveying, as people were at their most receptive to dialogue and the exchange of ideas. Indeed, the participation in chewing betel with locals was an excellent recruitment device; albeit at one's own expense, to the relish of a chorus of laughing locals. However, in the Solomon Islands, one is also confronting consequences of civil conflict. In Guadalcanal, tens of thousands of people were displaced from their homes. Many people either participated in killings or were themselves victims of assault, rape, and murder.

Subsequently, it was essential to be mindful of these factors when engaging with participants. It was only the participant's themselves who steered the conversation toward the conflict during interviews. Participants understood the project was about their lives and experiences as Honiarans, and being *heard*, irrespective of their social standing or status. This project was about their lives from their points of view. It was an opportunity to participate and articulate collaboratively, free from judgement, persecution, or prosecution; if they wished to discuss difficult matters, the prerogative was theirs. It was made clear to participants (hitherto referred to as Respondents) that their contributions were to remain anonymous, yet almost all Respondents wanted to be attributed. In the project, Respondents were identified by their given name and an initial. This acknowledges ethical considerations surrounding risk to participants whilst remaining sympathetic to the humanity of those being quoted. It was felt that this keenness to be named was an important aspect of the research itself. It demonstrated that the Respondents were invested in this project's intent to emphasise *their* experiences and narratives. It reflects the fact that Honiarans are self-conscious of the fact that their nation has for many years been under the microscope of others.

As this project derives from their experiences, beliefs and opinions, this desire to be identified and attributed for *their* ideas assuages a deeper desire to be seen and heard, not only by their own government, but the broader global community. One other step undertaken to mitigate risk to Respondents was to assign a unique code to each during the data collection process. This ensured personal information could not be extrapolated from demographic and survey data yet allowed the researcher to correctly attribute values and quotes as required without compromising the Respondent's privacy.

Chapter 5. Results and Interpretation

Centralism or Federalism?

Introduction

As described in the focus and scope, this thesis is seeking to determine the factors Honiarans perceive to be impeding effective governance. It seeks to explore what changes could be made, reflective of Honiarian customary practice and contemporary priorities to address those issues. As described (in the Focus and Scope:2), there are two foci that are used to inform this process. The first was to explore and evaluate how they measure the effectiveness of governance and explain what barriers Honiarans felt impeded good governance. The second was to explore and evaluate the role and value of customary forms of authority and the value and relevance of those practices in contemporary governance. This chapter will address the former. It is the summation and analysis of what Honiarans surveyed believe is the preferred type of governance for their country. It explores what they think about National and Provincial governance and issues currently affecting good governance. It questions whether governance structures determine effectiveness, or whether alternative models of governance like federalism may be more suitable.

This was undertaken by an examination of data previously obtained through the quantitative survey (Appendix E:297) combined with qualitative data selected from Respondent's answers to the survey's 'freeform' questions (Appendix E:301). This chapter explores their perceptions of National and Provincial governance, federalism, and devolution. It also explores how Honiarans measure effective governance, what other models of governance may or may not address ineffective governance. The chapter then turns to issues Honiarans surveyed saw as most affecting good governance. Issues include leadership models, corruption, the electoral process, including ballot manipulation and coercion. Respondent's views of foreign owned companies, aid from donor states as well as the influence of foreign states in the nation's governance are also examined. The chapter then turns to the investigation of the relationship between contemporary and customary ideas about governance.

It discusses the negative aspects of customary tradition, such as the negative role *Wantok* actively plays in undermining governance. But it also offers positive feedback suggesting the necessity of integrating customary tradition into judicial and political structures in relation to the use, management, and ownership of land. The chapter concludes with a broader examination of what Honiarans currently see as the key problems facing them today. The approach employed here was to ask Respondents to visualise themselves as a political leader. They were then asked to consider, with attendant gravity of that role, to offer their ideas on what singular aspect affecting the country they would change or address. We will examine the outcome of these ideas and look at where Respondents see as being the most effective way to their country to achieve these goals or solutions.

National Governance

In this section, the key aspects of National governance that Respondents believe underpins it as the preferred system of governance are examined. While more than one third of Respondents held this view and formed the slim majority, their support of National governance is ambiguous and is generally bundled with caveats, which are based on their empirical experience of governance (Appendix A:269). Addressing corruption, for example, is one of the predominant issues that hold Respondents back from more enthusiastic support of any government type (see Ending Corruption:189; Appendix A:270). Some responses were also informed by unfounded assumptions about how the system of governance currently operates in the country. The following analysis has been structured around observations made, and issues raised, by supporters of National governance. One issue that emerged amongst Respondents was over duplication within the current system of governance in the Solomon Islands. Respondent Augustine O. stated that in his opinion "National government is better suited because...the systems in place allow for it to effectively address citizens' concerns" and believed that "Provincial government is a replica of the National Government with less power and access to funds/resources to govern effectively." Similarly, Respondent David I. observed that "Provincial and National government can be seen as duplication of work in our government system."

He believed duplication, in concert with endemic corruption undermines effective governance: "Probably the intention behind their formation is good but this has been destroyed by the high level of corruption at all levels of government. For example, a \$100 channelled through the national to the Provincial Governments may end up being \$50 by the time it reaches its intended target at the rural areas. The money has been siphoned out as it passes through the channel." Perhaps it is this dilution, misappropriation, or wastage of funding from the national to provincial systems, that reinforced Godfrey P.'s observation that National Government was in his opinion "the better way...because they are the first one to bring support for their province instead of provincial sector." The logical solution for some observers was to dramatically reduce this duplication through a complete restructuring of the existing parliamentary system, such as this suggestion from David I.: "we should only have a National Government with only 15 representatives in the provinces. Something like what has been practised during the Colonial times."

This affinity for 'colonial times' has been observed elsewhere, notably the Area Constabulary (AC) with the native courts being remembered as an effective hybrid of western and customary practice. (Evans, Goddard *et al.* 2011:40-42). The next theme is what can be best described as 'functionalism through collaboration'. Respondents made it clear that the responsibility for good governance grows from citizens and both provincial and National Governments working together. Joann E. believes "As a citizen we would look forward for the cooperation with citizens alongside the National Government for all betterment. All in all, who we are is determined by the role which played by our political leaders." Respondent Deborah O. adds to this call for Honiarans to take more responsibility for how they are governed and emphasises their role as an electorate: "It is not an individual need [but] the need and concerns of the entire community; therefore, it is best be addressed by the National Government working hand in hand with the Provincial Government to address these needs and wants." Jackson K., noting the value of coordination and collaboration between government bodies and the community, also suggests that national and Provincial Government delineate their hierarchy of responsibility.

He believes that policy creation belongs at the macro level of National government, whereas the implementation of those policies comes under the purview of Provincial authorities: "The National Government should address all these and work together with the provincial to meet the needs. Because the National Government makes all policies and handles what this nation needs." A particular observation related to the concept of citizens taking on more responsibility to work with government to improve how they are governed is that the obverse can be said to be equally true. Governments in a democratic society have a responsibility to ensure the well-being and prosperity of its citizens. People vote with the understanding that they have chosen another member of the community to represent their interests and those of their communities and therefore have an expectation those obligations be met or at the very least, addressed by those representatives. As Respondent Annalise F. notes "Citizens vote for a particular person to represent them in parliament so that they have someone to help them addressing problems in their constituencies."

Respondent Joy O. is unambiguous: "Everybody trusted the National Government. That's the reason we voted for them. They have the power to rule and lead us so our needs and concerns should be met as we are the ones that put them into power." The concept of 'power' mentioned by Joy O. above is worth some consideration. She makes it clear that whilst the government is entrusted with the authority to govern, the legitimization of that authority derives from popular mandate through the electoral process. However, as other Respondents will note, there are nuances to perceptions of authority and power. A perception that was prevalent among pro-National government Respondents was that a centralised government was better able to govern more effectively by virtue of that centralisation. Philothia Q. notes that "National government is better suited to address the needs and concerns of citizens because it is the government is the decision of the country: what the government put is what the country follow, so for the citizens to be make use of the opportunity, better planning and decisions are to be made from the National Government." Hudson G. believes centralised government better addresses citizen's needs "through their policy, decision making and the law and order." Paul N. thinks that the "national level government and it is maybe the root of the political system of the nation".

Paul N. argues that addressing problems with governance begins at the national level but must begin with a change of sitting government: "we must change the system of government first before we may change whatever country's political system running up there in the parliament house. I therefore believe this could better address the needs of the nation or the citizenship." One metric by which Respondents measure legitimacy and authority derives from the perception that the central government has superior access to the fiscal means to implement policies that deliver outcomes. This concept, influenced no doubt by the aforementioned popular impression of bureaucratic duplication, ineffectiveness, and corruption, would also be influenced empirically by measurable examples of effective governance at work, such as infrastructure projects like road improvements and building projects in Honiara and its suburbs. "I think that the National Government is better suited to address my needs and concerns as a citizen because I knew that the National Government receive more aid from other countries than the Provincial Government" noted Respondent Elliot J. who added that "all funds and national issues are handled by the National government."

Thus, while National and Provincial governments are in a meta-functional sense a unified state governing apparatus, and in principle at least an interconnected system, it is telling that the perception in some Honiarans eyes is that National and Provincial tiers of government are viewed as entirely separate entities with varying levels of legitimacy. And it is the perceived ability to create policies and the ability to access financial power that are the key factors in how that legitimacy is judged. It appears that the perception of the degree to which a government satisfies these conditions is not necessarily a reflection of governmental effectiveness and more a misunderstanding of the relationship between national and state governmental bodies and how policy implementation is a product of that relationship, not the unilateral effort of one or the other. Stephany B. draws upon an example of where this perception appears to be confirmed: "National government is the body that is better suited to address my needs and concerns as a citizen...because it has the power to carry out in the improvement and betterment of the sectors in the country." However, the example of education is one where the reality and the perception become blurred.

The fact that almost all secondary and tertiary centres of education are in the Honiara region is due to the geographic and demographic realities of the disparate island nation. The logistics of establishing and maintaining thousands of education facilities across dozens of islands would be wildly expensive. Centralising centres of learning in the capital and drawing students from the surrounding provinces, is not therefore an expression of National governments delivering more education than Provincial governments. Rather it is the result of a pragmatic approach to simplify and concentrate a key national agenda in a cost-effective manner. It is a result of the socio-economic reality in the Solomon Islands. Honiara has long been the economic and cultural hub of the country. In brief, by way of analogy: Honiara is the hub of the national wheel, the Islands are the nation's rim. However, it is the 'spokes' of the wheel, the inter-island commercial, civil maritime/aviation transport network that is determining not only the perception, but also the reality of the effectiveness of governance in the provinces. For example, the nation's only paved airport, the Nation's fuel reserves, large commercial port facilities, banks and industrial enterprises are all located within the confines of the capital (Central Intelligence Agency 2023).

While regional airports connect the country, they are low volume operations, and generally the preserve of tourists, government functionaries and the well-heeled. There are almost no inter-island ferries, and the majority of inter-island travel and logistics is performed in open roofed fibreglass loading boats. Moving between islands in these vessels was entirely inadequate for a contemporary nation state whose society depended upon inter-island travel and communication. A good indication of this centralised focus on economics within Honiara is best illustrated by the government's plans in recent years expanding and modernising the city's urban fringe (Solomon Islands Government 2018b). Returning to other Respondents' opinions about the effectiveness of national governance use of authority and power, Adriano I.'s emphasised legal and constitutional power: "The National Government is better government than the Provincial Government because it is mostly discussed on about our constitution laws that guide and controls the whole nation...the National Government is most power to authorise to solve".

Florence V. saw the National Government as the “the highest and sole decision makes of our country and the power vested upon them”, and that legal reform rests with the National Government, but “the law of land needs to be change as mentioned above but many more that needed to be changed or somehow adjusted them so that it can be applicable to apply to our country.” Ultimately, the prevailing opinion was that National Government was the ultimate body of governance, and in the final reckoning, while acknowledging that provinces had a role in implementation of policy, it was at the national level where the key decisions were made. As Ray V. states, “the National Government has the right and power to address our concerns and needs of the people in the country. This is because the National Government has more power or authority to deal with issues in the country as a whole. Thus, the Provincial Government also has a power but dealt only in the provinces.” And as National government is the highest political authority, respondent Renley A. suggests, it is also where political reforms need to begin: “As a citizen of Solomon Islands, I really want the National Government to change its government process, just to do away with corruption and stand together for the development of our country and also the betterness of our country in the future.”

Provincial Governance

This chapter now turns to Respondents who considered provincial governance better suited to their needs as citizens. Statistically, support for provincial governance formed less than 14 percent of the total number of Respondents surveyed (Appendix A:269). There are several elements at play when considering why this is the case (see Structural Effectiveness:135). We need to first unpack and understand the key elements of provincial governance and its benefits from the views of Respondents. Janet P. expressed an opinion often encountered when interviewing Respondents that “most of the time I find it very difficult to consult them [government] as a local citizen in Solomons. It is also affect me because most of the time they just prioritised their voters which for us different voters we find it very difficult.” This description of a disconnect between voters and governance, while a sentiment held broadly across those interviewed, appears to be less pronounced where Provincial government is concerned.

Pro-provincial Respondents felt that Provincial authorities communicated more directly to constituents and better placed to understand their needs and concerns. Or as Silverio W. describes it, as being the initial interface between governance and citizens: "I think that Provincial government is better suited to address my needs and concerns as a citizen because according to the system of our government voters [communicate to] local area people to Provincial to National government. In other words, Provincial can hear our ideas and voice." Respondent Noel R. observed that if "we put our trust to the National government, it would take time to see changes happening...It is better that the Provincial Government are the ones suited to address our needs and concerns because they deal with problems in their province." This proximity between the electorate and Provincial authorities in Moreen Q.'s opinion is the reason it "might better suited. Because it is much easier to speak with the Provincial sectors rather than the national as a whole." Taylor F. is more direct in her preference for Provincial government "because the Provincial government can listen to the community needs and discuss the matter. And give solution."

Respondent Te'e S. concurs adding that Provincial governance was more effective because Provincial officials "visiting the rural areas always and have the concern for the people." The mechanics of this interaction is described by respondent Jimmy N., who notes that "the Provincial government is a small body which the leader can come to the villages and share ideas, needs and concern. For the National the MPs only concern for their own and their relatives *Wantok* only." Frank P. is starker in his critique: "Provincial government does the good work at villages and homes. National government doesn't do any good things in homes, they all corruption the talked about it and never do it." Some Respondents felt that there was more likelihood Provincial government was better placed to address local concerns like Peninah M., observing that "Provincial government should be much better, because it concentrates on constituency." Respondent Benjamin T. shares similar sentiments, arguing that "Provincial government is better suited to address your needs and concerns as a citizen because they are the government that your own choice to control your province or provincial leaders are easy to speak with each other."

Benjamin T. thinks that local interaction with the electorate is the key to good governance: "The Provincial leaders should go around the village in and around provinces take issues from the village and forward to the National government to help." Provincial government is most involved with the lives of citizen's living in the outer provinces and more likely to be the ones implementing development in rural or regional areas. Stanley A. explains that "the Provincial government has authority over me before the National government. For any business which will send to the rural citizens must got through the Provincial government before will reach the local." The prevailing view certainly appears to be that the proximity and role of Provincial governance means that has a better understanding of, or more direct control of local developmental needs. Provincial government's focus is constitutionally bound to that region's development exclusively and not to be distracted or diverted by other responsibilities borne by national governance, such as foreign affairs and defence. At the community level, this translates into the sentiment that National leaders have other priorities, or at worst, are a political elite disconnected from the concerns of the people.

Respondent Augustine B.'s view reflects some of these sentiments: "the Provincial (government) usually deals with building clinics, roads, and schools rather than sitting in parliament talking. Doing nothing." There is an issue here, noted by researchers and NGOs in the past (e.g., Cox & Morrison 2004:7), that there was a lack of understanding in the community, even among legislators themselves, as to the role of Provincial and National governments, both in terms of their respective legislative and jurisdictional responsibilities, which will influence perceptions and expectations of governance. This should not distract from what Respondents may say, as it does not undermine the lived experience of the respondent's views. Rather, it is a reminder that political literacy is not high in the community at all levels, which itself could be argued is a symptom of a society unclear as to what governance is supposed to look like structurally (Akin 2013; Corbett 2017:10; Keesing & Tonkinson 1982). John V., who envisions Provincial governance as the driver of rural employment and development and that the success of that development hinges upon the ability of provincial leadership to work with the community.

He said that "as a rural dwelling citizen, I believe [...] the Provincial government is to run the province in its development [...] I am also a human resource to that province. Therefore, the development of the Province is depend on how the Provincial Government deals with its human resources." One element of the popularity of Provincial governance for some Respondents was the perception that Provincial leaders were individuals elected from within the community. In being so, they are resultingly cognisant of and sympathetic to the needs of that community. In Respondent John M.'s words: "In our Provincial government we have our leaders which are from our Province, and they were easily to identify our needs and wants inside the community and society. And they are able to listen to the village people also able to manage our land, environment and also provide voters opportunity." Natasha W., a Respondent from Western Province, a remote island group 300 kilometres northwest of Honiara (Appendix B:281), thinks that "Provincial is better suited my needs because they are the ones who always help me [...] things like school fees sometimes few years back." Esther M. also emphasises the direct impact of Provincial government on regional communities: "Their work is to concern about people in their Province. Things like helping with development projects, give houses to people, give people what they need, buy student fees."

Thus far I have explored Respondents who favoured National and Provincial forms governance. However, the quantitative results suggest a third position existed somewhere between National and Provincial governance, both in terms of numbers of Respondents, but also in terms of being a hybrid of elements both of National and Provincial governance, with stronger provincial authorities, combined with an overarching national apparatus. The chapter will now turn to examine this idea and what distinguishes it from the prevailing system.

Federalism and State Governance

A reoccurring sentiment among Respondents who supported retaining both authorities in some capacity, was that there needed to be more executive parity between the National and Provincial authorities. And, in common with many national Respondents, that was a sense that there was a dilution of effectiveness due to bottlenecking between National and Provincial administrations. Some, like John L. believed the answer lay in Federalism, where States are better able to govern themselves. He says "I think Provincial and National government system there should be a state government system. The reason is because a State government system addresses its governing system." That is to say, a more independent Provincial (or even a State) government is more likely to better operate itself, and by extension, improve its ability to govern (Dinnen & Allen 2015). Many Honiarans, have long expressed an affinity for State governance: "In the period immediately preceding independence in 1978, several districts sought to loosen or sever ties with the political centre, including the well-known 'breakaway' movement in what is now Western Province" (Bennett 1987:327-330).

In the first review of the constitution during the transitional period in 1977 by the Kausimae Review Committee set out to devise a structure of governance to assist central government run the country. Mae notes that "in its pursuit of a 'cheap and easy to manage system,' the Committee failed to consider the 'desire for local control by the island districts' that would increase their law-making powers" (Mae 2010:9). For its second review in its 1986 submission the Provincial Government Review "unanimously recommended the federal system as an alternative for the provincial government system" (Mae 2010:9). That this and subsequent reviews was the aggregate of very broad community consultation cannot be over emphasised. Naturally the incumbent Central government sought to deflect the findings and went no further than the production of the 1987 Provincial Government Review White Paper, which promised to gradually decentralise power down to an evolved provincial system (Mae 2010:9). More progress was made under Mamaloni's 1987 Constitutional Review Committee. That committee unanimously declared that a federal system was the most popular and prudent course (Solomon Islands Government 2013b). And once again, the incumbent elites shelved the findings (Mae 2010:10).

During the crisis, the calls for federalism, even the ceding of states from the Solomon Islands led to the establishment of the State Government Task Force (STGF) in 2001, following the Townsville Peace Accord. By the time the Crisis Period loomed the idea of State government had established itself among Provincial governments ideologically. The Crisis, while not the basis for calls for State governance “revealed glaring flaws in government, political, security and administrative effectiveness [giving] new impetus to renewed actions taken towards the introduction of federalism in the country” (Wilikilagi 2009:9-11). Their recommendations echoed calls from the previous two decades calling for the adoption of a federal system. The STGF went further, recommending the establishment of a republic. Between 2003 and 2007, the UN Development Program assisted the National Government in conducting consultations within the provinces to understand if the issue of state government was an ongoing concern. Unsurprisingly, the findings were that calls for federation were unchanged (Mae 2010:11).

In 2004, the first draft federal constitution was launched. The response was broadly positive, with some exceptions in Malaita province (Mae 2010:11). The 2007 Constitutional Congress was established to formalise the conclusion of the new constitution and recommend ratification procedures. The Congress’s nominees were a balance of gender, religious, and traditional groups, and communities. The community response was found to be overwhelmingly in favour of the introduction of a state or federated polity in the Solomon Islands (Mae 2010:11). Understandably, autonomy and decentralisation were subjects avoided by Honiara’s political elites keen to retain their political hegemony. And the presence of foreign intervention forces in the nation at the time, with RAMSI’s focus on policing and peace building not politics, only reinforced the position of political elites due to this policy of non-interference in politics (Dinnen, McLeod & Peake 2006; Goldsmith & Dinnen 2007). As Australia’s Foreign Minister Alexander Downer declared during the 2006 Riots, the RAMSI mission kept clear of domestic politics despite the fact that “politicians in the Solomon Islands have not delivered good governance, and to the extent that by 2003 the country had virtually collapsed” (Alexander Downer, cited in Nautilus Institute 2008c).

Worse still RAMSI had failed to prosecute the main perpetrators of the Crisis Period and tackle endemic corruption, and instead of training locals into positions within the local administration, RAMSI inserted its own functionaries and administrators (Allen 2006:194-201). Honiara's power brokers viewed ideas like decentralisation as an existential threat not just for themselves, but the nation state itself. There was real concern that if central government gave more autonomy to distinct groups and administrative entities this would likely result in succession of provinces. However, on the other hand, if they do not allow the expression of distinct communities through increased autonomy, this may result in impeding the development of a national identity and its associated benefits (Nanau 2002). State government, and by extension, federal governance, was designed such that "the government remains close to the people and state governments feel that due to their accessibility and availability, government services can be delivered better to the people and in particular for small, isolated states removed from central government" (Wilikilagi 2009:6).

Respondent Nathaniel P. agrees and thinks that "Provincial government should have the same authority as the National government as today in Solomon Islands the Provincial government has lots of decision to make and less budget to fund resources and development because everything has to come first on the National Parliament budget before the Provincial." This last comment regarding the fiscal 'funnel effect' from National to Provincial government forms a central tenet in many arguments supporting decentralisation. Provincial governments themselves are subject not only to the dilution and delay of funds from the Central government, but that the Central government's budget exists at all is by virtue of those provinces. Provinces are recipients of centrally controlled service grants and distributions from Constituency Development Funds, but they also generate their own internal revenue. The process of how these funds are allocated and applied, both vertically and laterally, was reflective of the partisan and incendiary nature of the political landscape. During the intervention period it was clear that "wealthier provinces continue to resent the meagre benefits received from central government in return for the substantial contribution they make to national revenues" (Dinnen 2004d:28).

This systemically dysfunctional arrangement has eroded and degraded the ability for Provincial authorities to operate. Research into this issue found that fiscal management within the provinces was lacking at best:

No Province was able to describe regular reporting on finance or budgets. There is little to no reporting within the Province either to the Executive, Assembly, divisions or to the people, on budget and financial reporting. There have not been regular annual reports prepared and sent to the Assemblies and then to the Attorney General, as required in the Act. In addition, no Province was able to report regular auditing of the Provincial accounts, and it would appear that regular auditing has not been undertaken for some 15-20 years (Cox & Morrison 2004:17).

The centralisation of bureaucracy centralised the appointments process for the Provincial Government system. The process is incredibly slow administratively and “appointments can take up to a year to finalise” (Phillips 2020a:1).

In recent years, there has been a developing trend where Provincial governments, exhausted by this process, began to utilise their own budgets to hire direct employees to provincial appointments, and retrospectively seek national approval for those appointments (Phillips 2020b:1-2). Provincial governments were prepared to go to great lengths to wrest back control of their own administration with some using the Provincial Government Act itself to access funds that had been “originally intended to hire cleaners, receptionists [...] to create what became, in effect, a parallel administration” (Phillips 2020b:2). Provincial governance it appears is more capable when they are either given (or take) more administrative responsibility away from National government. The opinion of Respondents’ from across the political spectrum was that effectiveness came from cooperation between both levels of government and that responsibilities of governance can be met from both in different ways. Respondents supportive of both Provincial and National governments, believed that both authorities fulfilled (or were meant to fulfill) separate but essential roles.

Wilson B. thinks that "both of those government are very important and highly needed to address the country's great need as a concern citizen. This is because the Provincial government helps to survey, look, address whatsoever problems, or needs, needed to be done in the Provincial level. The Provincial government help to developed the provincial economic growth to improve people standard of living. As well as the National government, these are the leaders who are responsible for addressing the country's national problems or issues." Rousil L. agrees that both tiers of governance have inter-connected responsibilities and says "it should not only (be) one...like provincial or National Government...but both of them...Because if only one (form of governance), it may not (address) those needs and concerns completely. As it may not be fully effective if only the Provincial Government do this for instances." Nelson P. agrees that "provincial and National Government should work together" and adds that "both governments must have a plan and a policy."

Respondents want substantial effort to be made by both tiers of government to define their jurisdictional and administrative limits, with a functional bureaucratic apparatus linking Provincial and National governing systems. The dysfunction between the two has been a notable issue for some time and appears to be ongoing (Cox & Morrison 2004:14). One area that pro-hybrid/federal Respondents had in common with supporters of Provincial government was the need to address the concerns of rural inhabitants, with an emphasis upon both authorities focusing together to work to communicate with and act upon the needs and concerns of rural inhabitants. In this regard, for some Respondents a transition to a federal system would involve more local participation in governance and development. As Harold N. explains, "If I change the political system, it will be changed to a federal state system because it concerns more on the local area council that it could involve more people in grass root to participate in building the economy of the particular country." Others agreed that State or Provincial government is better able to manage or attuned local issues. For Basiana M., the "government should give away state government of our country Solomon Islands to the Provincial Government to manage about our own state government so that people of Solomon Islands to find it out what is a problem that affect our country of Solomon Island as well."

This contention that State governance would improve on the current model is supported by anecdotal evidence that “federal or state systems of government facilitates development of the nation in a fashion that is decentralized and focused on the regional level...[and]...has the potential to assimilate new and innovative ways of managing socio-economic and political problems” (Wilikilagi 2009:7). Provincial leaders themselves agree and have pointed to state governance as being the mechanism to remediate this disconnect and disfunction between central and peripheral systems, without necessarily undermining the other. Former Deputy Premier of Western Province Oliver Zapo contended that under a state system, state authorities would be able to legislate in the best interests of that region but not conflict with federal legislation, as the legislative reach of both would be constitutionally protected, enabling states to be “responsive to the needs of their people...[and]... become partners in nation building through developing their internal infrastructure (Olive Zapo, cited in Wilikilagi 2009:7).

Olish W. suggests rural inhabitants be more politically active and “work with provincial and national members with their concerns and needs”, and that both National and Provincial governments need to “hear the needs and concerns of the rural areas people.” Respondent Francis L. believes that effective governance from either authority needs to be applied universally: “National government and Provincial government should provide jobs for youth and unemployed people in the rural areas and in urban area as well, also helps people in their villages with infrastructure and other development.” If we factor in the intrinsically partisan nature of money politics, it is illogical to expect any amount of ‘cooperation’ towards a more equilibrrious system being achieved while clientelism maintains its influence over the electoral system (Wood 2018:481-494). A real-world consequence in ongoing failures in generating development and employment through dysfunction within and between governmental apparati, is that those provinces, as Linco P. describes, will have a difficult time avoiding the “future exodus of youths seeking employment abroad and domestically.” Concerns about this exodus of human potential where it is most needed (Bush & Le Mesurier 2004), reflective a self-consciousness among Respondents of the country’s vulnerabilities as a developing state (see Poverty, Drug Abuse and Crime:192).

Respondents acknowledge that they are mindful of how other nations in similar circumstances are faring. Brendah B. describes a sense within the community that Honiarans are aware of the developments and progress of other developing states and suggests the government take note: "the government should see what people concern about and try improve the standard of living the other third-world country are adapting." Honiarans are in other words, keenly self-conscious that, decades after civil war, despite decades of peace keeping and foreign intervention, there remains a fundamental concern with how their country is being governed, and what they as citizens can do about creating change. As the findings suggested, the immediate impression given by Respondents was that National governance was certainly seen as more effective than Provincial governance with more than double the support among Respondents (Appendix A:269).

However, there were again as many supporters of a federalised system of governance that proposed utilising elements of both National and Provincial types of governance. Supporters of National governance argue it is better for authority to be centralised. Supporters of Provincial governance laud its superior interaction with the community and its focus on local needs. Supporters of a federalised system see both forms of governance as mutually essential but only after fundamental constitutional reform and restructure would any type of governance to be viable. During the analysis it was reiterated by Respondents that endemic and systemic issues within all levels of governance in the Solomon Islands need to be addressed for any substantial progress to be made in the country's future. Respondent Alfred G. puts it thus: "Provincial and National government should work together to develop their own constituency respectively as together they develop the nation Solomon Islands and try to stop from nepotism or *Wantok* business. From above, that is because working together can change our living or in other words, spirit of working together can change our living or in other words, spirit of working together can lead us to better living and development level." Alfred G.'s reference to nepotism, and corruption generally, underpins much of what ails the nation which we will explore in further detail (see Electoral Fraud and Corruption:147).

Earlier in this study the relationship between customary and contemporary ideas of authority and power in the Solomon Islands was explored (see Self Governance, Corruption and Crisis:15). Conspicuous among them are concepts of loyalty through largesse (Larmour 2012; Frankel 2004). In customary traditions shared by most peoples in the region, it was a truism that a community's leader generally held that position not by blood right, but through patronage and exhibitions of their wealth and authority. Patronage and gifting binds the community to the leader both in a paralegal obligation but also reinforced the legitimacy of their governance. This community dynamic collapsed in the Colonial period where the legitimacy of traditional power was undermined by the imposition of British legal and administrative structures, as well as the effects of Christianity in eroding or banning practices that underpinned traditional authority (Keesing & Tonkinson 1982). *Kastom*, still fundamentally important for civic life, was no longer a functional aspect of governance. It had evolved into a framework of cultural memory and practice that interlaced with the Colonial social order (Dinnen 2008b:344). Christian tradition permeated and blended into customary practice, in many ways replacing pre-contact custom (Nanau 2002:41). From independence to the contemporary period, corruption, customary tradition, and cultural authority were used by political elites to gain and retain power (Fraenkel 2004). Honiarans remain embroiled in this political environment.

Devolution and Decentralisation

As seen in Federalism & State Governance above, support for State Governance has been widespread for several decades (Premdas & Steeves 1985). Respondents during this survey illustrated that the idea of a Federalised system, particularly the popular appeal of State governance, remains high. As iterated previously, research and empirical evidence from other experiments into Federalism holds that the decentralisation of power via either enhanced Provincial or fully fledged State governance, encourages socio-economic development at the local level, providing more opportunity for regional and rural islanders to tap into the national economy by virtue of an empowered executive attuned to, and politically dependent upon, that province's citizens (Dinnen 2008d; Wilikilagi 2009).

A federal model streamlines governance because a State model (an autonomic structure attuned to that region, its people, and its customs) is more likely to better manage local socio-economic, cultural, and customary issues, as they have the legislative and budgetary autonomy to do so (Scales 2005:140-148). Federalism works best where the semi-autonomous State governance manages local revenues and their allocation as pertaining to legislation that is tailored by that State to accommodate distinct regional mores (Saunders 2013:41). Scales describes the streamlining of Centralised governance under a decentralised or federal model as The Silo Model (2005:140-48). In this model, centralised functions contract while those of provinces increases. They 'swell' Provinces into States (including constitutions, laws, police, courts) and there is no administrative overlap between the Provinces. Finally, the Silo Model allocates responsibility for issues that are National in nature (such as foreign affairs, defence, tax) and are conducted by the Centre. There are advantages and disadvantages with the Silo Model.

Advantages include "Subregional political engagement, grassroots organic Postcolonial and genuine indigenous administration of individual provinces" (Scales 2005:142). The main disadvantages of the Silo Model are the potential for it to be too expensive, as well as potential issues regarding economic policy development and other areas where State and National interests may conflict. There remains the issue of economy of scale in relation to microstates achieving autonomous self-administration; it is argued that this may be fiscally impossible to achieve (Scales 2005:140-48). Another concern that incumbent Centralised governments have is that devolving power from the Centre to the Provinces/States creates the conditions conducive for Provinces to cede from the nation and seek self-determination (Nanau 2002:60). There are two responses to this idea. The first is that it is unlikely any Centralised government would contend that removing their power and giving it to the State governments (the source of the Central government's revenue and political legitimacy), was a good idea. The second is how much currency is there in suggesting that the constitutional or administrative structures of a region and the probability of ethnic separatism or self-determination, are causally linked?

This could be argued as being a logical fallacy. Separatism and self-determination movements are borne from a multiplicity of factors, any combination of which may or may not include how a people are governed. But it's not necessarily the structure of that governance that pushes communities towards secession or to seek self-determination (Wesley-Smith 2007b, 2007c). In the Solomon Islands it was not necessarily the fact that it was a Provincial or State system, but more to do with the appalling dereliction of governance. This dereliction of governance had a direct contributory effect to ethnic tensions and the prevalence of secessionism in many regions during the Crisis Period. There had been a variety of opportunities for growth in provincial Solomon Islands, with access to funding via the Provincial Governance Strengthening Program, and Regional Constituency Development Funds (Solomon Islands Government 2008; Batley, Wiltshire, Ridolfi & Rogers 2019a:1-2), but as shall be investigated later in issues affecting provincial development, much of the funding of these opportunities rarely reaches the intended destination due to corruption and hamstringing of Provincial governance.

Many Respondents identify that the overly centralised system as it stands simply does not offer the support to Solomon Islanders living outside of the country's capital and its surrounding industry. This is corroborated by the State Government Task Force in 2001 which found that despite Provincial government having "been part and parcel of the polity of the Solomon Islands [...] political, financial, social, legislative and administrative powers are still concentrated in the Central Government" (Wilikilagi 2009:7). As Respondent Edmond A. says "I think we should make state government that we can see changes happened in system of new roles and regulations laid in their countries. We need freedoms of State Government." Researchers agree, noting that State governance "offers responsive government that is more closely attuned to local needs, diversity in ideas about policy directions...and opportunities for a much wider range of people to play an active role in democratic life" (Saunders 2013:41). For some, like Hudson G. making "each province to run in [and] lead their own provincial welfare", would reduce political instability and perhaps there would be "not any fighting or leadership issue happening in the country."

Existing literature correlates with the view of Respondents suggesting that decentralisation is more likely to “lead to more responsibility and autonomy delegated to state level governments creating more autonomy and accountability of political decision making” (Wilikilagi 2009:7). Others like Joann E. argue that it is "better to decentralism so that industries can located in the provinces." Joann E. felt that too much focus was on developing opportunity in Honiara, reflecting the findings of observers who note the dominance of Central Government in decision making and executive authority, effectively exploiting the resources of the periphery, drawing them away from where such opportunities are most needed (Wilikilagi 2009:7).

Structural Effectiveness

Area Councils in the Solomon Islands have been largely superseded by Provincial governments since independence (Dinnen & Allen 2013:222-242). However, Honiara, as a capital territory separate to Guadalcanal province which enrounds it, is administered by the Honiara City Council. Due to the demographic weight of the twelve Wards in the Council’s area of responsibility it was important to investigate the how local council varied across Honiara (Table 1, below).

Province/Ward	Population size		Population change (number of people)	Average annual growth rate (1999-2009)
	1999	2009		
Honiara town council	49,107	64,609	15,502	2.7
Nggossi	6,186	10,062	3,876	4.9
Mbumburu	2,390	3,625	1,235	4.2
Rove/Lengakiki	2,177	2,613	436	1.8
Cruz	268	232	-36	-1.4
Vavaea	6,683	6,996	313	0.5
Vuhokesa	1,073	1,197	124	1.1
Mataniko	2,898	4,343	1,445	4.0
Kola'a	7,287	10,151	2,864	3.3
Kukum	1,969	1,835	-134	-0.7
Naha	877	356	-521	-9.0
Vura	8,025	9,096	1,071	1.3
Panatina	9,274	14,103	4,829	4.2

Table 1. Population Comparison of Honiara’s Council Wards, UNDP, 2014.

While the majority of decision-making is at the National and Provincial level, learning about the effectiveness of a Council based structure offers further insight into the direct impact and effect of governance. The assumption prior to the field phase of the study was that Honiarans' interaction with the local council (such as rates, rubbish removal, pet registration, planning permits) would then correlate with councils having more direct impact on their lives. Further, due to the Honiara Town Council Ward Development Fund being available to councillors of each Ward for "any income generating project, community or religious related projects, or any expense relating to primary or secondary education" (Honiara City Council 2020:np), that Respondents would be invested in Council level governance. However, the impression of Respondents was more qualified. Almost half of Respondents stated that councils offered the least impact on their lives. While they may engage more regularly with councils in their daily lives, it did not necessarily follow that this interaction was seen as impactful by Respondents (Appendix A:269).

The reason for this disparity likely lay in a combination of ineptitude and corruption. Based upon a recent audit of the Honiara Council by the Auditor-General, it indicated that service delivery and management of Ward Grants was poor. Poor enough that the Auditor-General recommended the matter "be referred to the appropriate authorities for investigation and necessary action" (Solomon Islands Government 2020:6). The idea that the closest layer of government would be more impactful is again not borne out in the results, with more Respondents noting that it was National government which had a far higher impact on their lives than Provincial Government, with over 62 percent of Respondents asserting that National governance had the most impact, where only 10.55 percent of Respondents believing Provincial Government had most impact. This should be qualified by the correspondingly relatively high rate of 51.37 percent of Respondents who believed that Provincial government had some impact on their lives (Appendix A:269). While National government is certainly most impactful, Provincial government is still a notable factor in their lives. Additionally, there is evidence supporting the contention that the role of Provincial Governments is poorly understood not only within the community, but among provincial politicians themselves.

This in turn creates a governing body with little tangible effectiveness. It was estimated at one point that some Provincial Governments could average less than one ordinance per year (Cox & Morrison 2004:8). During a UNDP provincial training program, it had been noted that “Provincial politicians had a very poor understanding of their roles, such that most did not understand the role of the Assembly in holding the Premier and Executive to account...nor did they understand the analogous role of Parliament in holding Cabinet accountable” (Cox & Morrison 2004:7). The Respondent population lives permanently in Honiara or are based there for most of the year for work or further education. Many retain strong ties to their home Provinces, with the majority of Respondents endeavouring to return to their home Province during election time (Appendix B:281). An aspect of cross board registration, or voters who wish to register in another province to cast their votes, requires that they physically register at the new location.

As a result, the Solomon Islands experiences this seasonal electoral migration known as Devil’s Night (Wasuka 2019c;np Batley, Wiltshire, Ridolfi & Rogers 2020a:1-2). Thus, while most of their lives are lived under the shadow of National governance, due to the nature of money politics, over half of Respondents in effect remain politically bound to Provincial governance (Appendix A:269). The evidence from the survey certainly highlights this. Thirty-seven Indigenous languages were recorded amongst Respondents with representations from all of the nation’s provinces (Appendix B:281). Note that in this context this relates to the socio-political aspects of the relationship between Honiarans and their home Province. What then do Respondents say about the structure of governance? Many stipulate that no matter what tier of government, it seems that all levels of government have difficulty translating policy into programs. As Alphonse R. notes: “our current government policy is very weak in terms of translation of the policy. Government ministers fund problems to implement it into programmes and projects.” The incumbency of corrupt politicians no doubt contributes to the sluggishness in policy implementation, as they seek to serve interests more likely to benefit themselves (Fraenkel 2011:303-326.; Walton & Hushang 2021:39-58; Larmour 2008:225-239, 2012:20--59,134-150).

Others suggest increasing the turnover of parliamentarians may mitigate this stagnancy as it would remove corrupt incumbents. Joann E. takes issue with incumbency within parliament and suggests limits on terms members can serve. She contends that “there are many truthful and honest people who never get a chance to gain seat in the big house” and bemoans the turnaround of governments which stymies long term development. She suggests that “all our new determined members [retain their seats] after two terms so that we may see if they can make the promises for real.” The chapter will now examine the issues surrounding ministerial terms, party politics and the role of corruption effecting parliamentary stability and Respondent’s views about what can be done to address these issues.

Alternative Models

There were a wide variety of interesting ideas shared by Respondents about what model or type of governance they consider to be more in tune with Honiarans’ perceptions of good governance. Of particular note is the view Respondents hold regarding multi-party politics (Rich, Hambly & Morgan 2006:1-26; Fraenkel, 2006a:43-67, 2008a:1-12, 2012:106-120). Respondent Augustine O. believes that multi-party politics inhibit the political process. He suggests that the country “use two party systems only and get rid of the multiparty system.” Noel R. agrees: “This is one of the reasons why our government’s stability is affected. Members tend to jump to other parties when faced with decisions made by their party, they may disagree with the decision and thus resulting in going to other party” (see Fraenkel 2012:106-120). Solomon Islands’ parliamentary history is largely one of individual parliamentarians focusing on their own and not their party’s agenda. Without adherence to the direction of party policy, passing legislation in such a partisan and volatile multiparty parliamentary system is exceedingly difficult (Corbett & Wood 2013a:320-334, 2013b:1-3; Kabutaulaka 2008; Fraenkel 2008a:1-12). Respondents took strong issue with party politics in their entirety, arguing that issues like health are more important to the national community. Olish W. explains that “if those members of provincial and national need are change too like they need to working together in sharing of ideas of who our society will developed in better way.”

While a cynical observer would argue that all societies would identify with this, this sentiment resonates particularly with Solomon Islanders. *Kastom* shared among many ethnicities in the Solomon Islands holds concepts of communities working together to achieve an outcome as sacrosanct (Akin 2013:164-326; Keesing R & Tonkinson 1982:29-399; McDougall 2015:450-472). This would occur when communities would share the burden of constructing communal gardens, or during religious festivals where participation of the entire community was at the centre of the process. Some insight into customary organisation can be gained with the efforts of *Maasina Ruru* in Malaita in the middle of the last century in managing and developing their community (Atkin 2013:186-213; Fifi'i 1988:93-104). This shared responsibility for your community, your *Wantok*, applies in communities throughout the country into the contemporary period. Indeed, positive, or 'good' *Wantok* is the socio-cultural framework that binds communities, protects, and nurtures families, and connects the present with the past (Larmour 2008:225-239, 2012:20-150).

What Respondents are asking for when they talk about politicians working together, is that they abandon 'bad' *Wantok*, which is corruption masked as custom, and re-embrace 'good' *Wantok*. Some politicians suggested the issue of corruption was that it was so insidious as to be invisible (Peter Kenilorea, cited in Larmour 2012:17). Respondents' views regarding corruption in Solomon Islands refutes Kenilorea's inference that somehow Solomon Islanders are unable to differentiate between customary traditions and corruption. Kenilorea's view on this does great disservice to his community, the inference that Solomon Islanders lacked the ability to discern right from wrong or corrupt from *Kastom*. This kind of cultural relativism has formed the lasting and inaccurate impression that non-western societies are incapable of differentiating between customary gift giving, and theft or corruption (Larmour 2008:225-239, 2012:20-150). Indeed, the fact that corruption at all levels of Solomon Island violates the norms of cultural practice, does not indicate an absence of those norms. As outlined earlier (see Federalism and State Governance:125), it is clear that many Respondents were intent on the current system of centralised governance, but to devolve executive power to the states.

As Respondent Ricky W. describes it "would be a system and structural system of the National Government, such as voting system, political governing system from centralism to state government." Other Respondents like Ben M. believe that to truly reflect customary values, the country needs to adopt socialism, because he argues "communism works well with our traditional government and laws...[and]...harmonise with the Indigenous citizens of my country." This viewpoint is uncommon in the author's experiences in the Solomon Islands, particularly from a younger person. Circumstantially, it may indicate that the Information Operations that China are currently undertaking to promote pro CCP and PRC narratives may influencing the inquiring minds of university students like Ben M. (see *China and the Solomon Islands*:35). Others are less focused on ideology, instead arguing for more recognition of the customary system, with chiefs working alongside political leaders as Respondent Benada O. describes: "I think one thing that could change the country's political system is to recognise the customary system...chiefs to work alongside the politicians" (see also Baines 2014:1-8; Kwa'ioloa & Burt: 2007:111-127; White & Lindstrom 1997:569-574).

In the previous sections, that Respondents thought around National and Provincial models of governance were examined. Both models offered benefits, thus a combination of the existing structures with elements of customary governance appeared to be the prevailing opinion of Respondent's *vis* structural change. What Respondents want is not a restructuring of the system in its entirety. Rather, they want more elements of customary authority represented in governance, as well as the devolution of authority to provincial authorities, which they believe will create more opportunities and development in their home provinces. But as has been noted, the penultimate concern for Respondents is the effect of corruption in creating barriers to good governance. While Respondents believe the biggest positive change to governance would be honest and effective politicians, any effective change remains contingent upon the effectiveness of systems of governance themselves.

Efficacy of Governance

The broad consensus of Respondents was that in general, both National and Provincial governments were perceived as doing an effective job at governing, with Provincial government seen as slightly more effective overall by a margin of 8.71 percent. Notably, while the negative reaction to governance was broadly even at 22.47 and 22.92 percent respectively, out of the overall positive responses National governance garnered a slightly higher approval rating in unambiguous positive responses at 28.89 percent, whereas Provincial government was less enthusiastically approved of at 18.79 percent (Appendix A:269). The relentless expansion and urbanisation of the city, and the government's struggle in managing the living standards, employment, education, and accommodation for the country's highest population concentration, may go some way in feeding a narrative where those missing out on opportunities would be more inclined to downplay National government's effectiveness, but those believing they were benefiting during this expansion of the city would look more favourably upon it.

Honiara's residents are more directly exposed to the electioneering and media coverage of MPs, no doubt drawing their focus toward the policies and practices of the National government over those of the provinces (Haque 2013:16). Respondents, while they feel that Provincial government was effective overall, have an enhanced perception of the effectiveness of National governance due to their direct exposure to National government in direct and tangible ways, such as public projects like roads and public facilities. However, with a differential of 1.39 percent in overall approval, it is quite clear that Respondents were positive in their approval effectiveness of both systems (Appendix A:269). Viewed through the prism of the nation's recent past, this indicates that in the decades since the Crisis Period, the synchronicity between community and state has somewhat stabilised. Recall that the Solomon Islands of the 2000s was by many global indices a failed state; governmental control had largely collapsed under the weight of internecine ethnic conflict, economic collapse, political factionalism, and corruption (Wesley-Smith 2006:121-26). In the post-RAMSI period, it seems the perception is that Solomon Islands' political and governmental structures have improved.

As was noted previously (see Colonialism: Kastom and Adaptation:10), the Solomon Islands was not supported adequately during the hasty handover period with the UK in the mid to late 1970s. The result was a bureaucracy that struggled to effectively maintain, develop or reform the structures of statehood they inherited (Hameiri 2007:418; Dinnen 2008b:352). This is particular to issues of legal codification, economic management and intranational governmental coordination. RAMSI, in collaboration with the Solomon Islands Government during the reconstruction period, appeared to have stabilised and consolidated the instruments of government to a degree where the overall impression of governance in communities' was a relatively positive one. Yet, despite an upward trend in the perception of effectiveness, grave reservations were still held by almost all Respondents. The pervasiveness of corruption is at the centre of the community's minds when discussing effectiveness in governance, more so than the vagaries of the structures of governance themselves.

Elison R. emphasised that the effects of poor leadership are self-evident. Raising her arm, she pointed angrily to Parliament house in the distance saying: "Leaders or politicians that were elected inside the parliament doesn't think about our country needs. If you [...] observe from national airport right down to Point Cruz, there were the same buildings and poor infrastructure [...] these things are not concerned by our leaders. They intend to do thing for their own people or language or province. This is not a real leader." (Elison R. 2019). Unsurprisingly, a common sentiment felt by many Respondents was of profound frustration in the political process, and its inability to produce effective and measurable results for the electorate. Respondents harbour genuine resentment and anger on an ongoing basis about the state of their country. Kebo E. observed that "there are no changes in our country before our government is failed to do what they issue when they coming to our communities to do their campaigning. However, they issue so many things they will do. But, when they come in power, they forget we should change the full government to make change for our country Solomon Islands." Indeed, the effectiveness of governance is heavily affected by corruption borne from the manipulation of the *Wantok* reciprocal tradition (Moore 2004; Fraenkel 2004).

For many, the core of governmental dysfunctionality lays in *Wantok* an idea represented by Peninah M. who thinks that "In Solomon Islands governments, there are lots of *Wantok* system, and this leads to corruption In Solomon Islands...if government can work without *Wantok* system and Solomon Islands will become a better country to live." Considering the intrinsic importance *Wantok* has in Melanesian cultures, it was an astonishing admonition of the political system and the damage it does culturally. However, the fact remains that *Wantok* itself is the cultural underlay within which a *generis* of Westminster polity evolved its unique characteristics. It is what Terence Wood (2018:481) describes as the 'central feature' of how politics is practiced in the broader Melanesian context, clientelism. In Wood's view, the result of this in the Solomon Islands is that voters themselves will support a candidate offering local development and opportunity, and in doing so, create a return of obligation whereby that politicians will appease their electorate, or 'clients' as it were, through focusing on meeting their needs at the expense of their broader responsibilities to the nation (Wood 2018:481-494). It is thus that there was a deep mistrust of the political system and politicians among Respondents, but not necessarily an awareness that the manner in which the electorate votes (tied to the clientelist paradigm, as it is), forms a major cog in that system's perpetuation. It is natural enough then that Respondents typically oscillated somewhere between resignation and anger. Respondents were asked how important trustworthiness was in their electing of candidates. It may be argued that this would be a truism for most voters everywhere, nevertheless, it was important to establish a baseline of Respondents' expectations of political leaders regarding ethical and moral behaviour.

Lack of Trust in Politicians

The overwhelming response was that trustworthiness is of considerable importance. It is noteworthy in this regard that of the positive responses, 20 percent of Respondents were qualified in their response (Appendix A:269). In considering these more reserved responses, and those Respondents who stated that trust played no part in their decision to vote for a candidate, it could suggest that these opinions were a product of long-term cynicism of political leaders, their agendas, motives, and behaviour.

There is also perhaps a sense of resignation amongst some Honiarans that untrustworthiness and dishonesty are an inescapable aspect to politicking and electioneering. It may also suggest that this attitude of frustration among Honiarans is the result of operating within a political system where clientelism prevails (Wood 2018). They are frustrated because they are victims of a system that they themselves inadvertently encourage. This is a socio-political trap:

Clientelism is preventing countries from developing, whereas at the same time, countries' underdevelopment is contributing to the clientelist politics that they suffer from. Each issue is perpetuating the other, preventing progress in both (Wood 2018:487).

Another important factor to recall here is that historically, the reins of power since independence have tended to be passed on within the relatively exclusive cliques within the nation's polity. Indeed, many sources of tension in the past have derived from the highly partisan and unstable parliamentary system where the interests of voters are superseded by the self-interest and power grabbing of politicians (Steeves 1996:115-138, 2011; Corbett & Wood 2013b:1-2). While Indigenised systems are preferable to exogenous ones, the Big Man mentality in the case of the Solomon Islands is incompatible with good governance at the provincial level (Deves 2014:61-70). A case in point is the misappropriation of the Provincial Capacity Development Funds (PCDF). Developed by Prime Minister Mamaloni in 1993, the CDFs it was hoped would foster development throughout the provinces (Fono 2007:127-30). The fund itself was also a stratagem by Mamaloni designed to foster loyalty within Parliament. The distribution of CDFs is an exemplary expression of the use of *Kastom* within governance; reflecting the Big Man principle, not only for Mamaloni, but enabled those Provincial leaders in turn to fulfill the obligations of clientelism to their electorates (McDougall 2014b). The conflation of the western notion of corruption with the more nuanced concept of patronage and reciprocity within customary traditions in Solomon Islands societies has been a source of misunderstanding and confusion (Larmour 2012:42-59).

As noted in previous chapters, Larmour maintains there are two broad interpretations of corruption; that of cultural misunderstanding between what is thought of as a bribe versus a gift, and that of nepotism versus protecting and nurturing one's family. According to People's Survey of 2006, as much as 46 percent of the urban population believes that the government is corrupt (RAMSI 2006). Results from this survey suggests the situation has worsened in Honiara with over 60 percent of Respondents believing the government is corrupt (Appendix A:269). As Nanau suggests, *Wantok* systems outside of the private realm are no longer about subsistence, but one of exploitation (Nanau 2011:20). to the chapter will now examine what Respondents describe as the problem. David I. describes the nature of how the democratic process has been undermined and says that "politicians are being given free handouts to their supporters as a payment for their votes. It would be quite difficult for an ordinary citizen to become a politician if that person does not have money to give to the people. Such funding must be stopped." Respondent Divine F. agrees, noting that bribery was prevalent "especially during National General Election."

Divine F. continued that the electorate should be free to "vote for any candidate they in favour of but not by force or bribe." Indeed, prior to the 2019 general election, two MPs John Fugui (Central Honiara) and Jaimie Vokia (North-East Guadalcanal), were both found guilty of bribing voters in the lead up to the election. The fact that both MPs were instrumental in the government's highly unpopular diplomatic realignment with China, demonstrates both the prevalence of electoral fraud, and that it carries tangible, potentially existential, consequences for the country (EIU 2020; Coorey & Tillett 2022a, 2022b). These events further erode trust, and it is unsurprising that the experience of voting feels like a futile endeavour. As Respondent Deborah O. puts it, "people did not have their choice as a winning candidate therefore it is affecting their decision to accept the winning candidate and also there had been back-to-back winners who repeats terms over again and again." Respondents simply do not trust political leaders because the system that placed them there has been demonstrably untrustworthy. The following section will look further into some of the elements raised by Respondents that they understand to be the main factors in the failure of governance in the Solomon Islands.

Incumbency of Elites

Respondents believe that the overriding concern for those entering politics is self-aggrandisement and the elevation of their allies or regions. Jevau H. relates that “most of the members in the parliament are corrupt leaders they seek only to please themselves and the priority needs of their family rather than helping the people in the country.” Many articulate that it is the ongoing manipulation of customary tradition, namely the practice of *Wantok*, has become the norm in Solomon Islands politics. Terrence P. states that if “The issue concerning *Wantok* system has been rising rapidly in our country which National Government candidate only help their family but not people outside family members. Thus, this given the raise to citizen complaint and about corruption in the country”. In an environment where corruption pervades and determines the nation’s political landscape, political aspirants must have the financial means to be able to develop broad support within their community (Nanau 2011:20).

Using a combination of gifting, vote buying, as well as committing to promises of development and funding to their electorates, politicians manipulate and exploit the reciprocal nature of *Wantok*. The “influence of money politics privileges older and more experienced candidates capable of generating the resources needed to win an election” (Corbett & Wood 2013b:1). The result is a thin stratum of established socio-economic elites hold the reins of power in the country (Walton 2021:41-6), and a cursory glance of the nation’s leadership since independence suggests power rarely leaves the hands of core powerbrokers (Appendix F:301). Business elites are increasingly drawn to politics. With established network of cronyism and corruption, can gain unique access through their wealth and perpetuate the process, and reflects changes in the nature of campaigning and voters’ financial expectations of candidates and MPs, something that advantages those with private sources of funding (Corbett & Wood 2013a:14). Greygin G. recommended the electorate “stop electing people with business status. I think we should stop electing people with business status because they would really interest to go to the parliament for their satisfy or create or expand their business. Instead of making law in government.”

In the opinion of Deborah O., the effect of nepotism and incumbency is ineptitude. She believes that it is essential that the electorate must “avoid repeat voting of former members who are unable to do their work properly” and that unless this incumbency of political elites is broken, there will be no change in the system.

Electoral Fraud and Corruption

The use of bribery by politicians to secure votes is a long standing and persistent issue in the Solomon Islands (Moore 2008b:488-509; Wasuka 2019b:np; McDougall 2014b). Many Respondents reflect Divine F.’s view that “all have rights to vote for any candidate they in favour of but not by force or bribe.” Terms such as ‘force’ may seem exaggerated, however the author was provided with firsthand accounts of intimidation and coercion in national elections. Indeed, Solomon Islands Police Commissioner Varley held a media briefing prior to the 2019 elections to condemn supporters of candidates who were using threats of ‘intimidation and violence’. Commissioner Varley noted that reports had been received that messages were “being given to communities that property previously provided under Rural Constituency Development Funds will be taken back if they do not vote for particular candidates” (Commissioner Varley, cited in Solomon Times, 2019b).

This atmosphere of intimidation and coercion, and the pressure of customary and social expectations forms a formidable obstacle in people’s minds as to their government’s legitimacy, as well as stifling an individual’s ability to freely exercise their electoral rights. Observers from the State, Society and Governance in Melanesia (SSGM) program from the Australian National University, and the Centre for Democratic Institutions (CDI) during the 2014 general elections, noted supporters of candidates utilised “mobile phones to influence voters, to intimidate voters, to facilitate gifting and vote buying, to mobilise support, to distract polling officials, [and] to spread misinformation about particular candidates” (Haley & Zubrinich 2015:2). Respondent Augustine B. explained that this is how politicians maintain political hegemony and that “changing the electoral commission office or system will go some way. Because they deal with counting and election of our future leaders.

Some of the offices, leaders are corrupted the leaders usually pays the officers to do false or corrupt counting.” Junior F. elaborated: “The way of counting the ballot papers ...should be change...it must be someone in higher level of electoral commission in any different country, not these same people. Because if this task was carried out by them, I believed they will creating the corruption in favourable of someone who has to be their candidate to add on some political moves with them and their candidates are...winning the ballot.” Indeed, in the 2010 elections, the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission was accused of corruption. In particular, the failure to remove double registered voters (O’Brien 2010). The reasons why Parliament delayed the passing of the amendment Bill, allowing the Commission to remove double registrations prior to those elections, remains unclear. Concrete steps were eventually taken by the Solomon Islands Government with the introduction of Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) ahead of the 2014 general election.

This system was designed to establish an accurate voters register to mitigate ongoing issues with electoral fraud and double registration by utilising biometrics such as fingerprints. Voters were issued with unique BVR ID cards to streamline the electoral process and sanitise the electoral rolls. However, even this system itself has become another means for candidates to influence and buy voters. Election monitors found firm evidence of money politics that had hitherto been speculative and anecdotal: “concrete data with respect to political gifting, vote buying and the sale of voter ID cards (Haley & Zubrinich 2015:2). Supporters of candidates were enticed with “distribution of cash and gifts, and...subject to exploitation and manipulation by political candidates and their supporters (Haley & Zubrinich 2015:2). The growing phenomenon of cross-border registration was also raised by Respondents as a serious issue. In September 2018, the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission conducted a national update of the voter registry. It was the opportunity for many citizens to update their details. Importantly, within Honiara “voters were able to register in a different constituency without having to travel there in person” (Batley, Wiltshire, Ridolfi & Rogers 2019b; 2020b).

The 2018 Electoral Act allows voters to register where they live, but it also allows a voter to register in any place where that individual “is entitled to be or is a member of a group, tribe or line indigenous to the constituency” (Solomon Islands Government 2018:19-22). But in the eyes of some, this provided an opportunity for candidates seeking to consolidate their foothold, by seeming to allow them to “legitimise activities aimed at encouraging or facilitating voters switching their registration to a different constituency” (Batley, Wiltshire, Ridolfi & Rogers 2019b:2). Respondents like John M. believe that voter registration results in the misappropriation of provincial funding, noting that “cross-board registration will not reflect the contribution of funds contributed to the member of parliament. For example, a voter from Choiseul cannot benefit from the funds contributed to parliament member from Honiara. The system of cross board registration must be replaced with a better system. Because registration voter of that particular constituency will not really benefit from the funds.” Despite these objections to the practice, cross-border registration was being taken up at very high levels prior to the 2019 elections.

As noted in the methodology (Chapter 4), this was the election that Respondents had participated in during the survey period. When asked about this, over 64 percent of Respondents acknowledged they return to their home Province to vote (Appendix B:293). In fact, the Department of Pacific Affairs (DPA) at the Australian National University had noted that by the end of the registration period, the Electoral Commission “had received 54,000 applications to transfer registration to another constituency, or 15 per cent of all registered voters” (Batley, Wiltshire, Ridolfi & Rogers 2019b:1). It was an enormous number of voters, and the research team noted that “neither population increase, nor general population movement can account for the wide variation between individual constituencies. This strongly suggests that voters purposefully changed their place of registration before the 2019 election” (Batley et al. 2019b:2). During the field phase, some Respondents spoke of how either they, or people they know, had often registered in constituencies they do not reside in. Their reasons were centred around voting for candidates they think will benefit them. For some though, concern for the welfare of their home province was a factor.

Election monitoring by DPA researchers also confirmed this growing trend and found the main reason was “citizens were eager to register in the constituency where they were most likely to receive benefits from the winning Member of Parliament” (Batley, Wiltshire *et al.* 2019b:2). According to Batley Wiltshire *et al.*, one citizen said they attempted to change their registration because “for the last 12 years I haven’t received any single assistance” (Batley, Wiltshire & Rogers 2019b:1). Batley Wiltshire *et al.* reported that another citizen in their study had sought to change constituencies because “for two solid terms hadn’t received assistance on school fees from former MP”, while another stated there was no development in their constituency so had “attempted to move to another constituency” (Batley, Wiltshire *et al.* 2019b:1). In conducting the research for this study, Respondents reported that coercion, financial or otherwise, was unnecessary in many cases when they register in this manner.

They too were seeking to position themselves as recipients of assistance and were well aware that in some cases their registration may be invalid or illegal but are nevertheless willing to take the risk. The impression shared by Randy A., a Honiaran of Malaitan and Guale descent who registered not at his home in Guadalcanal, but in Rennell and Bellona, his Polynesian wife’s province, was that voters are keenly aware of the inherent unfairness of the system, and their decisions are practical ones focused entirely on trying to generate favourable political outcomes for themselves and their community. They are not overly concerned whether it contravenes the law. In a country where many live well below the poverty line, this kind of pragmatism is commonplace. When candidates offer voters “promises of gifts, cash and direct CDF benefits, such as the payment of school fees” (Batley, Wiltshire, Ridolfi & Rogers 2019a:2), it is difficult to argue that, by obtaining said benefits, voters are not achieving a favourable outcome from this arrangement. This is a system where a condition of opportunism exists at all tiers of civil society. The issue with policing the electoral process Respondent Ferdinand B. notes is that “the people who want to run an election must be a quality person and must interview before a person to run an election.” But in a system where corruption has been institutionalised to this degree, if the agencies responsible for ensuring free and fair elections corrupt, what agency should be held responsible for their integrity?

At what tier of government does accountability lay when every step up the chain has been infested with corruption? Respondent Sephany B. reflected this view: "the current democratic system of voting is not effective...The First Past The Post system which see the candidate with highest number of voters win the election...should be changed" (see also ACE Project 2005; Kabutaulaka 2008:99). The result of this electoral system is that it creates outcomes in leadership that do not reflect popular sentiment according to Henry P., who believes that it is an "unfair system of choosing the leader. If we take a good view on how they choose the leader, we can tell that the number of persons who vote the winning candidate is less than the total number of persons on that constituency and because at their spreading to another candidate that cause the other candidate to win." As SIEC Chief Electoral Officer Mose Saitala conceded, the extant system "delivers winning candidates supported by only a small fraction of their electorates" (Mose Saitala, cited in Hawkins 2020:np).

The Solomon Islands Government has been investigating electoral reform to address this problem. In 2016, an Electoral Reform Team was tasked with reporting on setting aside the First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) voting system and adopt the Limited Preferable Voting (LPV) system. A key finding was that the FPTP system "always elected MPs with a small majority of the vote cast...produces weak mandate for MPs and high wastage of votes" (Mose Saitala, cited in Hawkins 2020:np). The team observed that the FPTP was hindering women being elected to parliament, impairing the development of political parties. They reasoned that the LPV system ameliorate many issues as it allows preference votes to be allocated until a full majority is achieved (Solomon Star 2016:np). In February 2020, the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission (SIEC) confirmed that it had introduced LPV in time for the 2023 National general election. The SIEC determined that the LPV system best suited the Solomon Islands, and it would adopt a quintuple variant of the preference system (Mose Saitala, cited in Hawkins 2020:np). Future work in this area could examine what emerges from this transition, both in terms of the outcomes for political parties, how this will influence their future development, and whether the change will lead to political outcomes more aligned with public expectations.

Qualifications and Suitability of Candidates

As noted earlier (see Efficacy of Governance:141; Lack of Trust in Politicians:143; Incumbency of Elites:146), the political system is underwritten by complex systems of patronage and reciprocity. In return for support at the polls from their 'client' (itself a corrupt process where money, promises and favours are granted), the politician in return, as the 'patron', is obliged to reciprocate through delivering on those promises, generally at the expense of other obligations and responsibilities (see Clientelism:xii). The experience of this system varied among Respondents, but the general emphasis was on the suitability of candidates being of particular concern. Wilson B. argues that the process of scrutinising the eligibility of candidates needs to be focused on their ability to effectively manage the country and that people "should vote leaders which are economical highly educated with good characters. People who do more reasoning and ask more economical question." Moreen Q. wants to see an end to individuals applying for work in ministries being more likely to be hired based on nepotistic or corrupt factors, rather than merit and ability.

She relates that "though some people have better qualification are applying for jobs the ministry just select those who they know or sometimes money is one contributing factor on the corruption." Several Respondents spoke of locals relating stories of how positions in government employment tended to be granted to associates of those already in government. The Solomon Islands Government has made efforts to investigate the parliamentary process and how MPs are inducted, as well as expectations on their conduct and public accountability and transparency (UNDP 2015). However, there is no real indication that vetting or auditing of candidates and MPs occurred in any formal sense and *"Ministers are rarely punished for poor performance. Bureaucracies are not subject to political pressure to improve; they are neglected and demoralised [my emphasis]* (Wood 2018:1). MPs were unable or unwilling to address this. Tellingly when the Solomon Islands developed the Solomon Islands Independent Commission Against Corruption (SIICAC) following the Anti-Corruption Act 2018 being passed, those meant to be accountable to the legislation made a concerted effort to stymie the Act "to assure MPs that the bill would not threaten their interests" (Walton 2021:2).

The lengths that stakeholders went to appease politicians in this regard were remarkable. According to Walton(2021:2), those involved in the legislative change were marginalised, and during the lead up to the passing of the legislation, critics of a motion to allow *Kastom* as a defence of bribery were excluded to the effect that the controversial clause made its way into the final Anti-Corruption Act. Here we see a reform combating corruption in governance being deliberately designed with a loophole offering immunity from prosecution for corruption; a loophole put in place as a result of pressure from the very individuals the legislation was designed to police. In terms of jurisprudence, it remains to be seen whether the Act will survive in its existing form. It would not be too far to suggest that this anti-corruption legislation (that conveniently offers immunity from the type of manipulated custom of gifting that accounts for the majority of electoral corruption in the country), is in itself symptomatic of clientelism. The fact that opponents of this loophole were deliberately kept out of the final process is in keeping with the mercenary nature of money politics (Walton & Hushang 2021:39-58).

These practices only encourage popular resentment and further erode trust in politicians, as well as people's confidence in the legitimacy of customary tradition in the broader civic context. Paradoxically, while Respondents understand that manipulation of *Wantok* was the engine room of corruption, but because both the electorate and the elected focus on immediate benefit, poor governance continues to perpetuate (Moore 2007b; Larmour 2012:17). For young Honiarans like Brittanica A., this creates a sense that no matter the effort and skill one may put into their chosen pathway in life, what the country ends up with is "a lot of people with good grades who deserves scholarships, and a lot of people have good qualifications without jobs. Because the *Wantok* system they gave away the opportunities" (Appendix A:278-80; Appendix B:281; see also Roughan 2004). Unsurprisingly, this also included concerns about those who aspire to political office having the requisite educational and qualificative foundation suitable for that role. Hudson G. states: candidates "who have no highest level of education background...for example...candidates who apply from the post of being a minister.

This will help the government to make a better decision to change the government political and also the welfare of the country as well". This emphasis of Respondents on improving the expertise of their political leaders and bureaucrats is an articulation of their experience with a seemingly endless cycle where ineptitude, corruption and self-interest collude to inhibit national development. Their understanding of the situation is that the problem resides in individual MPs. In simple terms, if they raise the bar, seeking candidates who have the expertise to govern, surely the system will improve? Willie A. explains that when "looking at the past government half of the parliament members they don't have good education backgrounds, so this affects how they make decisions when situations arises.... People who wish to take up the leadership role must be well educated because it where decision makings for the country are made." There is an issue, however, with this understanding of the education levels of MPs because in fact demographically, 85 percent of MPs have secondary schooling in comparison with less than 25 percent of the overall population having attended secondary schooling of some kind (Corbett & Wood 2013b:1).

More telling, as far back as 2001, approximately 90 percent of MPs had undertaken tertiary education. This contrasts starkly with 2009 census data that shows only 4.4 percent of Solomon Islanders had gone on to tertiary study (Corbett & Wood 2013b:1; Solomon Islands Government 2011). In the Solomon Islands, politicians are bound to networks and relationships which they utilise to influence their constituencies, meaning "questions about governance become less about leaders and more about the nature of the social contract (Corbett & Wood 2013b:1). It is an example of the power of *Kastom* within governance in determining how the functions of contemporary governance are practiced. The expertise and education of MPs is secondary to the overwhelming role played by customary tradition in forming the plurality of networks and relationships. Respondents are clearly aware of the role of corruption in poor governance (Appendix A:270; E:300). This section demonstrates that Respondents support holding politicians accountable, who they expect to be ethical and educated. They are also keenly aware of the importance of the electoral system being free of manipulation or corruption.

Yet Honiarans, wilfully or otherwise in very large numbers are actively perpetuating the conditions in which those among them who are utilising *Wantok* as the means and connections to run as a candidate, achieve success. They do this by voting in a province to which they do not belong, for familial, customary, tribal, or economic reasons. They contribute to a candidate's success by selling their votes or their voter ID cards. They will also vote because they were gifted by candidates, or because they felt that candidate offered them the best chance at beneficial gain (Wood 2014:12). This could be viewed as dissonance between the imperative to exist with some quality of life, and the desire to end corruption in politics. The next section will examine how ephemeral political parties, the *ad hoc* nature of party loyalty, and weak Parliamentary practice only enhances this public perception that individual MPs are not up to task, but also how this exacerbates the clientelist paradox.

Political Parties and Reform

Previously, the chapter addressed the incumbency of elites in the political system utilising the *Wantok* system to exploit and manipulate the electorate (see Electoral Fraud and Corruption:147). It also looked at some solutions Respondents articulate in how best to overcome these endemic issues, such as increased vetting and oversight of political candidates and incumbent politicians. At this juncture, it is important to re-emphasise that historically political parties which tend to be fluid and loosely affiliated associations in the Solomon Islands. Strong ideological traditions have not developed, thus less likely to form stable party structures as "customary leadership systems are so individualised and partly because political allegiances are so localised" (Fraenkel 2006a:9). It is a political landscape where temporary networks based on clientelist *Wantok* systems of obligation and reciprocation are the dominant feature (Brigg 2009). The political landscape is crowded with several political parties at any one time and the Solomon Islands defies 'Duverger's law' which postulates that "the first past the post systems tend to produce two party systems" (Fraenkel & Aspinall 2013:10). So, what do Respondents make of this? The chapter will now look at some other solutions being suggested by Honiarans on how to reform the political landscape in their country to better reflect their expectations.

An idea that garnered particular popularity among Respondents was that more needed to be done to ensure there are limits on terms an individuals can serve in a ministerial role. It is seen as an essential part of ensuring the intake of new political leadership and, it is hoped, new ideas about good governance. As Geua A. says, the "One thing I would change is the number of terms each leader serves in the parliament. There should be a certain number of terms each leader is entitled to. Therefore, new people may be elected to the government with new ideas and laws to improve our country." Joann E. agreed and suggested that there "should be a limited number of terms for a member/minister to serve. So, in the political system it should be on two terms only for the member if a person come back in his/her seat which means eight years' service the constituencies. This way to open a door for the new quality, integrity, and diligence people. It is better not to keep the same people if we need to make a change for if there any change especially in terms of country's economy, we should have seen it."

The outcomes from the introduction of the Limited Preferable Voting (LPV) system (see Electoral Fraud and Corruption:147) slated for the 2023 elections, could more accurately reflect the electorate's preferences, and encourage a reduction in political incumbency. However, there are a number of hurdles that may impede or stifle the roll out of the LPV system. The first was the Sogavare administration's decision to delay the election until April 2024 due to the Pacific Games (Manasseh Sogavare, cited in Maka'a 2022:np). More pressingly however, remains the issue of electoral fraud and corruption, as well as the controversial nature of cross-border registration. Logically, if the socio-cultural and socio-political conditions within which elections are held remain bound by the clientelist trap of money politics, it is likely that the resulting spread of MPs that come to power will still be bound by that system, irrespective of the voting system being used. Ergo, the political landscape will look and operate in much the same way to its participants, because it still operates under the same conditions, thus the outcomes will remain the same. Political parties are a vehicle for politicians' interests, and are "formed, often in the lead-up to elections, only to vanish without a trace, either failing to get any MPs elected to parliament or abandoned by their newly elected 'members'" (Wood 2014:2).

There is strong sentiment within the community that political parties signal their virtue publicly but were focused more on furthering the interests of their members, whilst insulating them from accountability for their actions. At the very least, the parties themselves do not reflect the interests of their constituents, other than those fortunate or grasping enough to fall within their orbits. As noted earlier (see Electoral Fraud and Corruption:147), political parties undermine the democratic process they themselves are meant to represent through the deliberate and malicious manipulation of the lobbying process. According to Elliot J., his experience of the last election was that "during the lobbying process, political parties can manipulate, and members fooled by money to form government." Historically, the ephemeral nature of party formation and the loyalty of its members is indicative of this fragility within the parliamentary system in the Solomon Islands.

Over time this created a mercenary culture whereby "even larger parties tend to have only skeletal party infrastructures and are, typically, readily abandoned by MPs in instances when they feel their ambitions will be better served by other alliances" (Wood 2014:2). There is little incentive for political parties to consolidate into more demonstrably functional political parties seen elsewhere. The dictate of clientelism is that individualism will generally keep party politics weak and fractional. After all, the precedent has been long ingrained and occurs at every level. Note the example of Prime Minister Solomon Mamaloni's 1990 defection from the party of which he was the leader. The decapitation of his party extinguished its *raison d'être*, "effectively ejecting it from government" (Fraenkel 2008a:63). This tendency of members crossing the floor to their own individual agenda instead of their party undermines the effectiveness of the legislative branch and only confirms this corrosive narrative (Fraenkel 2012; Wood 2014). And for most, the solution in the immediate term seems so obvious, yet remains out of reach.

The Electoral Process

The election of Prime Ministers was a particular issue that Respondents like Ellio J. felt was of serious concern who noted that "during the lobbying process, political parties can manipulate, and members fooled by money to form government." Simply, as Jimmy N. says: "through corruption system MP chooses who's the real corrupt person to lead the country." They argue that the direct election of the PM by the people is vital for the country's democracy. The issue begins with the election of MPs into national parliament via the FPTP voting system. During federal elections, FPTP disproportionately favours larger and stronger political parties (with a larger stronger electoral support base), to the detriment of political parties that represent regional and minority communities. Critics of FPTP suggest that there is also an increased likelihood of gerrymandering and other forms of electoral fraud (Ace 2005). The major issue that confronts the Solomon Islands remains that of vote buying and voter coercion. Voter coercion appears to be experienced by the less powerful individuals in communities, with evidence of threats and bribes (Wood 2014).

The outcome for the electorate is a PM who has come to power based on the decision of the very politicians whom all decry as being corrupt. When analysing the topical prevalence of themes surrounding elections, the consensus was that these issues can only be dealt with through the restructuring of the nation's electoral system, primarily the election of the country's leader can only be decided by a popular, direct vote (Fraenkel 2010). As Rodney P. explained: "I believe that it should be the right of all Solomon island citizen to vote for the Prime Minister...during the lobbying process political parties can manipulate and members be fooled by money to form government." Recall that the fiasco surrounding the election of the PM in 2006 (when Snyder Rini's selection by ministerial ballot led to riots and unrest) would still be fresh in many Respondent's minds (Skehan 2006; Atkinson 2009:55-59; Butler 2008). Many feel that popular consensus in electing the nation's leader would produce a twofold effect. First, the right to directly elect their leader should be a part of what makes their society democratic: "we as voters have the right to vote the person who leads our country" (Janet S.) and "should be given the right [to] cast their votes...the person with most votes from a particular party gets to win" (Annalise F.).

Second, direct election of Prime Ministers breaks the hold of political elites over the reins of governance, as Robert F. describes: "Not the members but the peoples who vote members should have right to vote for Prime Minister. Because we have right to vote for Prime Minister. We never change if same government all the time because they are corrupt in many ways."

Foreign Interference and Influence

Earlier in this study, the transition in the Solomon Islands from societies organised along traditional practices and customs to one that had to adapt to European 'modern' civil society was explored (Colonialism, Kastom and Adaptation:10-15, Pre-Contact and Colonialism:57-8). Solomon Islanders have as a result been metaphysically displaced within their own country. Historiographically, it is a narrative of the struggle against the enduring effects of Colonial and neo-Colonial predation. Whether the horrific exploitation and brutality of 19th century blackbirding, sponsored by the Colony of Queensland (Moore 2015:155-76), mass deforestation and land degradation (Wairiu 2007:233-46 and Pauku 2009:56p), As a result, Honiarans harbour an instinctive distrust and hostility towards non-Indigenous commercial business concerns.

More often than not, revenue generated by commercial concerns in the Solomon Islands are built upon the manipulation and deception of traditional landowners where wealth generated by these ventures less the pay offs to government officials is far more likely to go back to the business' country of origin, not Solomon Islanders (Wairiu & Nanau 2011:1-15; Kabutaulaka 2006a:239-258). While developed states are generally mindful of surrendering strategic resources, no such scrutiny occurs in a system whereby it is the government itself that drives this exploitative and unsustainable behaviour (Aqorau 2008:246-256; Kabutaulaka 2001:13-15). Respondents who discussed national development and economic issues were specific in their aversion to foreign owned and foreign operated commercial interests in the country. Some examples include Miriam A. who laments that Solomon Islanders "have all resources, that we could sell it and have a business. Instead, we give the businesses lands, environment and other [resources] to other people that is not citizen in Solomon Islands."

James L. insists that only Solomon Island citizens should be allowed to establish business concerns in the country: “I establish the law [that] only citizen can running business. No foreigner can come and make business.” It is important to explore this sentiment. Superficially, these attitudes could be perceived as xenophobia or racism. But racism in the Solomon Islands is nuanced and requires clarity. Bound with the formation of the nation itself, 19th century European quasi-Darwinian theories of a racial hierarchy was at the heart of the Colonial experience in the Pacific (Thomas 2010). Indeed, Colonialism itself should be understood as a manifestation of the racial-determinism and cultural-exceptionalism that formed the European world view. Undoubtedly, seen from the position of CRT the so-called post-Colonial experience remains, where political and economic life is measured and valued via dominant ‘globalist’ western systems (Delgado & Stefancic 2001). And these narratives compete directly with Indigenous subaltern narratives. However, European concepts about racial hierarchy also influenced concepts of race between Indigenous peoples of the Pacific.

Kabutaulaka (2015:112) notes that Melanesian peoples were ascribed the status of *Oceanic Negros*, in the European mindset. Indeed, the term Melanesia literally denotes ‘black skinned people’ or ‘black islands’ (Kabutaulaka 2015:112). Over time, this perception had “become internalised and was reflected in relationships in the Pacific Islands” (Kabutaulaka, cited in Khan & Po’ese 2010:np). Kabutaulaka points to language use in predominantly Polynesian societies such as Tonga and Samoa where “Melanesian’s are identified as ‘black’ derogatorily” (Kabutaulaka, cited in Khan & Po’ese 2010:np). Within Melanesian communities themselves there remains the additional layer of relationship, ethnicity, tribe or *Wantok*. Another important aspect to consider is the effect of globalised communication and information (Firth 2006). While physically remote, Honiarans are connected to and influenced by world cultural, political, and economic affairs. A tangible example of this broader connectedness is reflected in Honiara’s streets in the 2020s. Honiara is more and more a multi-cultural community. There are thriving expatriate communities from countries such as Fiji, Tonga, India, Australia, UK, New Zealand, Bangladesh, Thailand, China, and Taiwan who work and raise families alongside Indigenous Honiarans.

At no point during the research phase, nor several visits in the past was there hostility directed to foreigners merely on the basis of ethnicity, religion, or race. What Respondents indicated was that in their world view (grounded in the Postcolonial experience familiar to many colonised peoples), capitalist concerns in their history are invariably exploitative in nature (van Meijl & Goldsmith 2007:201-7). The clearest example of this dynamic in the Solomon Islands is the “ongoing debate about the international exploitation of natural resources [...] although not restricted to Colonialism and its immediate consequences, is deeply rooted in its history” (van Meijl & Goldsmith 2007:201-7). Fear of foreign business is derived from, and justified through, the collective experience of the generational exploitation of Solomon Islanders from European contact through to the present day. When the focus falls upon ethnicity as the underlying narrative of conflict in the Solomon Islands, it oversimplifies and misinterprets the issue.

Ethnicity is a complex social identifier. It is one of myriad networks, like religion and ideology (Appendix A:278-80; Appendix B:283-84) that underwrite and define how communities identify and differentiate themselves from others (Eriksen 2010). While social identifiers can bind communities, by virtue of this, they can also divide communities. Unlike ideas, however, ethnicity and race are involuntary and inescapable. Nations are geopolitical constructs and are not always defined along single social constructs but a multiplicity. On those occasions when a nation is experiencing an existential level of stress, fractures generally form along social identifiers when the point of conflict is reached (Cuhadar & Dayton 2011). Race, economic status, social status, ideology, religion, or a combination of any of these, can form the basis in how that conflict is expressed. Race and ethnicity (being involuntary, genetically based social identifiers), will tend to trump voluntary identifiers (e.g., ideology) during times of conflict, even if both voluntary and involuntary identifiers are in play (Cuhadar & Dayton 2011). This was the case in the Solomon Islands during the Crisis Period, where the supra-ethnic national identity of ‘Solomon Islander’, was unable to compete with the division of the community along ethnic lines. In a domestic context, the ‘*Wantok*’ of nation was (and perhaps remains) subordinate to the ‘*Wantok*’ of ethnicity.

In the context of foreign involvement and interference in the nation's affairs, as is the case with mainland Chinese influence and interference, the '*Wantok* of nation', that is, 'Solomon Islander', carries far more potency. As the social identifier is external to the '*Wantok* of nationality', (i.e., '*Waku*' 'Asian', 'China', 'Chinese', 'Foreign' etc), it will naturally be contextualised by a racial identifier (Moore 2008a; Yang 2011:143-5). In other words, ethnic Chinese are at once a member of the '*Wantok* of nationality', but in times of crisis, are conflated with the popular negative stereotypes of Asian foreign exploitation and influence; they oscillate between *Wantok*, and *Waku*. During the Crisis Period, a notable incident was the targeting of Chinatown by rioters (Moore 2008a; Atkinson 2009). It did indeed seem to be a racially and economically based attack. However, there are a number of controversies surrounding this theory, particularly evidence tending to suggest that this and related incidents were politically motivated and not spontaneous expressions of Sinophobia (Atkinson 2006).

To go some way in unravelling the various narratives that abound, during the field phase, the study endeavoured to gauge current perceptions of China amongst Honiarans of Chinese descent. It was found that a clear distinction was maintained between mainland Chinese and *ethnically* Chinese Honiarans. Chinese immigration to the Solomon Islands goes back to the beginning of the 20th century (Moore 2020). Long-standing ties within civic society, particularly in commerce, means ethnic Chinese Solomon Islanders have long been considered a driver for thriving commercial interests and are a key employer within the Honiaran community (Moore 2008a:64-95). Certainly, while objectively it appeared the community was targeted intentionally during the Crisis Period, much of this was driven by political interests seeking to improve their position at the expense of political and economic rivals (Atkinson 2006:47-65 & 2009:59). It was not of itself rooted in Sinophobia. Yet, in that environment, inducing or encouraging an angry, disenfranchised, unemployed and frightened population to direct their rage against Chinese business was not a difficult pitch to deliver. In the poverty and desperation of the Crisis Period, Chinese businesses were easy to blame for economic problems; their community's role as merchants was a long standing one (Moore 2008a:89).

In the Crisis Period, there was little else left of need or value in Honiara as the nation became increasingly cut off from the outside world. In this chaotic environment, it was inevitable that Chinese businesses would be targeted, with or without the tacit encouragement of vested interests, because in reality, there was little else to target. Whether they had been owned by Australians, Indo-Fijians or Malaysians, the results would likely have been the same. In an endeavour to explore this further, it was important to gain insight from within the ethnic Chinese community. To achieve this, the author spoke at length with one of the key players during the Crisis Period, ethnic Chinese business and community leader, and President of the United Democratic Party (UDP), Sir Thomas ‘Tommy’ Chan. Chan remains a controversial figure, perpetually entwined in the inner workings of the nation’s governance since the 1980s. He gained notoriety particularly during the unrest following the election of Snyder Rini in the 2006 Elections (Skehan 2006; Atkinson 2009:55-59).

Rini’s ties to the Chan family only encouraged the narrative that Rini was a Manchurian Candidate for any combination of PRC, ROK, or ethnic Chinese cabals. It was for precisely this reason that it was important to establish his personal perception of the state of things, not just to examine his influence in politics during that period. Tommy had lived through the period and would be well placed to offer the perspective on the evolution of the socio-cultural relationships between Chinese Islanders and Indigenous Islanders, and how they perceive individuals or organisations that represent *Waku*, or foreigners. Tommy described how locals refer to ‘new’ and ‘old’ Chinese (Chan, T. 2019, *Conversation with author*, 18 May). He pointed out that this was an important distinction as it was understood to mean that to be ‘old’ Chinese meant that you were considered part of the Solomon’s family (Tommy’s ancestors settled in the country at the turn of the 20th century, he himself was born in Malaita), whereas ‘new’ Chinese referred to mainland Chinese. The distinction formed out of a perceived existential angst (among *both* Indigenous *and* ethnic Chinese Honiarans) about the steadily increasing stream of mainland Chinese business interests flowing into the country in the 1980s and 1990s (Moore 2008a:67-70; Wesley-Smith 2007a).

In his view, recent developments in relation to the PRC has undermined considerable efforts made in the intervening years since the Crisis Period to heal wounds between Islanders of Chinese and Indigenous heritage. Tommy pointed out that the community is evolving and an example of this is the increase in intermarriage between ethnic Chinese and Indigenous Solomon Islanders (Chan, T. 2019, *Conversation with author*, 18 May). Indeed, Tommy's spouse is of Guale descent; he was sincere in his keenness to emphasise this fact to illustrate that stereotypes of ethnic division between Solomon Islanders was just that, a stereotype. He was convinced that generationally, this coming together of ethnicities will occur more and more.

Chapter 6. Results and Interpretation

Customary or Contemporary Authority?

Introduction

As described in the previous chapter's introduction, this thesis is seeking to determine the factors Honiarans perceive to be impeding effective governance. It seeks to explore what changes could be made, reflective of Honiarian customary practice and contemporary priorities to address those issues. Chapter 5 addressed how Honiarans surveyed measure the effectiveness of governance and explain barriers they felt impeded good governance. This chapter will explore and evaluate the role and value of customary forms of authority and the value and relevance of those practices in contemporary governance. This chapter examines how Honiarans regard customary and contemporary forms of authority, how they visualise the role of both forms in relationship to one another as well as the role of both within the country's extant mechanisms of contemporary governance.

This information was a combination of data previously obtained through the qualitative survey and the responses gathered to the interview questions (Appendix E:297-98; Appendix E:300). Respondents generally offered their opinions and ideas on several themes and were encouraged to do so. From the qualitative point of view, this offered Respondents an opportunity to express themselves in a broader framework than that of preferred governance. This resulted in an array of ideas that coalesced around a number of key themes, and which constitute the results of this chapter. Those themes were either 'social' or 'political' in nature, although I acknowledge that there is considerable overlap. Thus, political themes look at constitutional and electoral reform, changes to voting, and direct election of Prime Ministers, for example. Whereas social themes encompass broader economic and socio-cultural reforms, such as land management, health care and unemployment. An important thread that ran through all of the responses was that these reforms could only be implemented the nation eliminated corruption.

***Wantok* and Customary Authority**

At the outset, it is important to reinforce that the Solomon Islands exist in a cultural environment where customary tradition is both seen as an important aspect of the political system and should be encouraged; but at the same time, many Honiarans view some aspects of customary tradition as being anathema to good governance (see Lack of Trust in Politicians:143; Incumbency of Elites:146). *Wantok*, for example, has been tarnished so badly through its corrupt usage within the nation's mechanism of governance that it is broadly seen as anathema to good governance. In this chapter, these attitudes will be explored, as well as where Respondents think customary traditional authority ought to be adopted into contemporary governance in the Solomon Islands, and in what manner. The politicisation of *Wantok* over the last several decades has degraded its broader cultural legitimacy. Changes to these customary concepts occur in the same way as changes to concepts in any other language, their definition and use is responsive and changes over time (Levison & Priestly 2017).

Throughout the research of this project, it had become apparent that *Wantok* and corruption had coalesced etymologically. The use of *Wantok* and corruption interchangeably is not new (Nanau 2011; Brigg 2009), but in the 2020s it is more apparent than ever within vernacular discourse. This holds especially true amongst younger people, because they connect their experience of poverty with the lack of opportunity they experience as a direct result of *Wantok* undermining their chances of prosperity. For Respondents like Brittania A., it engenders the understanding that no matter the effort and skill one may put into their chosen pathway in life, what the country ends up with is “a lot of people with good grades who deserves scholarships, and a lot of people have good qualifications without jobs. Because the *Wantok* system they gave away the opportunities” (see also Moore 2004; Fraenkel 2004; Timmer 2014). Respondents universally condemned the pervasiveness of *Wantok* based corruption within the political system but also explained that it pervades every level of society, as Jodie C. relates: “Corruption is well practice in this country, every member is corrupted and also *Wantok* business is a common practice to Solomon Islanders.”

Numerous conversations with Honiarans would suggest that the contemporary concept of *Wantok* has largely lost much of its customary value in their minds. In a meta-cultural sense, particularly in commerce and politics, it is seen in negative terms (Haque 2012; Fraenkel 2004). *Wantok* is seen as the cultural vehicle for corruption and can insinuate itself into all tiers of civic society. Importantly, this is not to say that *Wantok* is losing its place in customary tradition entirely, but it is refocusing and evolving. Importantly this change is best understood as positivistic regressivism, and occurs not in the public sphere, but in the private one, the family. *Wantok* still informs ethical and moral decision making, but its remit is being re-focused far more narrowly (Nanau 2011; Brigg 2009). In the outer periphery of a family's circle; that is, extended family like cousins, or one's home village, for example, there is growing change in how people subscribe to *Wantok* obligations. It was noted during the research that the obligations outside of one's nuclear family were treated far more cautiously and scrutinised carefully. People are less likely to feel socially compromised by resisting or refusing accede to the obligations of broader *Wantok* networks and feel no loss of face in doing so.

In people's lives in a contemporary context, these broader obligations of *Wantok* are seen as synonymous with financial and emotional burdens that they simply are unable to sustain. This is a contemporary example of customary practices evolving their focus over time (Haque, 2012; Chowning, 1979:66-84). This evolution in the way *Wantok* operates is what could be described as customary functionalism. *Wantok* in this contemporary context is a contract of co-beneficial interdependency enabling a contractual relationship that is bound in a para-legal sense through mutually shared familial, customary values. It is not used as a mechanism to define status, nor as a means to improve status (Keesing & Tonkinson 1982; Nanau 2011:31-55) as it was in the pre-Colonial period, nor as it was manipulated during the Crisis Period (Moore 2004; Fraenkel 2004). The example describes an economic venture based in *Wantok* undertaken by the author's hosts (Lòve, M. 2019, *Conversation with author*, 18 May). Two related 'parties or clans' from within a broader familial *Wantok* operate on an informal but contractually accountable enterprise agreement. In this example the parties consist of an urban nuclear family, and rural extended family, connected by kinship.

It is important to note that these arrangements are scalable, depending upon the circumstances. They may occur between individuals, friends in another province, or an entire village. This is the flexibility of *Wantok*. It is worth reiterating that this is not the ‘manipulated *Wantok*’ one speaks of in reference to electoral fraud, or corruption in politics. This is ‘everyday use’ *Wantok* where both sides of the contract benefit economically and socially (see Incumbency of Elites:146). At one end of this enterprise, family members based in Honiara coordinate the shipping to and sale of *beches-de-mer* to clients at Honiara Market. At the other end of the arrangement, the Honiaran family’s cousins harvest, cure, and package the product, ready for transport. The profits of the venture are distributed according to the role of the family members along that enterprise chain. The clans vary in size. The Honiara clan consists of two or three family members, whereas the harvesting done by the *Wantok* in Malaita is represented by about a dozen family members, due to the labour requirements. This variation is factored into the agreement, and the distribution of profits and costs reflect this.

The role *Wantok* plays for the *Beche-de-mer* farmers in this example illustrates that customary *Wantok* networks when not manipulated or exploitative are profitable, egalitarian, and functional (Welchman 1994:1-24; Roughan *et al.* 2011:1-15; Bryant-Tokalau 2018). In the social sphere, these same folk insist that for themselves and many of their friends, what used to be considered *Wantok* now essentially mean the obligations of care and support of loved ones. In this example, Randy and Monique (Afuga, R. & Løve, M. 2019 *Conversation with author*, 20 May) provide long-term financial support to an extended family member who has not only had lived the experience of a displaced person during the Crisis Period, but she now subsists on a drastically contracted land holding trying to support a family of four children; one of whom lives with disabilities. Anecdotally, this *Wantok* is of course a human truism and will be immediately recognisable in any human society. However, the Afuga clan on principle will not abide it being bound to another individual in a formalised obligation based solely on the authority of *Wantok*, and instead focuses on the welfare of family, relatives, and friends. They consider being bound to *Wantok* in any context outside of those parameters is in their eyes, corrupt and parasitic.

This view is a damning indictment of the political establishment's take on *Kastom* and corruption (Larmour 2012:17). Broadening the scope of this analysis, clearly some aspects of customary tradition are anathema in contemporary Honiara. The following sections examine what other elements of customary tradition Honiarans think are appropriate, or not appropriate, both in civil society and within governance. A number of themes on this topic were developed, reflecting the prevalence of certain topics and issues uppermost in Honiarans minds. The first, and arguably most important theme is the perpetual and pervasive issue of customary land management.

Customary Land Management

Land management and development in the Solomon Islands continues to be hindered due to ongoing lack of synchronicity between *Kastom* and common law (Corrin 2008; Corrin & Paterson 2007). Kofana views this tension between traditional and contemporary perceptions of ownership as being at the heart of community friction (Kofana, 2014:29-40). This affects development not only at the level of agriculture (Allen, Bourke, Evans *et al.* 2006a-2006e) and housing, for example, but also mining licenses, tourism, industrial and fisheries development continue to be hindered or completely blocked by a land management system that in many cases does not have a functional legal framework in place for the granting of development rights (Tyler 1990). The Postcolonial split between crown and customary land is at the heart of most land disputes in the Solomon Islands today. Between 85 and 90 percent of land is held through customary law (Kofana 2014:29). It is extraordinarily difficult to establish land titles and undertake the legal transfer of land due to maze of contradictory cultural restrictions on the use of traditional land (Foukona 2017, 2015:504-8; Filer, McDonnell & Allen 2017:11). Negotiating the release of customary land for development when its legal status in current law is unclear is a sensitive issue and disputations are endless (Foukona 2011). Complicating the negotiations with developers is that Guale and Malaitan customary land laws are distinct from one another. Guale culture maintains a matrilineal inheritance of land in conjunction with male custodianship (Monson 2010), whereas Malaitan culture adheres to patriarchal laws of inheritance (Steger 2008).

In Guale culture, other descendants and migrants are often described as being subordinate to descendants of the first settlers (Monson 2010; Foukona & Allen 2019). Complicating this even further is the intermarriage between Guale and Malaitan communities, creating what Stege describes as hybrid systems of inheritance (Stege 2008). It was this very issue that was the crucible of tensions between Guale and Malaitans in the late 1990s (Wainwright 2003:21). As noted previously (see Land and Resource Management:28), efforts to address land management like the Customary Land Tenure Reform Project by the Solomon Islands government, particularly the defusing of inter-ethnic disputes over ownership, while certainly the right step forward are still contingent upon the process being legitimised by those communities (Solomon Islands Government 2006). Until some kind of formalised structure that codifies the process of customary land management within common law, it is unlikely the process will move forward in any meaningful way. For some researchers, the emphasis rests upon the conflict between contemporary Westminster based law and customary law. (Evans, Goddard, & Paterson 2011; Corrin & Zorn 2005:144-68),

Customary law and its recognition in common law has been an ongoing and difficult topic with no clear solutions. According to some estimates, up to 90 percent of the court appeals process involved land (Bush, Le Mesurier 2004:7). Incredibly, despite this, traditional law is not legislatively recognised or sanctioned. The Land and Titles Act's only provision in relation to customary disputes is to allow their resolution via local courts. It does not recognise customary law, thus cannot make rulings (Bush, Le Mesurier 2004:7). It goes without saying that *Kastom* varies widely, and as such, it must be accounted for in a hybrid system (Chand & Yala 2008). A particular example is the nature of patrilineal and matrilineal traditions of land ownership and usage in the Solomon Islands (Stege 2008; Monson 2010) and how that plays into the arbitration process. Thus, how can custom be accommodated into contemporary law *vis* land? A big issue for researchers is that the conceptualisation of 'evidence' and the 'burden of proof.' Contemporary common law as practiced in the Solomon Islands is an adversarial one driven by burden of proof (Corrin & Zorn 2005:144-68). How do we treat or even qualify 'proof' in customary claims?

How does common law accommodate *Kastom* when characteristics that drive the common law process are not applicable or would not be appropriate? Conversely, what measurement can be applicable when seeking to qualify a legal determination to ensure it meets both common and customary jurisprudential traditions? Research is scant in this regard and remains contentious (Corrin 2011:1-25). Postcolonial narratives have created a popular concept that custom, and law are in opposition with one another. They suggest that this is a relic of colonial tendency to perceive Indigenous practice as illegitimate or inferior to imposed structures and institutions (Tiffany 1983). As the nation's legal code descends from the legal apparatus established by the British, it will like other legacy structures of governance, likely tend to suffer the malaise of cultural incompatibility. Research suggests that in defiance of expectations many local courts certainly do integrate custom into western legal practice in the Pacific (Evans, Goddard & Paterson 2010). Village Courts in Papua New Guinea for example utilise local custom and use local language to arbitrate disputes quite successfully (Demian 2014:2; Goddard 2009).

In Vanuatu (Jowitt 1999) within jurisdictions where *Kastom* is practiced the lower court system is "empowered and/or required by statute to take customary law and practice into account" (Newton Cain 2001:56). The system is organised around customary chiefs who act as a consultative body regarding matters of custom pertaining to new legislation. Importantly, Bule notes that in the case of Vanuatu, chiefs have "no legislative or executive power" (Bule 1986:130). Historically, the Solomon Islands managed customary law via the Native Councils and Courts (Hogbin 1944). These examples illustrate that hybrid systems are achievable. What is also possible is that a hybrid legal system, like any other legal or legislative structure, has the potential for outcomes contrary to expectations. Goddard and Leisande (2013) for example found in their study into 'Hybrid Justice' in Vanuatu, that while successful in some ways, concerns persisted as to the legal ramifications in contemporary Vanuatu of applying customary law, which is in many ways illegal or breaches introduced law, as well as being out of step with contemporary values. The focus must remain on the fact that urgent effort needs to be made to address land rights for all and must begin from the ground up.

Respondents like Florence V. suggests that “the British laws the needed to be changed. It needs to be change because Solomon Islands Political System is a kind which like mixture of culture and British political system.” There is wide support for the point of view that suggests the issue of Colonial legal and political legacy must be addressed (Corrin 2007:143-168; Kabutaulaka 2008). In fact, the British themselves were not entirely comfortable with establishing a Westminster system in the country, and had preferred a ‘Governing Council’, that the British felt better reflected the ‘Melanesian’ context (Fraenkel & Aspinall 2013:195-204). Paradoxically, it was Mamaloni himself that had impressed on the British the full adoption of the Westminster system (Fraenkel & Aspinall 2013:198). Respondent Florence V. posits an example that rankles her in particularly is: “one law of the land that British still adopted in Solomon Islands was the rule/law of ownership of land. British established that 6 foot and above to the earth’s surface is owned by landowners and below 6ft was owned by the crown [...] because below 6 foot was where most minerals are located.” This is a reference to mineral resources policy in the Solomon Islands (SPREP 2022).

The policy “operates on the principle that all minerals belong to the state, including minerals found on customary land and that on customary land the state owns the rights of mineral resources beyond a depth of six feet” (Naitoro 2000:133-134). The issue with resource management in Solomon Islands is that it “operates in an environment of distrust [...] because the policy of state ownership contradicts the essence of land ownership system” (Naitoro 2000:134). Naturally this distrust is reflected by comments of a number of Respondents (Appendix A:273,275-6), such as James L. who thinks “the government should not involve with land issues.” It is an understandable position in light of the evidence that successive administrations have failed to develop legal and legislative standards to manage land (Filer, McDonnell & Allen 2017:11). But there are others who firmly believe the government has a role in arbitration and management of customary land, particularly in utilising long term leasehold arrangements. Timothy R. believes it is essential landowners have “the right to urge the government to consider decision by local council” in relation to land purchases from customary owners.

Approaches like this reflect pre-Colonial customary land management (Kali`uae 200:18-41) and importantly, contain enormous economic benefits via efficient land management practice unifying both the national interest (Williams 2011:3) and customary tradition (Kofana 2014:38). While aspects of customary tradition are essential within contemporary governance, particularly the right to arbitrate on issues considered within the jurisdictional purview of *Kastom*, the inappropriate use *Kastom* such as *Wantok* and ‘gifting’ are anathema. Clement A. reminds us that, “*Wantok* can affect the lives of people which they want the better ‘government to satisfying the needs and concerns of people.” It has been embedded in the political landscape for so long that when interviewing Honiarans, *Wantok* and ‘Corruption’ were used interchangeably during the survey. Consider this: it has now been twenty years since researchers noted ‘*Wantoks*’ etymological drift over the past three decades toward synonymity with ‘Corruption’ in Melanesian sociolectic lexicons (Moore 2004; Fraenkel 2004; Timmer 2014).

Indeed, there are enormous financial temptations inherently attached to development projects underwrites and feeds into the systemic corruption that has long destabilised governance in the country. This is the irony of so-called Chinese ‘soft diplomacy’ in the Solomon Islands (see China & The Solomon Islands:35). While offering enormous windfalls to governments, the effect these ‘prestige’ projects can have on customary land holders in Honiara can be catastrophic. The PRC has focused upon “large construction projects like roads, government buildings and sports venues [within] capital cities that directly benefit the governments in power rather than local communities” (Lum & Vaughn 2007:10). In Honiara, this translates into the purchasing of large swathes of traditionally held land between Honiara city along the coastal highway heading east to Henderson International Airport, where Chinese commercial activity have been developing apace, particularly in import and export, construction, and logistics, with these activities continuing to gradually subsume both public and customary land (Moore 2008a; McElroy & Wenwen 2008:225-246). This rapid uptake in development in Honiara is being imposed upon a region that has been in a generational struggle over exclusion and alienation from their land.

It is the result of “the process of long term historical ‘alienation of people from land’ which can transform over time to become ‘alienation of land by people’” (Foukona 2015:509). As Respondent Emmanuel M. says, commercial entities are having an enormously negative impact on people’s lives. She said that she would “change the law of people who come into our country...people come into our country and want to run their business do not allowed to buy any people of land but only allow them to rent the piece of land or buildings for a certain time according to our agreement.” Emmanuel goes on to say that as she understood it, “most area of piece of land beside the town area...the government cannot take it back because they we already register it [as a customary owner]. The idea is that people from different country they buy land and register, then we cannot take it back when we needed. This should not be allowed in our country so that our land would stay for our own.” This exemplifies the concerns Honiarans face regarding the rights of customary landowners to sell, lease or otherwise transfer land to both locals and foreigners.

It is a complicated legal environment where a number of factors lead to the situation “where a government awards land titles to some people, but not to others [creating an environment of] post agrarian exclusion or the loss of agricultural land to non-agricultural use” (Filer, McDonnell & Allen 2017:4), generating enormous existential pressures upon the area’s inhabitants. There are insurmountable contradistinctions between customary and contemporary land use in Honiara. Afuga, A. living along the Kukum Highway and its adjoining settlements held grave concerns about the rise of mainland Chinese commercial interests operating in Honiara itself and its effect on the community (Afuga, A. 2019, *Conversation with author*, 20 May). It has been noted that the intensity of land disputes is generally higher in urban and peri-urban environments and is the result not just of factors like population growth, “but is also due to the fact that some of the land in urban areas is still customary land or is subject to customary claims” (Filer, McDonnell & Allen 2017:11). The result of this is the urban environment becomes “rather like patchwork quilts, with some parts covered by formal land titles, some parts occupied by their customary owners, and some parts whose legal status is quite uncertain” (Filer, McDonnell & Allen 2017:11).

While land ownership in a contemporary legal sense is through “registered perpetual or fixed term estate,” other land falls under customary law (Foukona 2017:2). This type of land is able to be leased to foreigners with the consent of the Land Board. The law also allows for “the granting of easements over perpetual and fixed-term estates and registered leases. The Land Board can grant leases of public land under periodic terms and licences to occupy public land for a period not exceeding three years” (Foukona, 2017:2). Land held under *Kastom*, while there is not a legal basis allowing “customary landowners to lease their land to locals or foreigners” (Foukona 2017:2), customary law itself does make allowances for this to occur. This opens a window to external exploitation because the effect of poor land management, especially due to lack of enforcement, a result of corruption, means that there is a diminished ability to arbitrate customary claims within urban areas. This, in turn, is exploited by foreign businesses, who can take advantage of these systemic legal ambiguities (Filer, McDonnell & Allen 2017:11).

In urban Honiara a considerable number of customary tenants maintain customary rights over the land and can dictate to a degree the usage of that land, such as allowing the use of that land by non-owners as well as determining what can be constructed on the land, as well as physical access to that land (Williams 2011). The trouble with this is that in a contemporary legal sense, this customary land falls within the Honiara town boundary, and being public land, the government has legal privilege to lease this land for residential and commercial purposes at its own discretion (Williams 2011). This web of contradictory and confusing land claims, rights of tenancy and occupation is aggravated by the inability or ineptitude of the Land Board when it comes to enforcing and arbitrating the premiums and rentals from Estate titles (Foukona 2007). Even though non-compliance with the Board’s statutes results would ordinarily mean the forfeiture of that title, “getting people to pay their dues and removing people from forfeited estates remains a challenge [and in any case] evictions rarely happen in Honiara” (Foukona 2017:2). It was found that the Commissioner of Lands had abused their power in granting and transferring of registered estates, the result being that entities or individuals with considerable financial means gained control of land in and around Honiara.

This in turn increased property prices, pushed out the poor and contributed “to the expanding of informal settlements onto customary land” (Foukona 2017:2). Evidence provided by locals (Afuga, A. 2019, *Conversation with author*, 20 May) corroborates this, describing a number of mainland Chinese commercial interests strong arming locals into selling customary land holdings, forcing many onto reduced customary holdings or illegal tenements. The Gilbert Camp, astride Honiara’s south-east boundary, formed by chiefly i-Kiribati and Tuvaluan labourers during the Second World War, is an exemplary model of the effects of unregulated land management (Maggio 2016). But it is not China alone who is contributing to dispossessing communities from their traditional land holdings, forcing many to live illegally in the peri-urban areas in traditional huts without access to water, utilities, and power. For example, the Asian Development Bank (ADB)’s ‘Solomon Islands Land and Maritime Connectivity Project’ (ADB 2020). In a developed state, it would be a valuable infrastructure project. However, woven in amongst the KPIs and elevator pitches is the ‘Land Acquisition and Resettlement Framework,’ specifically the categorisation of ‘Displaced Persons.’

In this divisive and divided region, caught between the customary and contemporary, the ADB, a fiscal instrument of Asian, Austro-Pacific, European and North American UN member states makes it clear that ultimately, an Indigenous landholder’s rights, when it impedes on major infrastructure development, regardless from whence the development originated, simply gets in the way (Barjot & Lanthier 2021). It is an experience Indigenous Australians are all too familiar with in their relationship with the Mining Industry (Scambary 2013). In fact, it does not matter whether claimants have formal legal rights, customary rights, or right of occupancy (Foukona 2015:504-8), all have the potential to find themselves displaced from the land based upon arbitrary interpretation of land rights and ownership (ADB 2020:13). It is a situation where contemporary and customary rights are in direct competition or conflict with one another, as both are subsumed by commercial and infrastructure development. For Honiarans, it is all a continuation of the foreign development ‘Janus’ narrative of development and exploitation being inextricably linked.

Additionally, relations between traditional owners and internal migrants in Guadalcanal has developed into what Allen (2012:163) described as: “Malaitan settler and Guale landowner with competing ‘settler’ and ‘landowner’ identity narratives [where] both compete for the means to establish a morally legitimate claim to property rights and economic opportunities on Guadalcanal” (Allen 2012:164). This alienation of customary land and the encroachment of urbanisation puts “tremendous pressure on traditional institutions responsible for the management of customary land, but [...] little state intervention to facilitate adaptation to the cash economy or to support customary land development” (Foukona 2017:2). As described below, there is an absence of processes designed for land purchase and use outside Honiara’s town boundary, and any action authorities are meant to take remain “unclear, of dubious enforceability, and largely unrecorded” (Foukona 2017:2). Two families who were victims of the influence of foreign land development were interviewed at length (Afuga, A. 2019, *Conversations with author*, 18 May; Afuga, K. 2019, *Conversations with author*, 20 May).

Both families possessed long time Guale matrilineal customary land holdings, each consisting of about 2 acres of prime arable land. The land was the core of that clan’s market gardening enterprises and homes. The plots were located just east of the Lungga River bridge on the Kukum Highway. Incidentally, this area formed the area of interest regarding the development slated for the Honiara Port Project (Hurst 2023; Rahman 2023) as well as the associated redevelopment and improvements to the main arterial roads connecting the port to key logistic nodes, such as the Henderson International Airport (ADB 2020). It is also the location that some suggest is already fully controlled by Chinese interests for, as yet, unspecified use, but likely being an additional long berth docking facility, as well as a possible site for a Chinese military installation (Packham 2022). Over several months, both families claimed they were pressured through financial inducement, and sometimes with the encouragement of ‘stand over’ tactics of police officers on the payroll of those interests. Neither family group could confirm precisely who was purchasing their land, saying only that it was a *Waku* consortium of some kind. They inevitably succumbed to this pressure and sold part of their land.

One family consisted of a single mother and three children living in a single roomed traditional raised hut, tucked between the highway's rubbish filled drainage ditch, an access road, and their former land holdings, now empty and enrouned with a large perimeter construction fence. The matriarch of one family told me that this had been the case for well over twelve months. She believed they have no plans to build on the land in the immediate term but were buying up land parcels like hers with the intention of buying out all the land holdings along the Kukum Highway from the nation's port facilities in the city centre, to the nation's only international airport. To her own knowledge, this was affecting hundreds of families (Afuga, A. 2019, *Conversation with author*, 18 May). The ancillary effects of this land loss, and the inability of these people to find somewhere to live means that either they, like her, hang onto what tiny parcel of land they can, or if they are fortunate enough, return to their clan in the Provinces. The other family affected by this dispossession resides in an incomplete and abandoned concrete building. Its doors, windows, electrical cabling, and copper piping had long been stripped and taken away.

At the time of the interview, there was no power, water, or sewage, and their property was becoming ever confined by a gradually increasing maze of access roads and foot tracks, though locals adhered to *Kastom* and did their utmost to respect her land's boundary, such as it was. Suffice to say, tillable land for the subsistence was entirely inadequate to meet their needs (Afuga, K. 2019, *Conversation with author*, 20 May). For Honiaran families like these, concerns about mainland Chinese investment are about alienating communities from their land, unsustainable logging practices and land erosion. These concerns are reflective of the experiences of Honiarans directly affected by foreign development. Land alienation in Honiara is the outcome of an admixture of long-term leasehold tenure disputation. This in turn clashes with customary claims to land because there is an absence of effective legislation designed to arbitrate *ex juris* customary land claims that defy or contradict the existing *corpus juris* of the Solomon Islands. When combined with the cultural and physical bulldozers of foreign development, dispossession from land is evitable (Kali'uae 2005:18-41; Filer, McDonnell & Allen 2017:11).

The current state of land management and enforcement is such that categorisations of ownership such as customary, private leasehold, illegal IDP settlements, are all largely meaningless. It is an environment where poor governance and land management means that Honiarans affected by the lack of records, unscrupulous practices and clear land boundaries are left without legal recourse protecting them from dispossession (Foukona 2007:64-72, 2017:1-3; Foukona & Allen 2019:311-337).

Women in Governance

There are other areas where customary tradition is undergoing an active evolution, and a key aspect is the role of women socially and politically (Corrin 2006). While women have long held customary authority in certain communities, particularly in relation to the ownership of land, this was not the rule for the numerous ethnicities of the island chain (Monson 2010). Some hold very strong patriarchal traditions, and in the contemporary context, while women may in theory hold matrilineal authority, due to poor education and the inability to enforce or recognise customary law, women are at an institutionalised disadvantage. Even in a scenario where *Kastom* would have allowed for females to have a role in arbitration ‘behind the scenes’, in a western legal sense, these efforts are in vain as the system only recognises “negotiations that occur inside public arenas such as land acquisition proceedings or court hearings” (Monson 2010:2). Aggravating the problem is the fact that, generally speaking, customary tradition tends to favour male dominance (McDougall 2014a), and that customary law offers very little protection for women and children (Corrin 2003; Wairiu 2006; UNDP 2012). Corrin also points out that in the contemporary context, the assumption that introduced laws will generally promote an improvement in freedom and equality for women is a false one (Corrin 2006). Be that as it may, women’s roles within society are evolving, and often use ‘soft power’ in their implementation. One example describes women in the Western Province who are developing community based educational facilities, independent of male control (Cox 2017:75). This ability of women’s groups to organise and contribute to communities without recourse to government or NGOs “demonstrates their resourcefulness, resilience, and significant but neglected national potential” (Pollard 2003:44).

Women's 'soft' power potential is not only focused on women's welfare and representation but also on activities to broaden the role of women in society at a 'strategic' level, such as in environmentalism and education (Scheyvens 2003:24-43). Female empowerment has also long been fostered within church-based women's groups, as well as women's voluntarism in welfare projects. Corrin notes (2003:53-76) that women and children are afforded few protections they once had under customary law, because the cash economy has eroded customary authority, which in turn removed traditional avenues of redress and arbitration for women. Thus, women's groups form a crucial network that meets those needs and goes a long way toward fulfilling societal needs. As Pollard found, women's groups not only "supplement the traditional concerns of home economics. Health, Education, and community service," but are vocal and active within "economic development, political participation, and human rights" (Pollard 2003:44-60).

So active, in fact, that during the Crisis Period women's groups, particularly church-based ones, were deemed to possess strong *Mana* by the two sides; their counsel had *gravitas* and formed an important element in de-escalation of the conflict (Scheyvens 2003:24-43; Maebuta 2011). The contribution of women in this period was such that "many hoped that this would translate into representation in parliament: yet not a single female gained a seat" during the 2006 Elections (Fraenkel 2008b:164). It is attested that from a developmental perspective, female participation in the political process is considered an essential factor as to whether projects succeed or fail (Soaki 2017:95). Yet, women's representation and activism in the nation's political landscape remains quite low. As recently as 2019 the Women's Rights Action Movement the International Women's Development Agency reported the very low representation of women amongst parliamentarians means that "women's voices are therefore largely excluded from political decision-making" (Batalibasi 2019:8). Despite this, popular support women's participation persists. Other surveys conducted during the 2019 elections confirmed that "up to three-quarters of Respondents believed that there should be more women members of parliament" (Batley, Wiltshire, Ridolfi & Rogers 2020a).

However, the survey found that both genders were still less likely to vote for a female candidate (Batalibasi 2019:8). It perhaps indicates a cultural struggle underway between competing cultural mores. While women and men were clearly supportive of an increased role of women in politics, this constituted a challenge to persistent customary tradition whereby politics was understood as a male prerogative. Despite this cultural resistance, recent decades have seen women having an increasingly prominent role in the nation's governance. Waring, for example in *Being the First: Storis Blong Oloketa Mere Lo Solomon*, (Waring, cited in Aelan 2010), describes the lives of women who had defied cultural mores that limited female participation in public life, profiling female Permanent Secretaries, Public Service Commissioners, Members of Parliament. Gender roles in contemporary Solomon Islands are certainly undergoing gradual change (Cox 2017). One Respondent, Alfred G. offered his unqualified support: "women are more careful and can make a lot of decisions, a wise and satisfying decision as they always make right decisions despite of some for them fail for sometimes, I still strongly believe that the government system power should be given to the educated Solomon Island women."

Women are seen by many in the community as less corruptible than men, as Respondent Jodie C. explains: "we want woman to be in the parliament both national and provincial because women are honest in everything. They do give equal shares on projects even use money properly, women are not corrupted." There is evidence from other studies that tend to support this increasingly popular view of women being less corruptible and thus beneficial to governance (Batalibasi 2019:23). Interestingly, one study found that the two main responses from male focus groups, which had been asked why there should be more women in politics, was that women were less corrupt and considered more reliable than men (Batalibasi 2019:23). The third response men in that study gave was that women cared and were concerned about community welfare, and women in politics would engender more socially aware political leadership Rockson G. wants a leader who "have heart for the people meet the needs of the grass roots level...lets vote the female candidate in the parliament cos woman decision sometimes is perfect direction."

Ironically, due to the male dominated clientelist rubric that underlay governance, for corrupt bureaucrats and politicians concerned about losing access to (or being prosecuted for) ill-gotten gains, this belief in female incorruptibility creates barriers against increase women's participation in politics and business. A UN study into gender and corruption in the Pacific found that in the Solomon Islands, because women are thought to be less inclined to engage in corruption: it is likely that these political and economic networks will attempt to exclude women out of fear they would undermine their ability to engage in corruption. And where women were included, they were "expected to fall in line with the male leaders. This behaviour can perpetuate and reinforce corrupt practices such as clientelism, nepotism and trading in influence (UN-PRAC 2022:2-3). Finally, it should be obvious that measuring 'corruptibility' based on gender in the Solomon Islands will not produce any meaningful statistical information. Historically, female participation has been so low that any data sampling would be so small as to be meaningless. This is in addition to the fact that from a definitional sense, it remains very difficult to qualify and quantify the difference between 'ethical' traditional socio-cultural practice, 'unethical' traditional socio-cultural practice, and outright corruption.

Integrating Customary Practice into Governance.

In analysing the relationship between customary and contemporary forms of authority, it was noted that culturally, *Wantok* has evolved etymologically into a dialectic dualism. At its most basic, this consists of the 'positive' *Wantok* in private life, and 'negative' *Wantok* in public life. As described previously (see *Wantok and Customary Authority*:166), positive *Wantok* within private contexts is bound to immediate familial relationships or performs as a basis for mutually beneficial economic enterprise and community development (Roughan *et al.* 2011; Welchman 1994; Haque 2012). The broader tribal or ethnic ties of *Wantok* that bind communities together also remain. In the contemporary context, many Honiarans migrate internally for work and rely upon *Wantok* networks to maintain their links to their home islands (McDougall 2017). Positive *Wantok* is in many ways an expression of a progressive, contemporary Solomon Islands. This is noticeable in Honiara, which is a melting pot of ethnicities and nationalities, the result being that community participation revolves more around sporting clubs and church associations rather than along ethnocentric lines.

They are a shadow social welfare system. Empirically, during my time undertaking research, as well as spending time with friends, it was clear that contemporary expressions of positive *Wantok* were incredibly diverse but always remain bound within the private context. In contrast, the use of negative *Wantok* and other forms of custom utilised in the public sphere, particularly within politics, the public service, and corporate business (see *Incumbency of Elites*:146) has lay at the heart of the nation's woes from Independence. While the popular sentiment is that the use of custom within governance is generally manipulative, unethical and to be avoided almost entirely (Timmer 2014; Fraenkel 2004), there does remain several aspects of *Kastom* that many feel have an essential role to play within civic life (Maclellan 2006). As noted previously (*Customary Land Management*:170-80), the clarion call for the integration of customary law and practice was loudest regarding land ownership and management. Respondents who discussed land related matters during this project felt that customary laws and rights must be protected by common law.

As noted in the recounting of the dispossession of traditional landowners (see *Self-Governance, Corruption and Crisis*:15), it is seen as a fundamental human right to have Indigenous historical land ownership rights enshrined constitutionally, and like Corrin suggests, receive the legal validation and protection that it entails (Corrin 2011; Corrin & Zorn 2005). In the pre-Colonial period, custom was naturally the source of law that determined the administration of customary lands. With the establishment of the Protectorate in 1893, state institutions gradually supplanted customary land administration (Foukona 2007:64). Historically, the process of managing land has been highly dysfunctional, and has remained contentious into the contemporary period (Filer, McDonnell & Allen 2017; Williams 2011; Kofana 2014). And despite about eighty-five per cent of the country's total land area being held through customary tradition, it remains highly difficult to access for development due to the ambiguous legal status of customary land claims (Kofana 2014:64). And as Williams (2011) observes, up to ten percent of the nation's GDP is determined how 'public' land, that is, customary land, is governed. Customary land management is an issue that will not go away and needs to be addressed.

As Moore notes, *Wantokism* and *Kastom* are “basic to local culture and have to be accommodated – these cultural concepts can be used to advantage or ameliorated but not ignored” (2007b:179). Indeed, the violent results of disputes over traditional land ownership between Guale landowners and economic migrants from Malaita, and other provinces seeking to establish themselves, was a key element leading to the social unrest and violence during the crisis (see Self-Governance, Corruption & Crisis:15; The RAMSI Period:63-69). Many legal codes relating to the ownership of traditional versus crown land from the turn of the century are still at play today (Corrin Care 2001, 2005, 2008). Indeed, historically the sale of crown land by the government was, in essence, in contravention of the intended use, or limited use of that land by its customary owners. Unsurprisingly, there is a corresponding universal nervousness among Respondents who owned land in Honiara as to the validity and security of their land claims. As Kofana suggests, it is the recording of customary land ownership is the only way “forward for the country in terms of formalising customary land rights in the hope of preparing it for engaging in development” (Kofana 2014:29).

There is an argument that the codification of customary law could lead to social unrest due to the disruption of customary claims due to historical conflict for many Honiarans (Williams 2011). Yet, the prevailing opinion of Respondents who discussed land ownership was that the only effective method to addressing traditional land ownership was to redress the effects of Colonial legislation with the adoption of some form of Indigenous land council, led by traditional leaders, to take custody of these issues and resolves them through a constitutionally recognised framework. Customary law is not currently recognised or protected by current legislation (see Customary Land Management:169), and the legal recourse regarding customary disputes is limited to local courts (Chetwynd, Foukona & Gibson 2005). The recognition of customary law would amend issues of arbitration which had hitherto *marginalised the roles of traditional leaders* (Bush & Le Mesurier 2004:7). Yet a White notes, there is the matter of what kind of customary leadership would apply in the contemporary context, particularly how the State engages traditional leadership that is acceptable to the nation’s diverse customary traditions (White 2006:1-21).

According to Kali`uae “the systematic application of the concept of long-term individual leasehold tenure has already worked in Solomon Islands under the Fixed-Term Leasehold and Perpetual Estates legislation” (2005:18), and that it was possible to draft a legal framework that did not undermine the cultural and historical dimensions of *Kastom* and land. (Kali`uae, 2005:18-41). Kali`uae cites the example of Fiji’s broadly effective system of customary land management in Fiji under the Native Land Trust Act 1948 as evidence that these legislative changes can be made and can be successful (2005:29). Beyond land management, others, like John V., voice the idea of integrating customary practice at a Provincial level. John V. believes that the formal integration of customary practice with existing provincial structures would help in arbitration between ethnic communities within that region. And, as it represents that local jurisdiction it is tailored to that community’s practices and more likely to successfully resolve community disputes: “State government would allow each citizen to express his own idea because of similar tradition. Would also avoid tension between ethnic groups.”

As White and Lindstrom (1997) noted, the role of chiefs in governance in the Pacific region is diverse and integral. They cite how chiefs function as an intermediary between local communities and centralised authority in some context but also become the focus point for cultural and political struggles against centralised authority. As Respondent Hobson T. relates, communities across the country are actively engaged with entrenched customary traditions. They are still taken seriously in contemporary life. “Our culture and norms are already emplaced within every island in the Solomon Islands. Therefore, politicians should also input free space for our cultural laws as part of the parliament act within the Solomon Islands constitution” (Hobson T.). The renewed importance of chiefs seems to suggest cultural momentum continues to push toward an integration of customary leadership into extant political structures (White & Lindstrom 1997). Thus, according to Hobson T., it would only be natural that the adoption of customary laws should be integrated constitutionally, as the cultural framework is extant and integral to the social fabric of the country (Appendix A:300).

There are also reservations about what kinds of customary practices that should or should not be adopted constitutionally or otherwise (Begaye 2008). There remains in the Solomon Islands a dichotomy that links customary tradition with female subjugation, and the expectation that westernisation and introduced law will guarantee freedoms sought after by women (Care 2006). Here an example from the surveys and interview illustrates why serious consideration must be given to the fact that while customary tradition and contemporary legal and political reality are not diametrically opposed or incompatible inherently, due deliberation needs to be undertaken to understand what does or does not belong in a modern context (Monson 2010). A Respondent [name withheld] noted that he would “de-criminalise the violence against woman because some husbands have the right to kill *his* woman [my emphasis].” It is a reality of any cultural practice that many customary beliefs and practices run contrary not only to contemporary societal norms, but as the above example cautions us, fundamental human rights. It is also a reminder of the reality that such belief systems and practices still hold sway over the minds of people (Jalal 2009:25p).

Value and Relevance of Customary Practice

One approach to ascertain what elements of customary tradition should be integrated into contemporary legal and political structures would be through systematic and free flowing consultative programs between government representatives, and traditional chiefs and elders. Huffer and Ropate (2004) argued that the failure of the Solomon Islands to be able to successfully utilise the instruments of Westminster politics suggests the political narrative needs to be remodelled to reflect cultural mores in relation to *Kastom*. According to Boege *et al.* the potential benefits of hybridising customary tradition and contemporary practice are clear and that discourse on governance in terms of failed or fragile states was misleading and that it was “more appropriate to talk about states emerging from hybrid political orders as a common denominator” (Boege, *et al.* 2008:iii). In the summary of their investigation into hybrid governance in the region, researchers found that individual nations’ journeys through hybrid governance varied. However, it retained the essential element of “the introduced Western models of governance and elements stemming from local indigenous traditions” (Boege, *et al.* 2008:iii)."

It was found that in Melanesian states such as Vanuatu, Bougainville, and the Solomon Islands during their transition from Colonial governance, there had been ongoing dialogue on the “conditions and possibilities of a ‘marriage’ between customary governance and introduced Western forms of governance, based on relatively strong customary spheres and state institutions that struggle with problems of effectiveness and legitimacy” (Boege, *et al.* 2008:iii). In other words, contemporary and customary forms of authority could inform and improve the effectiveness of both. For contrast, East Timor (with Colonial and cultural ties to Portugal and Indonesia) is challenged with accommodating a kaleidoscope of Melanesian-Papuan and Malayo-Polynesian customary traditions into contemporary governance (Roque 2018:387-409). Other Pacific states have a very different customary tradition, and this informs their Postcolonial trajectory. Tonga for example is an Indigenous constitutional monarchy. Tonga’s Head of State, King ‘Aho‘eitu ‘Unuaki‘otonga Tuku‘aho (Tupou VI), plays a fundamentally important role as a leader of the Pacific islands’ only surviving Indigenous monarchy, representing customary continuity and authority (Powles 2014:1-22).

It is from this tradition that Tonga is in the process of evolving toward a more liberal form of democratic governance which is driven primarily by emergent civic based authority that appears to be increasingly influential (Boege, *et al.* 2008:21-2). Addressing the historical erosion of customary authority has gained popular momentum in the Solomon Islands. For Respondents like Nahaniel P., it is essential that a “political review on the current structures” be undertaken and the governments “should amend a law which will recognise the customary law practices by the people based on their beliefs that protects the rights and people since their past until today.” To neglect the recognition of Indigenous/customary traditions and practices may be the country’s undoing, the Solomon Islands must acknowledge their distinct regional and traditional approaches to governance (Nanau 2002:9-10). Others agree and posit other examples in the Pacific region where traditional leaders and politicians collaborate and do so relatively effectively. As Respondent Benada O. cites, “one example is Fiji. They have their chiefs to work alongside the politicians.” Many Honiarans of Polynesian ancestries often referred to the political arrangements of their brethren.

It is often overlooked that many Indigenous Solomon Islanders are in fact Polynesian, and those communities maintain cultural and familial ties to Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga. Interviews revealed that ideas about the roles of traditional leaders in Polynesian states have established themselves into the popular political vernacular of Melanesian Honiarans. This interest in Polynesian narratives is due to the unique circumstances of the transition to independence for the Solomon Islands in comparison to its Polynesian neighbours. As opposed to Samoa, Fiji or Tonga, customary 'community administrative' positions in the Solomon Islands were far weaker. Over time the position of traditional forms of governance and leadership had decreased to a far greater extent in the Solomon Islands in comparison to its Polynesian neighbours. This diminished or uncoupled people entirely from local governance in the Solomon Islands. Kabutaulaka notes that whereas Samoa and Fiji (which are culturally more homogenous than the Solomon Islands), incorporated traditional leadership roles into the political system, this did not occur in the Solomon Islands. The result was a "disconnect between the Solomon Islands Government and its people not seen in other Melanesian and Pacific countries" (Kabutaulaka 2008:96-118).

The Polynesian experience thus informs popular narratives in the Solomon Islands by highlighting that their customary traditions have been woefully under-represented historically in comparison to their Pacific neighbours, and that customary authority can play an effective and representational role in contemporary governance. Regarding integrating customary roles within governance, there are pros and cons for many Honiarans regarding this process. Depending upon cultural context, some call for an increased role for traditional leaders, while others call for traditional authority to be regulated (White 2006). The experience of Postcolonial governance of Pacific states is an essential aspect of informing popular discourse. Framed between the influence of the West, and that of China, the cultural influence of fellow Pacific states plays a fundamentally important sounding board by which Honiarans can best inform themselves about the appropriate, culturally consistent path toward political reform and social change. However, it remains important to remember that what applies for Fiji, Tonga, Papua New Guinea may not apply to the Solomon Islands.

It is a truism of exogenous systems of governance that their success depends upon degree of alignment culturally and socially. In this case, the ethnic diversity between Polynesia and Melanesia is a factor in explaining differences in state performance. That is, “different kinds of ethnic structure are associated with specific political and economic outcomes, including variation in political stability, economic development, and internal conflict from country to country” (Reilly 2004:479-493). In the Solomon Islands, its ethnic diversity is more conducive to democratic processes than in polar states such as Fiji (Reilly 2008). The Solomon Islands, utilising a devolved model where power is diluted outward provides a representative democratic model of multi-ethnic federal governance. This contrasts with the current system in place which would be better suited to Fiji with its “centralised systems which favoured dominant ethnic elites in and around the power centre” (Reilly 2004:479-493). The value of integrating customary law and tradition into contemporary political and legal structures is contingent upon overcoming the omnipresent threat of corruption. Customary laws and traditions, like contemporary legal and political practices, will only generate positive outcomes if the use of those practices is designed to empower the citizens, not punish, coerce, or manipulate them.

Ending Corruption

As related previously (see Corruption and Gift Giving:31; Governance and Corruption:80), the history of power dynamics in the Solomon Islands highlights the enduring role of ‘Big Men’ and Clientelism in politicking, and the ongoing manipulation of *Kastom* by social elites for political gain. During the Crisis Period, this manipulation was understood to be part of a larger issue within society in the Solomon Islands: that of endemic corruption. Indeed, almost twenty years after the crisis, the immediate impression encountered during this project was that the exasperation, resignation, anger and frustration felt within the community about corruption remained as high as ever. Corruption is viewed by almost every Honiaran interviewed as having pervaded all levels of society in some way (Appendix A:270-1 E:300). While citizens rail against corruption within government and business as undermining the nation; *petit* corruption, transacted between many people on all levels of society on a daily basis, is commonplace.

The corruption of the nation's governance is both a reflection of this social more but also creates the conditions that perpetuate it (Siota, Carnegie & Allen 2021:34-48). Respondents describe the effect of corruption on their society and what they think can be done to address this. David I. believes that democratic values are being fundamentally undermined by corruption: "In the Solomon Islands we could witness where democracy as a system of government has been fully abused. Politicians are being given free handouts to their supporters as a payment for their votes. It would be quite difficult for an ordinary citizen to become a politician if that person does not have money to give to the people." The following section will examine in more detail what Respondents think can be done to combat corruption. As established previously, the result of endemic corruption was that policy program delivery is all but ineffective. As a result, Respondents were universal in their belief that ending corruption in governance must be at the centre of any reforms.

Barnabus R. is clear on where action needs to be taken: "self-serving or corruption is my first priority to change. No member of the parliament should be mis-used any money [...] If caught, then should be put in prison for 7 years." This focus on directly punishing corrupting elements in the political system is, for others, not only an absolutely essential step in the nation's development going forward but is also a moral and ethical issue as Ezra T. relates: "Corruption is another word that refers to liar or steal so my opinion is that if we stop corruption that mean our country should be in a good state of development where development should being more job opportunities." Other Respondents argue that the clientelist system of patronage in the Solomon Islands encourages dependency, which is ultimately exploitative and stifles innovation. Jackson K. explains the manipulation of *Wantok* as "giving of money or material things and promises to gain favour from people". He continued: "we need to change this system because it will give an attitude of dependency to people to depend on their member to meet all their needs rather than rise to do own business to develop the country. This system made people to view parliament members as their money, not a leader."

Indeed, the corrosive nature of corruption corrodes social, even familial harmony as was noted when discussing this with Respondent Judy M. She related her personal experiences, saying that corruption can “effect people to become enemy, for example, riot. Some people they are related by due to corruption relative are now become enemy” (Judy M.). Because corruption is so pervasive Milba H. believes this leads to a situation where “management breaks down and corruption is everywhere from government to the grass roots people.” She infers that due to this, “unnecessary business [...] comes into our country because of what? Corruption. What we call ‘*Seleni*’ – ‘money talks’. To step up the economic system of the country.” In other words, instead of the focus being on national development, the focus of politicians is upon self-aggrandisement. Robert F. agrees that the culture of endemic corruption within the incumbent political elites directly hinders economic development and that as a result “we never change if same government all the time because they are corrupt in many ways, we did not seeing any development happen.”

Adriano I. observed that corruption, which hitherto had been the preserve of political elites in the past, has become increasingly accepted and adopted in all social stratum. Reflecting what was observed with the manipulation of customary law and *Wantok* during the Crisis Period (Timmer 2014), Adriano I. states that “mostly from the past few years ago parliamentary, corruption doesn’t exist widely in an around country and maybe some of our local peoples they can’t get influence or not understand what is meant by corruption.” Even though people are aware of corruption and the issues it causes, it still thrives in government (Moore 2007b). As Adriano I. noted, “corruption is the influential attitude in governmental systems that most opposes in many ways in which modern government should play internationally.” Many Respondents concentrated on the role of political elites in corruption, although some offered another perspective. Renley A. lays the responsibility for endemic corruption with all Solomon Islanders: “We all know that corruption is not only begins in the National Government, but it begins from grassroot level to the national level. Corruption occur every time in our daily living, where it refers to liar or stealing. So, from that I want to emphasise everybody to get rid of this...we need to slip corruption from our minds.”

Martin H. agrees, and also suggests that the nation needs to wean itself from corruption as a cultural norm: "In my own thinking, our country's political system should change or get rid of corruption because corruption is an issue where everyone not only the National Government but even the grassroot people are well known of it so from that I for one could make a change, where we need to stay away from corruption, do away from it and boost our country's development, provides more job opportunities, and improve our country's economic growth."

Poverty, Drug Abuse and Crime

The inability of successive administrations to meet their obligations to their citizens has ignited new or inflamed existing socio-cultural maladies, which, as discussed in relation to corruption, generally create a pathway to unrest. Jayson A. iterates the direct link between the lack of educational and employment opportunities among the young, and drug and alcohol abuse and states that the government must "provide jobs for the youths that have been dropped out of school so that they can spend time from illegal activities like alcohol and drug." Bryan D. suggests that the government needs to work with the community to address this.

Bryan argues that direct measures such as to "stop producing and selling of tobacco and cigarettes publicly in the streets, including drugs like marijuana and kwaso [moonshine]" need to be put in place. Bryan suggests that not enough is being done on the street: "Most of our young people lived in town of Honiara are most influenced in those bad activity that bring their lives to nowhere." Respondent Joy O. also highlighted the direct pathway between poverty and lack of opportunity leading to criminality: "Only some can afford to pay for their child's education so as the others they don't have enough money to send their children to school. When children don't go to school, they don't have jobs, and this can cause problems. They end up doing drugs, drinking kwaso and other criminal things, so the government should do something about this."

Healthcare, Water and Sanitation

An area of particular concern for Respondents was what could be described as neglect and underfunding in healthcare and community welfare (Appendix A:271). Neverlyn M. states: “The government did not provide enough medicines to the hospital and clinics for the patients.” Evidence suggested there are inadequate resources being allocated to frontline preventative medicine to deal with the leading causes of critical illness, malaria, respiratory diseases, tuberculosis, and diabetes (Westcott, *et al.* 2012). This lack of funding does not end at frontline health services. Other key elements crucial for community welfare are being held back by corruption, as Benjamin T. describes: “we need to change our leaders where they loving more corruption [...] they need to improve [...] infrastructure, water, sanitation. That is the examples that we need to [change].” Indeed, sanitation in urban areas and within the city itself are of real concern. Flooding events over the past 20 years and the potential for water borne disease is an ever-present threat. As health experts identify, the risk of major health pandemics as a result of poor water management is long established (Natuzzi *et al.* 2016:307-314).

It is incumbent on any state in the Pacific region to take tangible policy measures to future proof both urban and rural populations to better prepare them to manage climate change, minimise the impact of environmental degradation and improve their standards of living (Fleming, *et al.* 2019:331-340; Maebuta & Dorovolomo 2011). Water security and sanitation remain an ever-present concern. There is a real need for sustainable water management to reduce dependence upon ground water for example public health reasons (i.e., contamination due to industrial and human waste), and for public safety and environmental reasons (i.e., soil stability and degradation, erosion, and land slip). The impetus has been to look to renewable sources such as effective rainwater harvesting to supplement domestic water needs and take pressure off the water table (Quigley, *et al.* 2016:65-77). Indeed, there are some projects in train through agencies like the Asian Development Bank that will contribute enormously to improving living standards and public health, through improving the removal of waste and delivery of fresh drinking water to the countries growing urban centres (ADB 2022).

Education Reform

Data from surveys and interviews suggests that Honiarans are heavily invested in education, ideologically. For many Respondents (Appendix A:272; B:288-89), good education is the foundation through which society produces informed citizens, which in turn can foster improved civic cohesion, national development, and good governance. As Respondent Terry V. says, “education is a way forward empowering people to become more self-reliant. It is assumed that an education society is well empowered society that will in turn be resourceful and be able to make constructive and sound decision that would lead to development.” Unsurprisingly, education was cited by numerous Respondents as being a key aspect of civic life that needed immediate attention. Respondents believed that both tiers of government have been effective in improving the education sector with over 80 percent providing a positive response (Appendix A:272). But they also maintain that education is still out of reach for three main reasons, expense, lack of resources and over centralisation of educational facilities.

The cost of education, (itself a combination of fees and resource costs, plus transport and accommodation costs for regional students), is for most the main reason many are unable to receive an education. Respondents, like Roy V. recommend that the government “address issues concerning free education in the country.” Stanley A. qualifies this, explaining that “the main reason why they are without being in education is because of school fees, also contributing of that reason is because some children are being of the family which they are without father or mother. However, the main idea of this system which I decide on is mainly the government to make a free education for all children so that even children without father and mother can have privilege to enter or attend school.” That is to say, there exists a gap between the funding schools receive from the government, and the level of funding Honiarans are able to contribute to school fees. Funding for all educational facilities in the country is controlled by the Solomon Island’s Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD) and is “distributed to provincial authorities, schools and local communities after MEHRD has consulted with the National Education Board” (Narsey 2022:4).

According to the Education Act (Article 42), “it is the responsibility of school head teachers to collect funds from the government and it is the responsibility of both the provincial governments and schools to account for all funds collected” (Narsey 2022:4). Like Regional Constituency Development Funds (pp) this system is vulnerable to systemic corruption. However, the impression given by Respondents was that under-funding, not corruption, was the challenge here. There was simply not enough funding allocated to schools by the MEHRD, which in turn led to the increase in up-front education costs. Increasing regional educational facilities was tabled by Respondents as a means to lower the cost of education. It is significant that the majority of secondary and tertiary institutions are located in Honiara. This centralisation means that the costs incurred by regional students who must migrate internally to attend university, for example, can be onerous. With a lack of employment opportunity, migrant students depend entirely on the generosity of *Wantok* in Honiara for accommodation.

Respondents believe that addressing this problem directly by developing more educational facilities in the Provinces will become increasingly important as the nation’s population growth puts pressure on the overly centralised system. As Britany T. suggests, “as our population are rapidly growing, we need better education. Because we as a student faced many problems in our education this is terms of lack of resources that are provided to us by our states.” Among Respondents, education was very much seen as part of the solution to endemic socio-economic issues. In the immediate term, Ray V. sees the education system absorbing unemployed, uneducated youth: “Educate youths in order to stop number of youth unemployment rate in the country.” Indeed, the pressures faced by the Honiarans in finding employment for a demographic that in developed states will not enter the workforce until they reach adulthood, are disproportionate. Honiarans are cognisant of a youth population boom which became mired in a combination of high unemployment, drug abuse and criminality, contributing to the Crisis (Kuschel, Takiika & Angiki 2005:211-54). They are also aware that this grew out of lack of access to education, or opportunities upon leaving school, which in turn created the conditions in which social unrest thrives (Jourdan 1995:202-222; Whalan 2011).

Legal and Tax Reform

Legal Reforms need to occur to reflect the national character and composition in the contemporary period and reconcile historical injustice and the lack of customary authority in common law (Arkwright 2003:177-94; Corrin 2011:1-25). When collating Respondent views regarding legal reform (Appendix A:277; Appendix E:300), the view was that the legal system needed to integrate or replace existing legal structures with those that make allowances for customary laws and tradition (Corrin 2001:1290-1303; 2003:53-76). The most often cited example of where customary and contemporary law need to be reformed is land ownership, management, and development (Naitoro 2000:133-134). As explored earlier, (see Customary Land Management:169), land claims and the arbitration of land title in Honiara's peri-urban zone are in an appalling state. For Respondents surveyed in this region, legal reform was a matter of the highest urgency. They overwhelmingly identified corruption and exploitation of customary tradition within governance, and within daily life more broadly, as an abiding concern (Appendix A:270-71; Appendix E:300).

Tax fraud was also identified as an issue for some Honiarans. Their understanding, as Diana A. relates, was that "some of the laws are only benefiting the members of parliament and not the voter for example tax." Respondent Chloe A. elaborated, suggesting that the "current government doing tax free of all the national members." She was not alone in this assertion. Jayson A., too, believed that "All governments employer including government members must pay the same tax rates." Indeed, the salaries of Parliamentarians have been tax-free since the November 2015 ruling by the Parliamentary Entitlements Committee (Economist Intelligence Unit 2015). The implementation of an array of entitlements has remained unpopular example of the self-serving nature of politics in the nation (Economist Intelligence Unit 2015, 2016). For Mark G., the tax system was yet another means for those privileged few to aggrandise themselves: "Why did us local farmers from home paying or tax while national members first sitting down without saying any word during the parliament meeting and not paying of tax in addition, even their housewife get paid without done nothing, it too unfair for us." Indeed, research suggests that there appears to be growing concern about tax fraud and evasion.

Opposition Leader Hon. Matthew Wale raised the issue of tax evasion and non-compliance to Parliament during his July 2022 Debate Speech (Wale 2022). The nation's ranking as a Tax Haven has further disconcerted Solomon Islanders who were under the impression that the "Solomon Islands could never have been a tax haven because it has some of the toughest tax legislations in the Pacific region" (Sasako 2023:np). Others, like Aulelea R. believe that taxation reform should address national debt and reinvigorate the economic potential of the country, but "because the government is so greedy, every [part of the] economy and minerals on our country have not grown or increase the currency of our country."

Resource Management

The Solomon Islands certainly has moderate mineral wealth, but its extraction and the disbursement or misuse of royalties has been an ongoing problem (Tolia and Patterson 2005:149-59). Resource development must account for what has been described as the conflict between contemporary and customary values about resources and how they are extracted, as well as the expectation of benefit not only for the commercial enterprise, but for the customary owners. Importantly, resources should not be the backbone of the economy as Gold Ridge was in the past, but a supplement to other industries (Tagini 2014:23). Gold Ridge project exemplifies the trajectory that large scale extractive industries can take when the project is mismanaged and undermined. In 2013, evidence had emerged that "certain top government officials" within the Solomon Island's government "had misappropriated Gold Ridge royalty payments destined for the 16 tribes who have custodial ownership over the Gold Ridge site" (Solomon Star 2014:np). While it was reported that chiefs and others were in discussions about the mine and enforcing landowners' rights with the government (Tolia & Patterson 2005:149-59), the damage was done, and its effects long lasting, with the income meant for government coffers and landowners evaporating (Tengemoana 2014).

Employment Opportunities

The Solomon Islands has had ongoing issues with unemployment for some time. High youth population and a lack of development was a key factor in the development of conditions leading to the Crisis (Moore 2004; Jourdan 1995). Unemployment is still an issue of grave concern for Honiarans, where even the most rudimentary employment opportunities are few and far between. The result, as Philothia Q. relates, is a society where “many people are jobless and do nothing: they did not have money, food and this makes people did not have any hope at all. Other effects are this was lending people to bribe or stealing another people’s property.” This situation was evident during the field work phase of this project. Indeed, graft and petty theft are seen as an unfortunate part of many people’s endeavours to survive. Examples of this were in evidence in people’s daily lives: manipulating weights, measures, diluting products, and accessing the black market (Afuga, R. 2018, *Conversation with author*, 8 December). Businesses of any scale are subject to ongoing petty theft.

One of the author’s friends who owns and manage a general store destroyed in the 2019 unrest had been targeted so frequently they had resorted to hiring local wantok to guard the premises (Lòve, M. 2019, *Conversation with author*, 16 May). Ethical behaviour is trumped by the exigencies of human need, and this is no different outside the rubric of the cash economy. As will be related in the coming paragraphs, subsistence forms the economic core for the majority of Honiarans. In order to supplement this, they participate in the informal economy to access cash, goods, and services (Christensen & Mertz 2010). Individuals generally have a mixture of “sources of household income” such as selling betelnuts and cigarettes and working in full-time and casual unskilled jobs and that “average income from informal activities is two times more than the average fortnightly income from casual and full-time employment and 1.5 times more than the national minimum wage” (Maebuta & Maebuta 2009:118-31). Most Respondents like Chris T. who simply wants an opportunity to work, asks for “Fair right to all human race in terms of jobs opportunities”; and Victoria V. who wants “more small job for the people to work and earn money to help their families and fees for their children.”

Others, however, have a more nuanced understanding; like Philothia Q. who thinks that good economic management as well as sustainable employment should be the primary drivers: "Our government is responsible to manage on our economy. I suggest and wish that our government should consider and make good decisions in the country to make these people be part in getting job: provide the job that fitted the class of people according to each level." 'Brain drain' is a concern for some, who ask how the country can develop its potential if its best and brightest are likely to expatriate looking for broader opportunities overseas (Bush & Le Mesurier 2004). Miriam A. describes her impression of the issue: "some of our people here when they go overseas, they should see a change of the other countries to come and advise us to make our country a better place, instead they coming they do nothing that's why we didn't develop." Miriam certainly is correct in asserting that the loss in economic potential through migration of educated workers is a very real concern. However, there are benefits to be obtained from policies encouraging economic migration (Moore, Munro & Leckie 1990).

A Lowy Institute conference on labour mobility, held in 2008, agreed that all Pacific Island countries should be offered opportunities to participate in a seasonal labour scheme in Australia and New Zealand (Hayward-Jones 2008c). This could offer Solomon Islanders an opportunity to not only to generate income for their families, but an opportunity to develop lasting socio-cultural networks of exchange with the broader Pacific community. There is a thriving Australian South Sea Islander community in Queensland (Moore 2015:155-76). And while their ethnogenesis crystallised out of the darkness of the Colonial period, establishing lasting and mutually beneficial contemporary connections between Pacific nations, economically and culturally, could have lasting and positive impact (Tarte & Fry 2019). From a foreign policy perspective, this approach, utilising regionalist precepts falls comfortably within the softer approaches to diplomacy (Shaw 2006). Building closer ties between Pacific states in this way provides a durable link connecting Australia and New Zealand's interests to the Pacific region, in very tangible ways (Frazer 2006). It addresses endemic unemployment, provides a reliable, consistent income for thousands of Solomon Islanders and their communities (Patience 2004:1-18).

However, there is an intrinsic flaw to this perspective as it is the perspective of those external to the Solomon Islands. Migrant labour is by definition exploitative, it exists by virtue of the fact that it is cheaper than domestic labour. In other words, there are unmistakable Neo-Colonial overtones intrinsic to any labour scheme that exists in principle due to its ability to undercut the costs of hiring domestically. The aim of these schemes is to enrich the host nation, not the seasonal workers.

Economic Reform

Many Respondents remarked on how after so many years, so little progress in the nation's growth has been achieved. Joann E. believes that new leadership is in order: "It is better not to keep the same people if we need to make a change for if there any change especially in terms of country's economy, we should have seen it." And it is certainly difficult for a citizen to walk through Honiara and not be reminded of the severe neglect by government (Talbot & Ronnie 2007). Elison R. illustrates this: "if you could start observe from national airport right down to Point Cruz there were [the] same buildings and poor infrastructures. It seems like these things are not concerned by our leaders. They intend to do thing, for their own people or language or province." Others point to broader issues of neglect in economic reform at the expense of the nation. For example, Aulelea R. stated that "Every economy and minerals on our country have not grown or increase the currency of our country. Small scale industry should be fostered." For others, consultation and innovation with the community is seen as the path forward. Linco P. suggested that a "systematic approach...to...social economic reform...in small scale labour.... Which is, securing future jobs for our generation in education sector, and provide sustainable and economical transitional jobs" (see also Carney 1999). As noted in the analysis of issues affecting governance (see Qualifications and Suitability of Candidates:152) there is a desire to ensure that political leaders are of the requisite educational and empirical standard necessary for the task of managing their respective responsibilities. Wilson B. believed that economically focused individuals in government are essential: "People should vote leaders which are economical highly educated with good characters. People who do more reasoning and ask more economical question."

Import restrictions and a focus on export economy were also thought to encourage development. Ezra T. stated that “growth of our country’s economy depends entirely on the development in our country; thus, the development is to ban the imports and only to export our products that we produce in our country.” Retail infrastructure also needs to be a focus. Street markets have been noted as being increasingly unviable as the city grows (McGregor 2006:np). Peter A. suggested that economic growth start with the basics noting that there are simply “not enough markets for people to be sell things. People in Solomons then no place to sell or marketing. We should build a big market house for people to marketing, and they should divide in their place for marketing, example fish different place.” Tied into this issue is the lack of efficient road infrastructure. It is either incredibly time consuming or prohibitively expensive for many producers to get their products to consumers. The result, generally, is that many augment income by setting up improvised market stalls at the nearest serviceable road in order to attract foot or vehicle traffic.

The Land and Marine Connectivity Project is an attempt by the Solomon Islands Government to address problems like this (ADB 2020). Yet, as discussed earlier (see Foreign Interference and Influence:159), projects like this concern Honiarans who fear imminent dispossession from their lands, customary or otherwise. It is a developmental ‘Catch-22’; fostering development to improve living standards, yet that same development diminishes or even destroys the livelihood of those people for whom the development had been intended (ADB 2020). Other Respondents also talk about the negative effect of imports on the economy, like Cyril T. who wants to “reduce the number of import and make more export by building industries to make our product for example, fisheries, farming and plywood.” Similarly, Taylor F. agrees that generating exports through creating more industrial capacity should be the focus. As she puts it “the country need more jobs for the increasing unemployment in the country. Provide more factories and farms.” Indeed, aside from a few key primary producers of material like palm oil, coconut products and high turnover marine products, there are few domestically operated large-scale agricultural or maritime industries (Fraenkel, Matthew & Brock 2010).

However, there are some indications that developmental focus is growing regarding renewable energy, ICT infrastructure and transport. This perhaps would provide further impetus for improvements in primary industry (Asian Development Bank 2019). It must be noted that many Honiarans are wary of large-scale commercial enterprise. As noted previously (see Foreign Interference and Influence:159), industries have been so destructive to both the economy and environment, many Honiarans are wary of industry. Development in the Solomon Islands must focus on “people, particularly resource owners, and utilises the strengths and advantages of the customary land tenure system” (Aqorau 2004:113). For example, as the majority of Solomon Islanders live in a rural subsistence economy, many were able to weather the economic crises that emerged from the Crisis Period (Sodhi 2008:1-19; Moore 2007:170). However, the loss of arable land to development and the effects of climate change mean that Solomon Islanders living on the Guadalcanal Plains upon which Honiara is located, are under considerably more pressure than ever, their ability to subsist becoming increasingly difficult.

Many Solomon Islanders do not even participate in the cash economy, and depend upon means of subsistence to survive, even in peri-urban environments (Sodhi 2008:1-19). Furthermore, the lack of employment opportunities keeps many Honiarans outside the cash economy. The fact that Honiarans are rarely the beneficiaries of commercial development, combined with the loss of customary land used to subsist upon, means that for many Respondents their ability to maintain even the most basic living standards has become perilously difficult. There are constraints to this kind of development, however. The traditional system of landownership provides a welfare safety-net for the vast majority of Solomon Islanders (AusAID 2008), and any development upon this land reduces the amount of land available for village-based subsistence gardening. Large scale development upon this land is “problematic, costly and fraught with uncertainty due to the inevitable and often multiple disputes that arise between owners and developers, or between different landowner groups” (Pauku 2009:iii). One solution to this dilemma is developing a policy program that connected local people with “rural advancement strategies” to improve agricultural development with a focus upon Indigenous based agricultural practice (World Bank 2007).

Environmental Reform

Respondents expressed their concern about logging by foreign companies when examining their views in relation to foreign interference and influence in the Solomon Islands (see Foreign Interference and Influence:159). It is also important to examine their views on logging itself in relation to the economic, social and environment damage it continues to wreak across the country (Bird, Wells *et al.* 2007). As Smith A. summarised: "Logging company [...] contributed very much to climate change where citizen suffer the negative impact." The effect that deforestation has on the rest of the ecosystem was understood as Peter H. alludes: "we need to stop logging, it will affect our marine side." Indeed, during the field phase of this project a number of market gardens and rural communities west of Honiara were visited. a number of areas with local farmers were examined, where they pointed to run off from deforestation that was visibly choking several major river outlets along the north Guadalcanal coast, as well as land erosion and destabilisation.

A number of farmers brought up their grave concerns about the shrinking arable land because of the damage being caused by flooding. This is itself a result of deforestation reducing the hygroscopic ability of the soil, diminishing its catchment, and thus increasing surface run off during the rainy season at potentially catastrophic volumes (Clark 1987). Significantly, the margin for error between normalcy and disaster for those living by subsistence in this precarious environment, is very fine indeed. For Denly H. when he asks "...logging companies not to spoil our resources that God has given us to be survive," his words are not hyperbole, he is not concerned about reduced margins and increased overheads. It's the threat of malnourishment, poverty, land loss and dispossession. Further afield from Honiara, Solomon Islanders are taking direct action to address environmental issues and are doing so from within the framework of customary land ownership and use, and ecologically focused forestry management. For example, in Western Province, the Christian Fellowship Church (Ishimori 2007:33-52) has developed a community-based Reforestation Project (Aswani & Racelis 2011).

Members of church have managed to persuade village leaders and community members to undertake a large-scale reforestation project on customary land held by a number of kin groups. The Christian Fellowship Church “has undertaken an apparently effective, large-scale reforestation project where the government, corporate logging companies, or localized kin groups have not” (Aswani & Racelis 2011:26). Strategies like these are a tangible way for Solomon Islanders to regain control over both their environment, but also their livelihoods. If customary ownership rights were enforced, this would give the country’s remaining forests a chance at survival and effective management in accordance with *Kastom* (Kabutaulaka 2006a:237-57). For Linco P., the government must adapt to the reality confronting their electorates, and “needs to create jobs and adapt to this climate change with adequate initiatives to come forth.” The reality of contemporary resource management is that there are no longer any resource frontiers. What that means is that there are no longer any resources that are not in some way ‘owned’. And due to this, all resources will involve competing claims of ownership, and conflict over the management of wealth generated (Tyler 1990).

While resource conflict is inevitable and global in scope, for most Solomon Islanders, daily life operates within the confines of small-scale subsistence economics. This is not uncommon in countries possessing excellent climate, substantial fisheries and fertile soil. It is for this reason that many Solomon Islanders were not affected directly by these resource extraction issues in the short term (Moore 2007:170). However, the enduring effect of long term economic and environmental mismanagement will result in a generational degradation in their overall standard of living and well-being. Yet, conflicts over the utilisation of renewable natural resources can be avoided or reduced through greater stakeholder participation during project planning and management (World Bank 2009b; UNCED 1992; Winterbottom 1992). This emphasis on participation is particularly relevant to ‘the poor’. Giving greater voice to the poor is not necessarily a conflict-free activity as it raises the possibility of new tensions between project beneficiaries and excluded groups (Haley & May 2007). Resource-based poverty reduction projects, which depend on their success upon those excluded from the project’s immediate benefits for example, are potentially vulnerable to such tensions (Warner 2000:10).

However, there are options available for recovery with emergent sectors such as eco-tourism and ethical sustainable resource use (Cinner & Aswani 2007). There is also a growing awareness within rural communities and the private sector of the commercial value within shared resources (wildlife, land, minerals, forests, fish, etc.) and these benefits can be accessed through the exertion of 'private' property rights, increasing Indigenous commercial opportunities and employment (Sodhi 2008:1-19). One example of this is the customary management of marine resources designed to adhere to the *Kastom* of coastal communities by integrating "traditional rights-based fishery management systems" (Aswani 2005:286). Fishery management has hitherto been a failure and renewed impetus needs to be made to "design innovative fishery management prescriptions that integrate natural and social science research more comprehensively" (Aswani 2005:286).

Exogenous pressure will remain a constant throughout the developing world (Warner 2000). Yet if the process of development is managed within parameters that comply both with customary and contemporary socio-cultural and socio-economic mores, the benefits are more likely to be experienced across society more equitably. The establishment of policies to foster transnational institutional integration between Pacific Island states and regional partners would increase trade investment and allow regional growth, shrink bureaucracy and increase the availability of skilled labour in the marketplace (Powell 2005:218-239). If coherent governance to control the development of emergent sectors in the coming decade, it is likely that a more equitable and sustainable economic system is achievable.

Chapter 7: Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the results and interpretation of found in Chapter 5, exploring how Honiarans measure both National and Provincial governance, their effectiveness as well as barriers impeding good governance, and the results of Chapter 6, which explored Honiaran perceptions about the **role and value of customary and contemporary forms of authority**. Based on these combined findings, this chapter returns to the questions that form the basis of this study:

What factors are perceived to impede effective governance and what changes could be made, reflective of the community's customary practice and contemporary priorities, would be necessary to produce more effective governance?

Discussion

This section discusses the findings regarding Respondent views on the existing tiers of governance and describes how they evaluated the effectiveness of those structures. It then describes their opinion regarding alternative structures of governance, particularly reforms that reflect more federalised models, with state structures that empower regional communities, with particular focus on integrating elements of customary administration. Respondents generally believed that these kinds of reforms would improve the effectiveness of governance. They felt that empowering local participation within governance through devolution would encourage regional structures of governance better attuned to that community's needs. According to the survey, 75.22 percent of Respondents believed National Governance was more effective than Provincial Governance, with 84.85 percent believing National government has sufficient authority to govern, and 62.38 percent believed National government had most impact in their lives (Appendix A:269-70). Respondents who supported the existing centralised system of government felt it was better able to govern for a number of reasons (see National Governance:116). They believed that Central government had superior access to the fiscal means and authority to create and implement policy.

It was believed that National governance, as custodian of the nation's laws and constitution, was considered the ultimate authority over their lives. Respondents indicated that there was a popular misunderstanding of the relationship between national and state governmental bodies. Many Honiarans appear to consider Central and Provincial government as separate entities with varying levels of legitimacy. National and Provincial Government must delineate their hierarchy of responsibility and clarify the role both tiers of government have, both in policy implementation, but also in service delivery. Evidence and Respondent opinion both align in that the focus should be upon a reduction in duplication between the tiers of governance in combination with higher degrees of transparency and oversight so as to reduce the endemic corruption undermining effective governance. Many Respondents consider National leaders as an apolitical elite disconnected from the concerns of the people and more focused on accessing wealth and power.

Respondents are aware that responsibility for institutional change is ultimately in the hands of the electorate and that the ballot box was the medium through which they can call for systemic political change and renewal. In relation to Provincial governance, 73.83 percent of Respondents felt Provincial governance was more effective, while 75.67 percent believed it had sufficient authority to govern effectively. 51.37 percent of Respondents felt Provincial government was most impactful (Appendix A:270-71). There is a broad equivalency between both forms of governance in terms of impact, effectiveness, and authority. While National governance was often framed in term of legitimacy and authority, Provincial governance's support was based upon the perception that it was more synchronous with constituencies by design. Provincial authorities were perceived to communicate more directly with constituents and were better placed to understand electorates needs and concerns. Those surveyed argued this was the result of being constitutionally bound to that region's development (see Provincial Governance:121; Devolution and Decentralisation:132). It is understood that the success of development was contingent on the ability of government to work with the community. Respondents argued that this success was more likely in the Provincial context because its leaders were individuals elected from within the community.

This meant that there was an innate understanding of the expectations and interests of that region, and Provincial leaders were considered to be more cognisant of and sympathetic to the needs of their community and better able to understand the requirements, protocols, and management of local development. There has long been community support for the introduction of a state or federated polity in the Solomon Islands (Bennett 1987:327-330; Mae 2010:9). State government, and by extension, federal governance, can be designed so that the interface between government and people is more direct (Wilikilagi 2009:6). This proximity means that government services and initiatives are better able to be delivered to recipients. Respondents and researchers identified that this proximity is of particular importance for a nation like the Solomon Islands where a considerable portion of the population is removed from centralised governance. The funnel effect between National and Provincial agencies, whereby the dilution and delay of funds from the Central government through to Provincial agencies reduces not only the Province's working capital but diminishes the legitimacy and effectiveness of policy implementation.

The centralisation of bureaucracy is such that all key positions within the Provincial tier of government were selected through an appointment process controlled at the National level. Aside from being incredibly time consuming, it also diminishes those offices. That is, because the selection process is occurring outside its remit, the Provincial government, as the affected stakeholder, loses its ability to select individuals it feels are best suited to those positions (Phillips 2020a:1). State governance would improve on the current model because state systems facilitate decentralisation and development focused on the regional level. Being more in tune with their Province's socio-economic zeitgeist offers State governments the chance to cultivate innovative approaches in managing economic development, as well as being more effective in engaging with political issues affecting their region (Wilikilagi 2009:7). That overly centralised system of governance has hindered regional development in the Solomon Islands has been established for some time (Wilikilagi 2009:7).

As established (see Devolution and Decentralisation:132), evidence suggests decentralisation would assist in resolving ongoing issues surrounding land management, infrastructure development and social justice. As Saunders explains, semi-autonomous State governments are better placed to manage the socio-economic, cultural, and customary issues of their jurisdiction (Saunders 2013:41-46). Honiarans surveyed corroborate this view and argued that adopting or adapting the current system toward a devolved, polycentric federalism offers the Solomon Islands a chance at finding the balance between custom and modern, rural and urban, the traditional and the new. Despite the ongoing popularity of State governance conceptually, political elites have stymied any measures to increase Provincial (State) autonomy or decentralisation. After all, political elites depend upon the centralisation of power in Honiara to maintain their power base. Political elites are concerned that increased decentralisation would result in the succession of those Provinces. But if they do not allow the expression of distinct communities through increased autonomy, it is also likely that this will impede national development (Nanau 1998:183-199, 2002:1-18).

In terms of effectiveness of governance in relation to other performance indices tested during the survey, both tiers of government scored reasonably well. 75.22 percent of Respondents felt National Governance was effective in its role, with 73.83 percent believing Provincial Governance was effective (Appendix A:269-70). Despite this, Respondents still identified both tiers of government as being inefficient in some way. Some felt that Provincial governance in particular was less effective in its responsibilities as a result of the over-centralisation of authority. For example, some felt that the National government's control over the ability for Provincial authorities to appoint staff, impeding the ability for Provincial governments to govern more effectively. They also felt that Provincial governments lacked the fiscal independence from centralised control to be able to effectively govern (see Structural Effectiveness:135; Efficacy of Governance:141). Respondents were clear in their call for more executive parity between the National and Provincial authorities, with particular attention to be paid to empowering Provincial governments. For Honiarans however, corruption in governance is at the core of inefficiencies and ineffectiveness.

It is the corruption of politicians that determines the effectiveness of governance more so than the structures of governance themselves. Respondents argue that the quality and integrity of political leaders was at the heart of effective governance. The political system of the Solomon Islands is fundamentally a Westminster style unitarian system. However, over time, the manipulation of customary tradition of patronage, or 'clientelism', has modified the conditions under which the structures of the Westminster system operate in the country. Clientelism uses customary practice and tradition to underwrite a system of obligation (Wood 2018:481-94). In clientelism, voters inadvertently perpetuate endemic political maladministration. Electorates support politicians offering local development and opportunity to *Wantok*. Candidates will employ manipulated customary practices of the Big Man, such as gift giving and the offering of payments to encourage the support of voters. A clientelist system is by definition exclusionary by nature. If you are outside the graces of a patron, you will not benefit. On the other hand, if you are, tradition dictates that your patron must repay your loyalty through largesse of some kind.

In the Solomon Islands, this translates into a system where incumbent political elites are compelled by their customary obligations to support development within their electorates, over and above their responsibilities to nation. Politicians are heavily invested in this process as it is the basis of their personal wealth and power and will often employ corruption or exert their authority to leverage any opportunities that benefit themselves and their power base. As all political elites have operated in this way for generations, the nation's socio-economic development has been unfocused, and as a result, uneven and unjust (Wood 2018:481-494). The incumbency of corrupt politicians contributes to the sluggishness in policy implementation (Cox & Morrison 2004:8), as they seek to serve interests more likely to benefit themselves (Fraenkel 2011). This erodes confidence in governance and also disincentivises innovation and discourages development. This structural stagnancy is seen in all tiers of government by Respondents who think both governments cannot translate policy promises. This may be explained by the fact that many politicians indeed have a poor understanding of the functions of government, even the nature of their own roles (Cox & Morrison 2004:7).

Were the nation free from cronyism and corruption, it is more likely than not that many existing structures of governance would function effectively. This section analyses the findings regarding other issues that Respondents thought negatively affected governance and describe solutions they believed would contribute to the stability and functionality of governance. Some key issues include major reforms to the electoral system, political parties and the manipulated *Kastom* and its corrosive role in perpetuating the dominance of political elites. Respondents offered thoughts on reform to address these issues, with particular focus being on tackling endemic corruption in tangible ways. It highlights the difficulty of reforms in this regard due to the country's political system being structured along Clientelist precepts, which, due to its relationship with customary traditions of patronage and the 'Big Man' leadership paradigm, pre-determines the political process, perpetuating issues such as corruption that Respondents themselves railed against. Respondents looked for more trustworthy leadership to combat this issue of endemic corruption, yet the political process itself perpetuates the conditions that makes this impossible.

This trap of Clientelism needs to be addressed, the abandonment of patronage within politics, and its replacement with stronger electoral laws to control the lobbying process, more accountable and stable political parties, and a reformed voting system. Respondents and researchers alike believe that preferential voting will address the preponderance of established corrupt elites who manipulate the existing FPTP system through Clientelist money politics. Respondents have ongoing concerns about the threats to sovereignty and cultural traditions that the influence of foreign powers present., Respondents were damning of the corrosive and corrupting effect of Taiwan's decades long CDF program upon National and Provincial governments. In particular, they felt CDFs exacerbated the corrupt practices of political elites by virtue of the fact CDFs super-charged existing financially based activities that manipulated customary practice. In their drive to consolidate their hold on power, political elites cynically piggy-back *Wantok*, the ethno-familial cultural network that has formed the bedrock of life in the Solomon Islands for generations.

The true gravity of the PRC's rise to prominence in recent years was examined and the implications of increased PRC influence in the nation discussed, not only in terms of geo-political and security factors, but how it is affecting Respondents' lives tangibly. In particular, the threat of land dispossession through development, as well as the threat of social destabilisation due to ethnic and economic friction, as well as the perception that Chinese influence presents a threat to *Kastom*. From a statistical viewpoint, a lack of trust in the nation's political leadership was at the heart of Respondent views on governance. 84.85 percent (National) and 82.10 percent (Provincial) of Respondents say that trust was a central consideration when voting for a candidate (Appendix A:269-70). In a manifestation of the clientelist 'feedback loop', despite trust being of paramount importance for Respondents when casting votes, Respondents condemned the degree of corruption in government with only 59.16 percent (National) and 56.41 percent (Provincial) of Respondents believing those tiers of government were free of corruption (Appendix A: 269-70). This is the effect of clientelism; if you are outside those *Wantok* that benefit from a successful candidate's benevolence, the impression of injustice or corruption is established.

This is despite the fact that this was the outcome of the cultural twist to the electoral process they themselves participate in, perpetuating the conditions they in good faith are voting to change. It is important to recall here that voting is voluntary in the Solomon Islands, so for better or worse, citizens that take the time and energy to vote are invested in their country's political process. This participatory enthusiasm in the functions of civic society need to be encouraged and fostered through effective political reform (Upton 2006). The Crisis Period illustrated the existential danger in allowing a collapse in confidence in governance. Tied to this concern for Respondents is the state of political parties in the nation. Political parties are fluid associations, often formed prior to elections, and if unsuccessful, will disband almost as quickly (Wood 2014:2). This is not restricted to minor parties and is the result of clientelism defining how politicians gain and maintain power. It is unlikely that stable party structures will form because the customary system is focused on individual leaders and their localised support bases (Fraenkel 2006a:9). This is why members of parliament in the country are comfortable defying their party to pursue their own agenda.

It also explains how, despite utilising the First Past The Post (FPTP) electoral system (which generally encourages a bipartite system), the country still manages to foster a proliferation of minor, weak, political parties. Respondents believed increased vetting and oversight of politicians as well as limits on terms was essential for reform. They also expect MPs have the qualifications, capability, and oversight to effectively fulfill their roles. They hope that measures like this, and existing legislation to enforce them (Solomon Islands Government 2014), would address political instability, improve party integrity, as well as combat corruption and cronyism. However, unless the nation was to abandon concepts of customary leadership and patronage, it is unlikely that the political landscape will look and operate any differently to participants, because it will still operate under the same conditions, ensuring the outcome will be for all intents the same. Political parties undermine the democratic process they themselves are meant to represent through the deliberate manipulation of the lobbying process (see Lack of Trust in Politicians:143; Ending Corruption:189). But by the same token, individual MPs who form these parties are often under the same or competing pressures from their individual constituents.

In the long term, political parties will need to evolve from their current function as vehicles to win elections and become agents of socio-economic and political change. Researchers (ACE Project 2005; Kabutaulaka 2008:99) and Respondents (see Incumbency of Elites:146) alike believe that the voting system itself, as well as the direct election of PMs may be a longer-term solution to the current inefficiencies and issues in the electoral process. The issue for Respondents begins with the election of MPs into national parliament via the First Past the Post (FPTP) voting system. During federal elections FPTP favours larger, stronger political parties over those representing regional and minority communities (Fraenkel, Regan & Hegarty 2008). These issues can only be dealt with by Honiarans exercising their right to directly elect their leader. In Respondents eyes, it forms a part of what makes their society democratic. Second, direct elections of Prime Ministers breaks the hold of political elites over the reins of governance. Whether the change to Limited Preferential Voting will result in actual change in this regard is unclear (Hawkins 2020).

The final issue that Respondents hold great concern for is the effect of foreign influence and interference upon the nation's politics and society. It illustrated that among Honiarans today, mainland Chinese economic and political interests are seen as having an acutely negative impact. It also explained how fear about foreign development and influence is based upon the experiences of generational exploitation of Solomon Islanders from the Colonial period. In the twenty-first century Honiarans, these concerns are concentrated toward the increasing influence of China. The use of cultural diplomacy by China, such as funding sporting stadiums, or development projects like the Honiara Port Project, are manifestations of this, and are unsettling developments for many Honiarans. And not without good reason. It has been noted that Chinese 'cheque book' style diplomacy often contains unsustainable financial instruments to encourage fiscal dependency.

These debt traps, combined with the loss of control over economic or strategic assets, is such that fears of foreign influence felt by Honiarans are certainly well founded. There are also more immediate effects of foreign interests in the country. For many Respondents, the 'soft diplomacy' of China has led to the dispossession of customary landholdings, as established previously (see Customary Land Management:169), and Chinese development continues to be seen with concern and suspicion by Honiarans (see China and the Solomon Islands:35). In conclusion, when exploring issues affecting effective governance, it became clear that breaking the hold of clientelism over the electoral process needed to be investigated. The Clientelist system encourages voters to commit electoral fraud, particularly in relation to vote selling and cross-jurisdictional registration (Wood 2018:481-494). The Honiarans surveyed although participants in this system nevertheless recognise that electoral reform is essential, including direct elections of Prime Ministers, as well as addressing the issue of weak parties and corruption.

Findings

In the analysis of the Respondent views of custom in governance (see Integrating Customary Practice into Governance:182; Value and Relevance of Customary Practice:186), highlighted how Honiarans envision *Kastom* can relate to contemporary governance and suggest that traditional and contemporary forms of authority work best when one informs the other and evolve with the community over time. An example of this would be reforms to again increase the role of traditional leadership at the provincial level as a means to unify both forms of authority in a productive and inclusive way by drawing upon the traditional structures of authority that regulate that community. The manipulation of traditional concepts of power, instead of validating them structurally, has the effect of degrading their impact and relevance over time. Such is the example of *Wantok* in governance. Respondents reiterate that while *Wantok* like many other elements of *Kastom* are manifestly important aspects of their lives, the use of such traditions within politics must end. The analysis moves on to how customary tradition and authority should play a much greater role in land management.

Respondents discuss how this affects their lives in tangible ways, and regard reform to address the lack of formal structural recognition of *Kastom* within contemporary law regarding land as a matter of urgent attention. The analysis then moved to what Respondents thought about the role of women in governance and their relationship with customary authority in the contemporary context. The integration of customary practice and tradition into mechanisms of governance could be a constructive endeavour that would improve the relationship between governments and communities (see Integrating Customary Practice into Governance:182). The discussion then turned to the issues Honiarans believe are the most pressing for their society, and how they believe both tiers of government are performing in addressing these concerns and issues (see Chapter 6:189-205). Those issues are broad in scope and include what can be done to address endemic issues like corruption, unemployment and poverty. In many instances, it is the adoption or inclusion of customary authority and traditions that factor large in solutions Honiarans offer to these problems. Honiarans surveyed felt that *Kastom* had a place in government decision making, with over 84.39 percent offering support for customary traditions in governance (Appendix A:278).

Respondents were also clear in acknowledging that some aspects of traditional practice were exploitative, manipulative and had no place in the country's governance (Timmer 2014; Fraenkel 2004). As iterated previously (see Customary Land Management:169), Honiarans who discussed land related matters were unequivocal that the government needed to ensure customary laws and rights were protected by common law. Perhaps it is not understood by policy makers in the Solomon Islands as to just how much of role many traditional belief systems still play in people's lives (Jalal 2009:25p;). Indeed, a popular suggestion to address this was the adoption of an Indigenous land council, where traditional leaders manages land issues within a constitutionally recognised framework. Traditional leaders have important roles in communities and re-establishing the validity of customary practice would work to counter the marginalisation of customary leadership and enable communities to adapt and adopt new avenues of dispute resolution (Bush, Le Mesurier 2004:7). Begaye found that re-integrating customary practice with existing provincial structures would improve the ability of communities to arbitrate, though they can be complex undertakings due to incompatibilities with contemporary mores (Begaye 2008).

Integrating local customary practice into contemporary avenues of arbitration has the effect of making successful arbitration more likely as it is in tune with the cultural mores of that region. Historically, the role of women in governance in the Solomon Islands has been relatively minor. This is despite the fact that among many of the customary traditions in the Solomon Islands, women hold a great deal of matrilineal authority. Thus, within contemporary Solomon Islands life, the combination of a lack of access to education, as well as the inability to enforce or recognise customary law, results in women operating at an institutionalised disadvantage. Research has indicated that whereas in a traditional role women would arbitrate in customary scenarios; in the contemporary contest, the authority of women has less impact as the system only recognises the outcomes of negotiations in public legal proceedings (Monson 2010). Corrin observed that there was an assumption that contemporary law promotes the improvement of women's rights. Evidence suggests that this is not necessarily the case (Corrin 2006).

The exceptional research by Corrin makes it clear that women were not afforded at least some of the limited protections they once enjoyed under customary law (Corrin 2003). Corrin also found that the emergence of the cash economy had undermined customary authority as traditional concepts of self-worth became measured through western materialism, effectively scuppering women's traditional lines of redress (Corrin 2003:53-76). More positively, women's 'soft power' in the Solomon Islands is one aspect of civic society that was providing support for women (see *Women in Governance*:86,179). Often community based and voluntary, women's organisations have been acting as a shadow welfare system, offering assistance and support for women. While female activism is still focused upon traditional women's affairs such as domestic-based welfare and health issues, its scope has broadened. Women are increasingly active in issues such as conservation, education, and human rights (Scheyvens 2003:24-43; Pollard 2003:44-60).

Despite the low participation rate of women in politics, popular support for women being more involved in politics has also grown, with research suggesting that Solomon Islanders believe women should be more involved in governance (Batley, Wiltshire, Ridolfi & Rogers 2020a:1-6). Some believe that the involvement of women in governance would go some way in reducing the endemic corruption plaguing the country, based upon the perception that women were less corruptible (Batalibasi 2019:23). While there is no way to measure this assertion with any accuracy, it has been observed (UN-PRAC 2022:2-3) that this belief may in fact further exclude women from the political process, as incumbent male elites, reluctant to be called out or prosecuted for corruption, put up roadblocks limiting female access to governance. Despite this, research tends to support the notion that increased diversity in the workplace acts as a bulwark against corruption (UN-PRAC 2022:2-3). It is likely that an increasing role of women in governance will develop over time, with the current popular zeitgeist being generally supportive of an increased role of women in governance. It was apparent that *Kastom* continues to act as the cultural prism through which many Honiarans conceptualise and evaluate many aspects of their lives.

For Honiarans surveyed, customary traditions play an important role in daily life with over 90 percent of Respondents said that family matters were informed by customary traditions, and over 80 percent saying that *Kastom* was an important aspect of their relationships with others. However, customary traditions were determined to be less relevant in public aspects of their lives (Appendix A:279-80) with customary practice seen as less relevant in economics and development with 60.08 percent of Respondents saying *Kastom* guided business decisions, and 63.75 percent and 71.54 percent citing custom factoring into infrastructure development and employment decisions respectively (Appendix A:279-80). Integrating custom into contemporary governance was viewed as essential step forward, with Honiarans surveyed feeling that customary authority can play a constructive role in contemporary good governance (see Value and Relevance of Customary Practice:186; Kabutaulaka 2008:96-118). This final section is a summary of the most prominent issues confronting Respondents and governance today, which may be addressed through reform and renewal. The overwhelming issue for Honiarans was corruption and its fallout.

Neither tier of government was seen as making any real effort in dealing corruption, with less than 60 percent of Respondents believing governments were addressing corruption, whether provincially or nationally. One argument was that the system of *Wantok*, manifested in the clientelism that drives Solomon Islands politics, encourages dependency within the community and stifles innovation (Corruption and Gift Giving:32-32, Governance and Corruption:81-2). Yet, despite Respondents unambiguously condemning the manipulation of *Wantok* in governance, over 70 percent of Respondents said that ethnicity and *Wantok* were nevertheless important considerations when voting for political candidates (Appendix A:278). This apparent contradiction is the result of *Wantok* being epistemically bisemous; meaning it carries two contrary definitions. Broader social, economic, and political obligations of *Wantok* are synonymous with unsustainable financial and emotional burdens. However, when utilised in private, civic capacities, *Wantok* is operating as a contract of co-beneficial interdependency between two kin groups. *Wantok* is informed by protocols developed from shared familial, customary values and practices which are *ad hoc* and will vary between kin groups regionally.

Wantok in this context is not a mechanism to define or improve status, but to bind and benefit. People resent being bound to another individual in a formalised obligation based solely on the authority of *Wantok* and thus in a social context, *Wantok* will rarely expand its focus outside of the welfare of family, relatives, and friends (see Integrating Customary Practice into Governance:182). Being bound to *Wantok* in any context outside of those parameters is considered corruption and cronyism, or at the very least, not beneficial to individuals or their family. The readiness of politicians to resort to corruption and cronyism is a trend that many Respondents fear is becoming more common outside of politics and is being adopted by all social strata (see Ending Corruption:189). In a system driven by corruption, conditions whereby corruption can be avoided diminish. This forces others to resort to corruption, thus perpetuating and spreading its practice (Clientelism: xii, 83,130,143-44,152-53,157,182,189, 210-12).

Breaking the cycle of corruption socially will involve top-down structural change, particularly in the formation of political parties, electoral laws, and the vetting of candidates. Changes to the selection process under the LPV system would begin to break the relationship between customary patronage and politics. For many Honiarans, the effect of long-term unemployment are notable and chronic. While many Honiarans live via subsistence (i.e. family garden plots/livestock pens) and supplement this through engaging with the informal economy, the ability to move beyond subsistence is exceedingly difficult. For Honiarans surveyed (see Poverty, Drug Abuse & Crime:192; Appendix A:273, 275), the lack of educational and employment opportunities has meant that incidents of drug and alcohol abuse are becoming more prevalent. As described earlier, unemployment and a youth population bubble were key contributory factors leading to the outbreak of violence and lawlessness during the Crisis Period (see Self-Governance, Corruption and Crisis:15); Wesley-Smith 2006:121-26). For Respondents, it is imperative that the government be seen to address delinquency and crime by creating opportunities within the formal cash economy to break this cycle.

In conversation with the author, an older Honiarian recalled the 'Masta Liu' phenomenon and the associated alcoholism, drug abuse and destruction that engulfed Honiara in the late 1990s (Jourdan 1995; Kuschel, Takiika *et al.* 2005:211-54). They understand that a failure to address these issues could lead to conditions conducive to the re-emergence of those same calamities (see Bush, Le Mesurier 2004). Employment opportunities are scarce for Solomon Islanders generally and those Honiarians surveyed, when discussing their home provinces were scathing about the lack of effectiveness of Provincial governments in addressing employment, with only 18.34 percent of Respondents believing enough was being done (Appendix A:275). Indeed, it was an issue that approximately 80 percent of Respondents took into consideration when voting (Appendix A:275; Appendix B:271-2). Conventional employment is generally unavailable to most, with subsistence again forming the core of people's lives, with households subsisting on income and resources sourced from formal and informal activities.

But the lack of employment has led to some loss in human capital as those that manage to achieve a higher level of education often emigrate overseas in search of opportunity (Bush & Le Mesurier 2004). This loss of intellectual potential caused by this as well as the negative return on investment in terms of the government's investment in the education and training of those individuals can be difficult to mitigate. While employment opportunities exist in the broader Pacific region, and some observers think it would be folly for the Solomon Islands Government not to invest the nation's considerable labour potential (Hayward-Jones 2008c), this does not address the dire state of domestic employment. Establishing of durable and beneficial socio-economic ties with fellow Pacific nations would develop lasting commercial relationships, enabling less aid dependency (Mosse 2004:639-671). Healthcare is one sector where both tiers of government are seen to be invested in improving the delivery of healthcare. 84.85 percent (National) and 83.47 percent (Provincial) of Respondents offering positive feedback in this regard (Appendix A:272). Despite this, there continues to be ongoing issues with the inadequacy of resourcing being allocated to frontline preventative medicine (Westcott *et al.* 2012). It is also imperative that both tiers of government address water management and sanitation, particularly as the country's urban centres continue to grow apace (Natuzzi *et al.* 2016:307-14).

Climate change and environmental degradation are also having a tangible effect on the livelihoods and wellbeing of urban and rural populations (Fleming *et al.* 2019:331-340). Research indicates that areas of particular concern in this regard include improving wastewater and sewage management, as well as generating a consistent supply of potable water through the modernisation of urban utility infrastructure. National and Provincial governments are also seen as being invested in the nation's education by well over 80 percent of Respondents (Appendix A:273; Appendix B: 289-90). Despite this, education remains out of reach for many, Respondents citing fees, lack of resources, and the centralisation of educational facilities in Honiara, such that the cost of education increases exponentially the more remote the community from the nation's capital (Appendix B:289-90). Indications are that shortages or the lack of resources within the education system does not appear to be the result of direct corruption within the sector, rather the victim of broader fiscal mismanagement that diminished funds available slated for education (see Ending Corruption:189).

A national review of funding to the education system, and reforms in that regard (particularly in regional areas), was a matter of priority for many Respondents. Respondents were also clear in their concerns about law and order. Over 80 percent of Respondents took law and order into consideration when electing candidates (Appendix A:277; Appendix E:300). Their concerns lay not so much in combating common crime, *per se*. Respondents were more focused upon broader legal reform that was representational and reconciled customary authority with common law (see Arkwright 2003:177-94; Corrin 2011:1-25; Dinnen & Haley 2012). Customary law and tradition remain intrinsic to many communities (Corrin 2001:1290-1303; 2003:53-76). Therefore, accommodating customary law into existing laws governing the ownership, management and development of land should be a key priority in reforms (Naitoro 2000:133-134). Land management and customary tradition figured prominently in Respondent opinions. For many, it is at the crux of their existential angst for the future. As explored previously, Honiarans depend upon subsistence and the informal economy for their livelihoods (see Land and Resource Management:28; Customary Land Management:169).

As such, land ownership, use and management has a direct impact on people's lives and for Respondents the solution lay in customary law and tradition. The survey results indicate that over 90.80 percent of Respondents believed that *Kastom* guided their decision-making processes regarding land management (Appendix A:273,280). At the heart of the problem is the ambiguity surrounding the enforceability of customary land claims in the contemporary period. This affects not only the status of private land ownership by traditional owners but the national interest as mining licenses, tourism, industrial, commercial, and housing which are all impacted by the lack of a functional legal apparatus to deal with development rights and grants (Tyler 1990). The problem is compounded by the absence of a legal framework that can arbitrate contradictory cultural restrictions on the ownership and use of traditional land (Foukona 2017 & 2015:504-8; Filer, McDonnell & Allen 2017:11). In the contemporary period an additional problem with land management is that intermarriage has created hybrid systems of inheritance (Stege 2008), and this results in difficulties interpreting the law in the hierarchy of claims on land (Monson 2010).

Indeed, despite the fact that 70 – 90 percent of local court work deals with customary land appeals (Bush & Le Mesurier 2004:7) customary arbitration by community leaders and stakeholders are not sanctioned by legislation (Bush & Le Mesurier 2004:7). The problem is that concepts of evidentiary proof, as expected in common law, are not readily transferrable to issues of customary rights of ownership (Corrin & Zorn 2005:144-68). Customary and common law is not necessarily incompatible, and preconceptions about the validity of customary law and tradition is a relic of Colonial stereotypes. Devising legal criterion and measures to qualify customary legal determinations is achievable, with the example of Vanuatu and PNG utilising hybrid legal systems to arbitrate customary land issues (Haccius 2009; Stefanova, Porter & Nixon 2012). Furthermore, there are some applications where customary law can breach common law or may run contrary to contemporary norms and values (see Legal and Tax Reform:196; Goddard and Leisande 2013). Respondents in this study are well aware that some aspects of customary tradition must be excluded or contained within legally defined parameters in order, that those contemporary or customary traditions that are out of step with what is considered beneficial to society be removed.

Tied to issues of contemporary versus customary values about land use is confusion and conflict surrounding resource extraction. The history of resource extraction in the Solomon Islands is not particularly extensive, yet the example of the Gold Ridge mine indicates that customary landowners are generally on the losing side (Tengemoana 2014). The theft of royalty payments, as well as issues surrounding the enforceability of customary land rights, illustrates the imperative in developing clear and consistent policies to ensure that future resource extraction is conducted in a sustainable way. Beyond that, it must occur within an environment whereby customary and contemporary legal standards are clearly established, and with legal codes that are robust enough to enforce those standards. In terms of economics, Respondents suggested reform in a number of areas (see Employment Opportunities:198; Economic Reform:200-2). Labour reform in small scale enterprise was slated, for example.

Respondents also noted that future reforms in the economic sector needed to focus on sustainable development to account for climate change, as well as the provision of transitional training and upskilling into new employment opportunities. Respondents also insisted that the Solomon Islands needed to invest in transport infrastructure, as well as expanding commercial and retail space in Honiara to encourage economic growth and employment opportunities. Many believe that the nation needs to be less dependent upon imports and increase its focus on developing export potential (see Economic Reform:200). Indeed, there are very few domestically operated industries and enormous potential exists in this regard (Asian Development Bank 2019). However, large scale development, particularly if it is foreign owned, is treated with great caution by Honiarans (see pages:38,176,178,214). For development to occur in alignment with Solomon Islands' values, efforts will need to be made to ensure customary and contemporary rights and interests are protected. Land availability in an island nation like the Solomon Islands is quite small. Any development upon arable land reduces the amount of land available for people's livelihoods. As such, the vetting process for infrastructure development in the future needs to account for customary rights and ensure people's livelihoods and lifestyles are protected.

Along these lines, government needs to encourage initiatives focused upon the integration of contemporary commercial enterprise with Indigenous practice, particularly in the agricultural sector (Darcy & Russell 2014). Effort in this regard will likely ensure outcomes that will generate revenue, create employment, but do so in a way that conforms to customary and contemporary cultural mores (Aqorau 2004:113-22). Both Provincial and National governments fared very poorly when Honiarans were asked about how they felt government addressed environmental issues (see Environmental Reform:203). As explored earlier, logging by foreign companies has wrought environment havoc across the country with lasting and damaging impact upon the rest of the ecosystem (see pages:16-8,28-9,35-6,92-3,178,203). Arable land, if not encroached upon by development or informal settlements, is also being lost through flooding and erosion. Respondents were again universal in demanding direct action to address environmental issues. It was also noted that for this to occur successfully, it needs to operate in a fashion that is sympathetic with customary land practices as well as sustainable environmental management (see Customary Land Management:169). Research suggests that integrating customary stakeholder participation in project planning in management makes conflict over renewable resources such as fisheries (Aswani 2011) and timber extraction far less likely (World Bank 2010; UNCED 1992; Winterbottom 1992). It also found that there is increasing awareness in rural communities that the enforcement of customary rights over resources held in common can provide greater opportunities for those communities to develop community based commercial enterprise (Sodhi 2008:1-19).

Conclusion

Honiarans want power to devolve from the centralised governance to the existing Provincial level so that it operates with similar autonomy observed in Federalised State systems. Respondents believed this type of governance would contribute to socio-cultural stability as well as encourage a flatter, more equitable developmental pyramid for the entire nation, both urban and rural alike. Yet, change is required to achieve this. Honiarans hold grave concerns as to the undue influence of foreign powers and its effect upon governance, the economy and civic harmony (China and the Solomon Islands:35-55; Foreign Interference and Influence:159-64).

They are also exhausted by the enduring hold corruption has over the national psyche. Corruption influences almost every aspect of people's lives, and they want this tackled by their leaders. Yet, when they head to the ballots to make their voice heard they do so within a manipulated system of customary connectedness. Their voting behaviour is driven and determined by the very corruption they seek to eliminate. In this way, they become agents of the perpetuation of the inequity, divisiveness, and social unrest they themselves wish to overcome (Clientelism: xii, 83,130,143-44,152-53,157,182,189, 210-12). In Honiara, the entire edifice of governance and the structures that form it are enveloped and dominated by a corrupt patronymic clientelism. And unsurprisingly, it is this aspect of governance in the that Honiarans insist on addressing. There is little point in questioning the effectiveness of governance within these parameters. In an operational sense, the utility of extant systems remains unclear because the evolution of the political landscape has altered the conditions under which those structures are designed to operate.

By first addressing the democratic process at its most fundamental level can we then create conditions whereby the efficacy of extant structures can be tested and evaluated. The existing system is predicated upon the self-interest coming a distant second to national interest (Incumbency of Elites:146-47). The exigencies of poverty are tapped into and manipulated by elites through custom in order to gain and retain power. To break the clientelist cycle culturally will require the functions of politics and those of customary tradition to be realigned. The concept of customary systems of patronage within public life need to be understood as based on manipulation and corruption, yet at the same time recognise that in private life, customary acts of reciprocity and obligation remain culturally acceptable (Wantok and Customary Authority:166; Appendix A:273,280; Appendix E:300). Only concerted efforts whereby Honiarans, and Solomon Islanders generally relearn, redefine, and revitalise their understanding and application of the fundamental aspects of democratic systems of governance will the nation be able to unbind itself from enduring socio-political and cultural patterns that developed during the post-Colonial period, reaching its apogee in the twenty-first century.

It is a fragile democratic façade, mortared with corruption, its upkeep maintained through the manipulation of people, their customs, and land. Breaking this cycle of clientelist dependency requires a circuit breaker. It must be made clear that enforcement of anti-corruption measures are meaningless without a structural break from the cultural quicksand of clientelist politics. Making politicians and parties accountable for their electorates takes systemic change. Change in how elections are conducted, how electoral campaigns are run, the manner and legitimacy of how votes are cast and counted, and how the electoral process is understood. The adoption of Limited Preferential Voting is one step toward; creating conditions where those candidates who are elected to office are statistically more likely to reflect popular mandate. Continued efforts must be made to enforce electoral legal mechanisms to preserve the accuracy and legitimacy of the electoral process (see *The Electoral Process*:158).

The revitalisation of participatory democracy at a grassroots level can be fostered via the formal induction of customary principles and traditions into the legal and administrative apparatus of all tiers of governance, tailored to the cultural mores of the governed. Culturally, Honiarans would be able to conceptualise 'customary authority' and 'customary tradition' within the apparatus of governance in ways that transcend the extant endemic corruption masked and legitimated through the improper use of customary traditions of kinship and power. Empowering Provincial governments with administrative and legal autonomy will engineer capable and stable governance by aligning it with local customary mores which in turn addresses the underlying socio-economic factors that hitherto had formed the locus of conflict for generations. This transformative process will gradually strengthen the nation's sovereign integrity through improved socio-political cohesion and the cultural and economic benefits this would engender. Integrating customary authority into governance will create a mechanism to achieve this as it fosters a legitimisation of contemporary governance which, with increased representation and consensus building, binds the fractious and diverse nation within a social contract that reflects both their past beliefs, present needs, and future aspirations.

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Appendices

A. Aggregated Survey Results

Governance

Do you think the National government is doing an effective job?

Sometimes	101 Respondents:	46.33%
Often	37 Respondents:	16.97%
Always	26 Respondents:	11.92%
Never	35 Respondents:	16.05%
Rarely	14 Respondents:	06.42%
Nil Response	05 Respondents:	02.29%

Do you think the Provincial government is doing an effective job?

Sometimes	120 Respondents:	55.04%
Often	24 Respondents:	11.00%
Always	17 Respondents:	7.79%
Never	34 Respondents:	15.59%
Rarely	16 Respondents:	07.33%
Nil Response	07 Respondents:	03.21%

Do you think that National government has enough authority to do an effective job?

Always	67 Respondents:	30.73%
Often	42 Respondents:	19.26%
Sometimes	76 Respondents:	34.86%
Rarely	10 Respondents:	04.58%
Never	21 Respondents:	09.63%
Nil Response	02 Respondents:	00.91%

Do you think that Provincial government has enough authority to do an effective job?

Always	47 Respondents:	21.55%
Often	37 Respondents:	16.97%
Sometimes	81 Respondents:	37.15%
Never	30 Respondents:	13.76%
Rarely	21 Respondents:	09.63%
Nil Response	02 Respondents:	00.91%

What degree of impact do Local Area Councils have on your life?

Least Impact	100 Respondents:	45.87%
Most Impact	47 Respondents:	21.55%
Some Impact	26 Respondents:	11.92%
Nil Response	45 Respondents:	20.64%

Governance (Cont.)

What degree of impact does Provincial Government have on your life?

Most Impact	23 Respondents:	10.55%
Some Impact	112 Respondents:	51.37%
Least Impact	40 Respondents:	18.34%
Nil Response	43 Respondents:	19.72%

What degree of impact does the National Government have on your life?

Most Impact	136 Respondents:	62.38%
Some Impact	29 Respondents:	13.30%
Least Impact	32 Respondents:	14.67%
Nil Response	21 Respondents:	09.63%

Corruption

Which type of government is MORE effective in dealing with corruption?

National	159 Respondents:	72.93%
Provincial	48 Respondents:	22.01%
Nil Response	11 Respondents:	05.04%

Does the National government address corruption?

Always	67 Respondents:	30.73%
Often	19 Respondents:	08.71%
Sometimes	38 Respondents:	17.43%
Never	55 Respondents:	25.22%
Rarely	35 Respondents:	16.05%
Nil Response	04 Respondents:	01.83%

Does the Provincial government address corruption?

Always	56 Respondents:	25.68%
Often	27 Respondents:	12.38%
Sometimes	44 Respondents:	20.18%
Never	50 Respondents:	22.93%
Rarely	41 Respondents:	18.80%
Nil Response	00 Respondents:	00.00%

What role does trust play in your decision to vote for a National candidate?

Always	115 Respondents:	52.75%
Sometimes	44 Respondents:	20.18%
Often	26 Respondents:	11.92%
Never	19 Respondents:	08.71%
Rarely	13 Respondents:	05.96%
Nil Response	01 Respondent:	00.45%

Corruption (Cont.)

What role does trust play in your decision to vote for a Provincial candidate?

Always	110 Respondents:	45.87%
Sometimes	58 Respondents:	26.60%
Often	21 Respondents:	09.63%
Never	16 Respondents:	07.33%
Rarely	09 Respondents:	04.12%
Nil Response	04 Respondents:	01.83%

How confident are you that National government is free of corruption?

Never	86 Respondents:	39.44%
Not	43 Respondents:	19.72%
Mostly	50 Respondents:	22.93%
Very	07 Respondents:	03.21%
Somewhat	22 Respondents:	10.09%
Nil Response	10 Respondents:	04.58%

How confident are you that Provincial government is free of corruption?

Not	65 Respondents:	29.81%
Never	58 Respondents:	26.60%
Mostly	46 Respondents:	21.10%
Very	18 Respondents:	08.25%
Somewhat	27 Respondents:	12.38%
Nil Response	04 Respondents:	01.83%

Healthcare

Which type of government is MORE effective in dealing with health?

National	149 Respondents:	68.34%
Provincial	61 Respondents:	27.98%
Nil Response	8 Respondents:	03.66%

Does the National government address health?

Always	79 Respondents:	36.23%
Often	37 Respondents:	16.97%
Sometimes	69 Respondents:	31.65%
Never	17 Respondents:	07.79%
Rarely	14 Respondents:	06.42%
Nil Response	2 Respondents:	00.91%

Does the Provincial government address health?

Sometimes	89 Respondents:	40.82%
Always	63 Respondents:	28.89%
Often	30 Respondents:	13.76%
Rarely	19 Respondents:	08.71%

Never	17 Respondents:	07.79%
Nil Response	00 Respondents:	00.00%

Job Security

Which type of government is MORE effective in dealing with job security?

National	158 Respondents:	72.47%
Provincial	52 Respondents:	23.85%
Nil Response	08 Respondents:	03.66%

Does the National government address job security?

Always	56 Respondents:	25.68%
Often	26 Respondents:	11.92%
Sometimes	76 Respondents:	34.86%
Never	40 Respondents:	18.34%
Rarely	17 Respondents:	07.79%
Nil Response	03 Respondents:	01.37%

Does the Provincial government address job security?

Sometimes	102 Respondents:	46.78%
Always	27 Respondents:	12.38%
Often	17 Respondents:	7.79%
Never	54 Respondents:	24.77%
Rarely	16 Respondents:	07.33%
Nil Response	02 Respondents:	00.91%

Education

Which type of government is MORE effective in dealing with education?

National	160 Respondents:	73.39%
Provincial	52 Respondents:	23.85%
Nil Response	06 Respondents:	02.75%

Does the National government address education?

Always	93 Respondents:	42.66%
Often	39 Respondents:	17.88%
Sometimes	63 Respondents:	28.89%
Never	12 Respondents:	05.50%
Rarely	8 Respondents:	03.66%
Nil Response	03 Respondents:	01.37%

Does the Provincial government address education?

Always	84 Respondents:	38.53%
Often	29 Respondents:	13.30%
Sometimes	74 Respondents:	33.94%
Never	18 Respondents:	08.25%
Rarely	11 Respondents:	05.04%
Nil Response	02 Respondents:	00.91%

Infrastructure

Which type of government is MORE effective in dealing with infrastructure?

National	161 Respondents:	73.85%
Provincial	45 Respondents:	20.64%
Nil Response	12 Respondents:	05.50%

Does the National government address infrastructure?

Always	65 Respondents:	29.81%
Often	21 Respondents:	09.63%
Sometimes	81 Respondents:	37.15%
Rarely	22 Respondents:	10.09%
Never	21 Respondents:	09.63%
Nil Response	8 Respondents:	03.66%

Does the Provincial government address infrastructure?

Sometimes	88 Respondents:	40.36%
Often	35 Respondents:	16.05%
Always	30 Respondents:	13.76%
Never	43 Respondents:	19.72%
Rarely	21 Respondents:	09.63%
Nil Response	01 Respondent:	00.45%

Land Management

Which type of government is MORE effective in dealing with land management?

Provincial	114 Respondents:	52.29%
National	92 Respondents:	42.20%
Nil Response	12 Respondents:	05.50%

Does the National government address land management?

Sometimes	87 Respondents:	39.90%
Always	47 Respondents:	21.55%
Often	22 Respondents:	10.09%
Never	34 Respondents:	15.59%
Rarely	25 Respondents:	11.46%
Nil Response	03 Respondents:	01.37%

Does the Provincial government address land management?

Sometimes	74 Respondents:	33.94%
Always	45 Respondents:	20.64%
Often	29 Respondents:	13.30%
Never	35 Respondents:	16.05%
Rarely	33 Respondents:	15.13%
Nil Response	02 Respondents:	00.91%

Employment

Which type of government is MORE effective in dealing with employment?

National	165 Respondents:	75.68%
Provincial	40 Respondents:	18.34%
Nil Response	13 Respondents:	05.96%

Does the National government address employment?

Always	53 Respondents:	24.31%
Often	28 Respondents:	12.84%
Sometimes	68 Respondents:	31.19%
Never	35 Respondents:	16.05%
Rarely	28 Respondents:	12.84%
Nil Response	06 Respondents:	02.75%

Does the Provincial government address employment?

Sometimes	77 Respondents:	35.32%
Always	32 Respondents:	14.67%
Often	28 Respondents:	12.84%
Rarely	43 Respondents:	19.72%
Never	35 Respondents:	16.05%
Nil Response	03 Respondents:	01.37%

What role does employment play in your decision to vote for a National candidate?

Always	97 Respondents:	44.49%
Often	35 Respondents:	16.05%
Sometimes	54 Respondents:	24.77%
Never	20 Respondents:	09.17%
Rarely	10 Respondents:	04.58%
Nil Response	02 Respondents:	00.91%

What role does employment play in your decision to vote for a Provincial candidate?

Always	82 Respondents:	37.61%
Often	31 Respondents:	14.22%
Sometimes	60 Respondents:	27.52%
Never	27 Respondents:	12.38%
Rarely	13 Respondents:	05.96%
Nil Response	05 Respondents:	02.29%

Economy

What role does the economy play in your decision to vote for a National candidate?

Always	106 Respondents:	48.62%
Often	29 Respondents:	13.30%
Sometimes	40 Respondents:	18.34%
Never	27 Respondents:	12.38%
Rarely	15 Respondents:	06.88%
Nil Response	01 Respondent:	00.45%

What role does the economy play in your decision to vote for a Provincial candidate?

Always	90 Respondents:	41.28%
Often	29 Respondents:	13.30%
Sometimes	56 Respondents:	25.68%
Never	29 Respondents:	13.30%
Rarely	11 Respondents:	05.04%
Nil Response	03 Respondents:	01.37%

Environment

Which type of government is MORE effective in dealing with the environment?

National	120 Respondents:	55.04%
Provincial	85 Respondents:	38.99%
Nil Response	13 Respondents:	5.96%

Does the National government address the environment?

Always	53 Respondents:	24.31%
Often	31 Respondents:	14.22%
Sometimes	62 Respondents:	28.44%
Rarely	39 Respondents:	17.88%
Never	30 Respondents:	13.76%
Nil Response	03 Respondents:	01.37%

Does the Provincial government address the environment?

Sometimes	85 Respondents:	38.99%
Often	39 Respondents:	17.88%
Always	28 Respondents:	12.84%
Never	37 Respondents:	16.97%
Rarely	27 Respondents:	12.38%
Nil Response	02 Respondents:	00.91%

What role does the environment play in your decision to vote for a National candidate?

Always	79 Respondents:	36.23%
Often	31 Respondents:	14.22%
Sometimes	62 Respondents:	28.44%

Never	22 Respondents:	10.09%
Rarely	20 Respondents:	09.17%
Nil Response	04 Respondents:	01.83%

Environment (Cont.)

What role does the environment play in your decision to vote for a Provincial candidate?

Always	70 Respondents:	32.11%
Often	28 Respondents:	12.84%
Sometimes	69 Respondents:	31.65%
Never	29 Respondents:	13.30%
Rarely	15 Respondents:	06.88%
Nil Response	07 Respondents:	03.21%

Housing

Which type of government is MORE effective in dealing with housing?

National	132 Respondents:	60.55%
Provincial	72 Respondents:	33.02%
Nil Response	14 Respondents:	06.42%

Does the National government address housing?

Always	47 Respondents:	21.55%
Often	28 Respondents:	12.84%
Sometimes	72 Respondents:	33.02%
Never	34 Respondents:	15.59%
Rarely	33 Respondents:	15.13%
Nil Response	04 Respondents:	01.83%

Does the Provincial government address housing?

Sometimes	74 Respondents:	33.94%
Often	33 Respondents:	15.13%
Always	29 Respondents:	13.30%
Never	44 Respondents:	20.18%
Rarely	38 Respondents:	17.43%
Nil Response	00 Respondents:	00.00%

What role does housing play in your decision to vote for a National candidate?

Always	69 Respondents:	31.65%
Often	38 Respondents:	17.43%
Sometimes	67 Respondents:	30.73%
Never	22 Respondents:	10.09%
Rarely	19 Respondents:	08.71%
Nil Response	03 Respondents:	01.37%

What role does housing play in your decision to vote for a Provincial candidate?

Sometimes	72 Respondents:	33.02%
Always	64 Respondents:	29.35%
Often	32 Respondents:	14.67%

Never	32 Respondents:	14.67%
Rarely	12 Respondents:	05.50%
Nil Response	06 Respondents:	02.75%

Law and Order

Which type of government is MORE effective in dealing with law and order?

National	173 Respondents:	79.35%
Provincial	37 Respondents:	16.97%
Nil Response	08 Respondents:	03.66%

Does the National government address law and order?

Always	85 Respondents:	38.99%
Often	35 Respondents:	16.05%
Sometimes	67 Respondents:	30.73%
Never	16 Respondents:	07.33%
Rarely	12 Respondents:	05.50%
Nil Response	03 Respondents:	01.37%

Does the Provincial government address law and order?

Always	83 Respondents:	38.07%
Often	24 Respondents:	11.00%
Sometimes	76 Respondents:	34.86%
Rarely	16 Respondents:	07.33%
Never	19 Respondents:	08.71%

What role does law and order play in your decision to vote for a National candidate?

Always	120 Respondents:	55.04%
Often	34 Respondents:	15.59%
Sometimes	40 Respondents:	18.34%
Never	14 Respondents:	06.42%
Rarely	06 Respondents:	02.75%
Nil Response	04 Respondents:	01.83%

What role does law and order play in your decision to vote for a Provincial candidate?

Always	113 Respondents:	51.83%
Often	24 Respondents:	11.00%
Sometimes	46 Respondents:	21.10%
Never	21 Respondents:	09.63%
Rarely	09 Respondents:	04.12%
Nil Response	05 Respondents:	02.29%

Ethnicity and Wantok

Do you think traditional laws and Kastom should be used in government decisions?

Always	73 Respondents:	33.48%
Often	22 Respondents:	10.09%
Sometimes	89 Respondents:	40.82%
Rarely	13 Respondents:	05.96%
Never	13 Respondents:	05.96%
Nil Response	08 Respondents:	03.66%

What role does ethnicity play in your decision to vote for a National candidate?

Always	64 Respondents:	29.35%
Often	32 Respondents:	14.67%
Sometimes	60 Respondents:	27.52%
Never	35 Respondents:	16.05%
Rarely	24 Respondents:	11.00%
Nil Response	03 Respondents:	01.37%

What role does ethnicity play in your decision to vote for a Provincial candidate?

Always	51 Respondents:	23.39%
Often	38 Respondents:	17.43%
Sometimes	70 Respondents:	32.11%
Never	32 Respondents:	14.67%
Rarely	20 Respondents:	09.17%
Nil Response	07 Respondents:	03.21%

What role does Wantok play in your decision to vote for a National candidate?

Always	61 Respondents:	27.98%
Often	31 Respondents:	14.22%
Sometimes	64 Respondents:	29.35%
Never	34 Respondents:	15.59%
Rarely	26 Respondents:	11.92%
Nil Response	02 Respondents:	00.91%

What role does Wantok play in your decision to vote for a Provincial candidate?

Always	62 Respondents:	28.44%
Often	34 Respondents:	15.59%
Sometimes	58 Respondents:	26.60%
Never	35 Respondents:	16.05%
Rarely	21 Respondents:	09.63%
Nil Response	8 Respondents:	03.66%

Kastom in daily life

How much does Kastom help guide your decisions in your daily life with business?

Sometimes	70 Respondents:	32.11%
Always	36 Respondents:	16.51%
Often	25 Respondents:	11.46%
Rarely	46 Respondents:	21.10%
Never	40 Respondents:	18.34%
Nil Response	01 Respondent:	00.45%

How much does Kastom help guide your decisions in your daily life with corruption?

Always	66 Respondents:	30.27%
Often	27 Respondents:	12.38%
Sometimes	46 Respondents:	21.10%
Never	45 Respondents:	20.64%
Rarely	28 Respondents:	12.84%
Nil Response	06 Respondents:	02.75%

How much does Kastom help guide your decisions in your daily life with education?

Always	94 Respondents:	43.11%
Often	27 Respondents:	12.38%
Sometimes	60 Respondents:	27.52%
Never	18 Respondents:	08.25%
Rarely	17 Respondents:	07.79%
Nil Response	02 Respondents:	00.91%

How much does Kastom help guide your decisions in your daily life with family matters?

Always	126 Respondents:	57.79%
Often	29 Respondents:	13.30%
Sometimes	47 Respondents:	21.55%
Never	11 Respondents:	05.04%
Rarely	05 Respondents:	02.29%

How much does Kastom help guide your decisions in your daily life with health?

Always	67 Respondents:	30.73%
Often	32 Respondents:	14.67%
Sometimes	76 Respondents:	34.86%
Never	24 Respondents:	11.00%
Rarely	14 Respondents:	06.42%
Nil Response	05 Respondents:	02.29%

Kastom in daily life (Cont.)

How much does Kastom help guide your decisions in your daily life with infrastructure?

Sometimes	76 Respondents:	34.86%
Always	40 Respondents:	18.34%
Often	23 Respondents:	10.55%
Never	45 Respondents:	20.64%
Rarely	27 Respondents:	12.38%
Nil Response	07 Respondents:	03.21%

How much does Kastom help guide your decisions in your daily life with job security?

Always	65 Respondents:	29.81%
Often	27 Respondents:	12.38%
Sometimes	64 Respondents:	29.35%
Never	36 Respondents:	16.51%
Rarely	20 Respondents:	09.17%
Nil Response	06 Respondents:	02.75%

How much does Kastom help guide your decisions in your daily life with land management?

Always	111 Respondents:	50.91%
Often	32 Respondents:	14.67%
Sometimes	55 Respondents:	25.22%
Never	09 Respondents:	04.12%
Rarely	09 Respondents:	04.12%
Nil Response	02 Respondents:	00.91%

How much does Kastom help guide your decisions in your daily life with relationships?

Always	108 Respondents:	49.54%
Often	34 Respondents:	15.59%
Sometimes	47 Respondents:	21.55%
Never	16 Respondents:	07.33%
Rarely	12 Respondents:	05.50%
Nil Response	01 Respondent:	00.45%

How much does Kastom help guide your decisions in your daily life with safety and security?

Always	89 Respondents:	40.82%
Often	27 Respondents:	12.38%
Sometimes	65 Respondents:	29.81%
Never	17 Respondents:	07.79%
Rarely	16 Respondents:	07.33%
Nil Response	04 Respondents:	01.83%

B. Demographic Results and Supplementary Interpretation

Respondent Gender

Male:	141 Respondents:	64.67%
Female:	77 Respondents:	35.32%

Respondent Age

18-25 years:	152 Respondents:	69.72%
26-35 years:	36 Respondents:	16.51%
36-45 years:	18 Respondents:	08.25%
46-55 years:	07 Respondents:	03.21%
56+ years:	01 Respondent:	00.45%
Nil Response:	04 Respondents:	01.83%

Birth Province

Guadalcanal:	50 Respondents:	22.93%
Malaita:	47 Respondents:	21.55%
Western:	12 Respondents:	05.50%
Central:	08 Respondents:	03.66%
Makira-Ulawa:	08 Respondents:	03.66%
Temotu:	08 Respondents:	03.66%
Choiseul:	06 Respondents:	02.75%
Isabel:	04 Respondents:	01.83%
Capital Territory:	01 Respondent:	00.45%
Nil Response:	74 Respondents:	33.94%

A negative response here may be indicative of effects of civil war. Several tens of thousands of IDPs at the period where majority of Respondents were either conceived or in their infancy. The inductive approach could suggest here that nil response may indicate a literal ignorance of place of birth due to their parents' status as IDPs, or at least a degree of ambiguity. Ethno-linguistic diversity from the data set suggests cultural continuation in terms of ethnic identity, but your literal and littoral point of origin may be obscure. This may also play a factor in young people being unclear as to their point of origin. However, there is certainly a rash of infrastructure, sourced from overseas finance, displacing many hundreds of people along the strip of coastal plain and traditional market gardens and housing running East from Honiara. It will almost certainly become a potential source of ethno-economic unrest in the future.

The country's track record of attacks against specific communities has been consistent since independence and it is unlikely that scapegoating during times of social stress will become a thing of the past.

Marital Status

Single:	157 Respondents:	72.01%
Married:	35 Respondents:	16.05%
Defacto:	03 Respondents:	01.37%
Widowed:	02 Respondents:	00.91%
Nil Response:	21 Respondents:	009.63%

A clear majority of 72 percent of Respondents were unmarried. This correlates with the fact that almost 70 percent of Respondents were under the age of 25. This correlates to the median age estimate for the Solomon Islands which is approximately 19.9 and 23.2 years of age. A note on the 21 Respondents who did not record a response. Based on the age range surveyed, inductively, it is very likely that these Respondents were involved in unmarried relationships. As this survey question was focused more on understanding age dependency ratios and family economics than personal questions about relationships, I elected to focus on single versus married status. This was what I considered most valuable. How did the individual sit within a social construct? Marriage in this context is also a good indicator of social maturity and participation in formal community activity such as business entrepreneurship, raising families, household debt and so on.

Respondent Dependents Age and Gender

Commensurate with the capital's relatively youthful population, 77.98 percent of the survey sampling did not have direct dependents. Only 48 of the survey Respondents had a single dependent, and as few as 29 Respondents with two dependents, and only a very small minority had three or more dependents.

Dependent 1 Age and Gender			Dependent 2 Age and Gender		
0-17	33 Respondents:	15.13%	0-17	19 Respondents:	08.71%
18-25	12 Respondents:	05.50%	18-25	08 Respondents:	03.66%
26-35	03 Respondents:	01.37%	26-35	02 Respondents:	00.91%
F	25 Respondents:	11.46%	F	12 Respondents:	05.50%
M	23 Respondents:	10.55%	M	17 Respondents:	07.79%
N/A	170 Respondents:	77.98%	N/A	189 Respondents:	86.69%

Dependent 3 Age and Gender		
0-17	09 Respondents:	04.12%
18-25	02 Respondents:	00.91%
26-35	00 Respondents:	00.00%
F	06 Respondents:	02.75%
M	05 Respondents:	02.29%
N/A	207 Respondents:	94.95%

Dependent 4 Age and Gender		
0-17	12 Respondents:	05.50%
18-25	04 Respondents:	01.83%
26-35	02 Respondents:	00.91%
F	15 Respondents:	06.88%
M	03 Respondents:	01.37%
N/A	200 Respondents:	91.74%

Dependent 5 Age and Gender		
0-17	06 Respondents:	02.75%
18-25	00 Respondents:	00.00%
26-35	01 Respondent:	00.45%
F	03 Respondents:	01.37%
M	04 Respondents:	01.83%
N/A	211 Respondents:	96.78%

Dependent 6 Age and Gender		
0-17	01 Respondent:	00.45%
18-25	00 Respondents:	00.00%
26-35	01 Respondent:	00.45%
F	01 Respondent:	00.45%
M	01 Respondent:	00.45%
N/A	216 Respondents:	99.08%

For the purposes of this project, these results are of considerable value as a measure of the Respondent pool's diversity. Adults with dependents will offer a very different perspective regarding their relationship with national political life. Responsible for the welfare, education and life path of a dependent, they offer insights into their agency and responsibilities than for example, a young university age single male.

Respondent Religion

Denomination	Respondents	Total
Church of Melanesia:	67:	30.73%
Roman Catholic:	54:	24.77%
South Seas Evangelical Church:	38:	17.43%
Uniting Church:	23:	10.55%
Seventh Day Adventist:	18:	08.25%
Nil Response:	06:	02.75%
Christian Outreach Centre:	03:	01.37%
Christian Fellowship Church:	02:	00.91%
Jehovah's Witness:	02:	00.91%
Assembly of God:	01:	00.45%
Forward in Faith Ministry:	01:	00.45%
Latter Day Saints:	01:	00.45%
No Religion:	01:	00.45%
Christian Church of God:	01:	00.45%

Religiosity and self-identification via faith remains a very important element in everyday life for many Solomon Islanders. Whilst Buddhism and Baha'i and Sufism do have a presence in Honiara and other provincial capitals, many such gatherings are very small, often in the tens. Anecdotally, it appears that many faith groups are congregations of newcomers to the Solomon Islands, such as Thais, Filipinos, Indians, and Bangladeshis. Many of these groups are essentially extended families that have brought their faith with them and tend to worship in more private and informal ways. Note that I have no statistical data in this regard. This qualified assessment was formed through dialogue with locals in Honiara who explained that non-Christians are functionally treated just as any other in the community and that from a socio-cultural perspective, it is not due to fear of prosecution or bigotry that these religious festivals and observances were more often than not held at private residences, it was simply due to the fact that private religious practice on a small scale is not readily visible to the broader community. The central role of religious leaders in the Solomon Islands remains an incredibly important aspect of cultural life for most. When I attended a number of religious services, attendance was very high, with most churches at capacity.

Respondent Languages

Language	Province (Region)	Family	Total	%
Pijin:	Solomon Islands	English Creole	193	88.53%
English:	United Kingdom	Indo-European	72	33.02%
Kwara'ae:	Malaita	SE Solomon	17	07.79%
'Are'are:	Malaita	SE Solomon	13	05.96%
Lau:	Malaita	SE Solomon	4	01.83%
Baelelea:	Malaita	SE Solomon	2	00.91%
Sa'a:	Malaita	SE Solomon	2	00.91%
Kasi/Chai:	Malaita	SE Solomon	1	00.45%
Kwaio:	Malaita	SE Solomon	1	00.45%
Toqabaqita:	Malaita	SE Solomon	1	00.45%
Wala:	Malaita	SE Solomon	1	00.45%
Kasi/Chai:	Malaita	SE Solomon	1	00.45%
Lau:	Malaita	SE Solomon	1	00.45%
Sa'a:	Malaita	SE Solomon	1	00.45%
Ghari:	Guadalcanal	SE Solomon	2	00.91%
Lengo:	Guadalcanal	SE Solomon	2	00.91%
Talise:	Guadalcanal	SE Solomon	2	00.91%
Birau:	Guadalcanal	SE Solomon	2	00.91%
Ghari:	Guadalcanal	SE Solomon	1	00.45%
Longgu:	Guadalcanal	SE Solomon	1	00.45%
Arosi:	Makira-Ulawa (Makira Isl.)	SE Solomon	1	00.45%
Bauro:	Makira-Ulawa (Makira Isl.)	SE Solomon	1	00.45%
Gela:	Central (Nggela Isl.)	SE Solomon	2	00.91%
Roviana:	Western (New Georgia)	NW Solomon	3	01.37%
Hoava:	Western (New Georgia)	NW Solomon	1	00.45%
Marovo:	Western (New Georgia)	NW Solomon	1	00.45%
Ughele:	Western (Rendova Isl.)	NW Solomon	1	00.45%
Duke:	Western (Kolombangara)	NW Solomon	1	00.45%
Mono:	Western (Shortland Isl.)	NW Solomon	1	00.45%
Babatana:	Choiseul (Choiseul Isl.)	NW Solomon	3	01.36%
Touo:	Western (Rendova Isl.)	Central Solomon	1	00.45%
Ghaimuta:	Central (Russell Isl.)	Central Solomon	1	00.45%
Lavukaleve:	Central (Russell Isl.)	Central Solomon	1	00.45%
Savo-Savo:	Central (Savo Isl.)	Central Solomon	1	00.45%
Bilua:	Western (Vella-Lavella)	Papuan	2	00.91%
Tikopia:	Temotu (Vanikoro/Tikopia)	Samoic	1	00.45%
Tanema:	Temotu (Vanikoro)	Temotu	1	00.45%
Äiwoo:	Temotu (Reef Isl.)	Temotu	2	00.91%

It should be noted here that whilst English is an official language that is used in government, diplomatic and economic contexts, it is not widely spoken by Honiarans in daily life. It tends to be utilised when engaged with non-Solomon Islanders. For example, during my research I played touch football with a local club on a couple of occasions. In that context, as there were individuals from the UK, Belgium, the USA, Tonga and New Zealand, as well as Guale and Malaitan locals. In this case, *Pijin* was the preferred language as most Respondents spoke it. However, out of politeness, many locals utilised a dilute *Pijin* that more readily utilised English vocabulary in order that non *Pijin* speakers weren't excluded. It wasn't English per se, but a dilute *Pijin* that was heavier with contemporary English terminology. However, where foreigners were scant, *Pijin* or Kwara'ae were preferred as most people had no difficulty with either. It is a dynamic region however, and communities tended to speak their regional dialect within that community, *Pijin* to those outside those ethnic enclaves in their daily routine and reserved English for outsiders.

It was not uncommon however to run into people that spoke very little English or *Pijin* and stuck to their birth dialect. This prevailed among older individuals in my experiences. It was the norm that most individuals spoke at least two languages. Another important note is that many learn a language outside the rubric of their origins due to their social circumstances. My host, a Guale/Malaitan, learnt his wife's Polynesian language in order that he could integrate into her family and communicate readily with older relations. Language is inherited, but adopting a new language can be a choice made for socio-economic reasons. Languages such as Japanese, Thai and Chinese are often utilised by locals as well, generally those working in tourism and hospitality. Most ethnic Chinese Honiarans speak *Pijin* almost exclusively in their daily lives. And much like their Melanesian countrymen, tend to only utilise Chinese in a closed familial context. This is, however, not a standard rule. Many ethnic Chinese are married to Melanesians, and as a result, these convenient distinctions are of little relevance when applied to the reality of an ethnically diverse and intermingled contemporary family and social structures. Note that these observations are of 'everyday' families and social circles of friends and colleagues that I lived and worked with in prior to and during my research.

At no point did I infer social inferiority or other negative associations one may have expected in a country where it has been noted for ethnic conflict, in relation to language use and preference. Language is a key binding agent that binds these diverse communities together, and it is quite common for the transfer of loan words from other dialects to appear in *Pijin* for example. This is particularly so with everyday things such as food etc as well as marketplace banter and casual encounters, such as at parties and events. In each observed example, I noticed that the loan word was delivered from the non-native speaker to the recipient in that recipient's language. It was a combination of an attempt at clarity by using an alternate term for a type of fish for example but also acted as social lubricant to build rapport between the speakers. It is a truism that in any culture that an earnest attempt by a foreigner to utilise their language in a social situation is almost always greeted warmly. This has been a cornerstone in diplomatic relationships for time immemorial. In the Solomon Islands, this blending of language is playful as well as being utilitarian.

The point to be made here, in relation to this study on people's understanding of governance, is that Solomon Islanders, while a national body, is unlike that of Australia. While we share culturally diverse populations, Solomon Islanders are the expression of hundreds of unique ethno-linguistic communities that have had relationships with one another that are over 4000 years old. The differences of the peoples that constitute the Solomon Islands are points of mutual pride, and are generally universally respected, and this has developed over many centuries of conflict and reconciliation. As such, it needs to be made clear that where you are from matters very much and will influence one's perspective of their nation. Honiara, as this linguistic snapshot of Respondents illustrates, is a hub where all the provinces have a representative population. This outcome illustrates several aspects of the dynamism and mobility of individuals and communities. Malaita was the source for much of the wartime and post war labour involved in the construction of the township when it served as the main US Army base and service facilities in the Solomon Islands during the US island hopping campaign across the Western Pacific as it closed in on the Imperial Japanese forces.

That the city still boasts a clear majority of citizens of Malaitan origin is entirely in keeping with the development of Honiara in the post war period. Indeed, the preponderance of Malaitans in the capital is also a direct result of the civil conflict where many tens of thousands of internally displaced persons, the majority of whom were indigenous Guale, were driven to the south of Guadalcanal to the Weathercoast and townships on the extreme ends of the island. It is unsurprising then to note that speakers of Guale languages are spoken with the less frequency than language groups from much further flung ethnic communities from Western Province for example. However, as I noted previously, much of this process is a mixture of a number of factors. As Honiara has an itinerant population of labourers and workers who tend to bring their language with them; the relative frequency of languages from remote regions is unsurprising. Another factor is that intermarriage between Malaitan and Guale Honiarans is quite common. As a result, many young people speak both parents' languages. The relatively higher proportion of Malaitans living in former Guale territory combined with the inevitable search for a compatible partner is such that Malaitan language is gradually subsuming others due to it being more widely understood.

Respondent Education

Secondary	75 Respondents:	34.40%
Tertiary	70 Respondents:	32.11%
Trade School	58 Respondents:	26.60%
Nil Response	7 Respondents:	3.21%
Primary	4 Respondents:	1.83%
Home School	2 Respondents:	0.91%
None	2 Respondents:	0.91%

The survey indicates a good level of access to education among Respondents. As research suggests, overall literacy and enrolment rates rank the country on a similar par with India (Narsey 2022). For context, Papua New Guinea reported an adult literacy rate of 61.6 percent. Recent years have seen the tertiary and technical education system undergo considerable improvement since the Crisis Period; both in tertiary campus numbers as well as in the upgrading and improving of existing facilities. Direct beneficiaries of this expansion in the education sector in the capital and surrounds are Honiarans themselves.

Adult literacy rate > Female	69	1999	7th out of 8
Adult literacy rate > Total	76.6	1999	7th out of 8
Children out of school, primary	5,869	2012	48th out of 64
Children out of school, primary, female	2,824	2012	45th out of 55
Children out of school, primary, male	3,045	2012	40th out of 55
Education enrolment by level > Primary level	55,093	2002	145th out of 173
High school enrolment rate	69.8	2002	94th out of 118
Literacy rate > People aged 15-24	85	1999	7th out of 8
Primary education, pupils	121,437	2012	67th out of 88
Secondary education > General pupils	22,487	2005	88th out of 103
Tertiary > Students studying abroad	3,173.87	2011	134th out of 203
Tertiary enrolment rate**	52,974	2021	?

Table 2 Solomon Islands Education Statistics (as of 2012), Nationmaster.com, 2018

As the nation economic and political centre of gravity, it is unsurprising that access to training, upskilling and education is also located centrally. These benefits are varied. Aside from the immediate proximity of facilities, which reduces economic hardship surrounding households being able to afford sending their young people to school, the concentration of young people, particularly young adults in secondary and tertiary education creates a large consumer base for local retail outlets and food stands, as well as providing local businesses with access to a substantial labour pool of literate young adults for casual employment etc. This was particularly noted during the survey period. The university campus strip along the main highway has developed as a commercial and retail hub, albeit a generally ad hoc one, driven largely by continuous high volume foot traffic. As previous survey questions regarding ethno-linguistics and birth province, many Respondents are from outer provinces who move or co-locate to Honiara to study. Solomon Islands National University has on campus housing, while others board with extended family during school terms. Benefits of access are reserved for those that either live in the area or can afford to co-locate there for the duration of their studies.

Respondent Employment Status

Student	130 Respondents:	59.63%
Full Time	26 Respondents:	11.92%
Nil Response	19 Respondents:	8.71%
Self Employed	16 Respondents:	7.33%
Part Time	14 Respondents:	6.42%
Un-employed	10 Respondents:	4.58%
Casual	02 Respondents:	0.91%
Retired:	01 Respondent:	0.45%

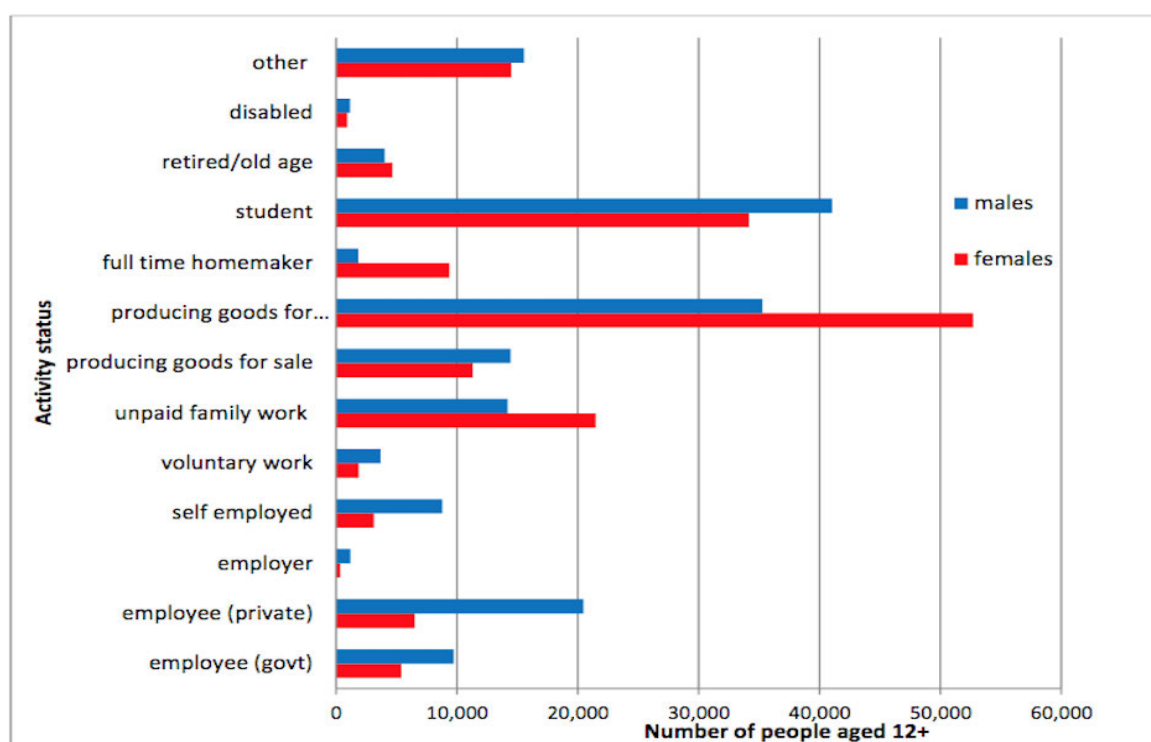


Table 3. 2009 Report on Economic Activity and Labour Force, Solomon Islands Government (2011) Population and Housing Census 2009, Ministry of Finance and Treasury, Government of the Solomon Islands: Honiara.

Responses garnered during the survey broadly corresponds to census data compiled in 2009. Students still make up a considerable proportion of the adult population. This reflects the high population ratio of young people in the Solomon Islands. Another factor that directly influences this survey is that the countries educational facilities are concentrated in the capital and surrounds. As a result, Honiara is contextually in some ways a university city, much like Yogyakarta in Indonesia. I was mindful of this aspect during the survey process and as a result we paid attention to ensure surveys were conducted not only around areas where youth congregated but also shopping strips, community gardens and coastal villages. Results of Respondents regarding which economic sector they were

engaged show a preponderance in construction, retail, government, tourism and automotive industries. This is reflected in census data which established that these employment opportunities were urban based. As such there tends to be a higher proportion of salaried workers than that seen in rural areas due to the concentration in Honiara of retail, construction and manufacturing sectors.

Respondent Primary Job Sector

Nil Response	84 Respondents:	38.53%
Construction	39 Respondents:	17.88%
Farming*	24 Respondents:	11.00%
Retail	18 Respondents:	8.25%
Government	15 Respondents:	6.88%
Tourism	12 Respondents:	5.50%
Automotive	11 Respondents:	5.04%
Business	7 Respondents:	3.21%
Education	3 Respondents:	1.37%
Manufacturing	3 Respondents:	1.37%
Fisheries	1 Respondent:	0.45%
Medical	1 Respondent:	0.45%

Respondent Secondary Job Sector

Nil Response	210 Respondents:	96.33%
Government	2 Respondents:	0.91%
Retail	2 Respondents:	0.91%
Construction	1 Respondent:	0.45%
Farming	1 Respondent:	0.45%
Fisheries	1 Respondent:	0.45%
Manufacturing	1 Respondent:	0.45%

As the 2009 census noted, this does not necessarily reflect how households secure their main sources of income: “some aspects of income are not easy to quantify, and (most) households would have a range of income sources. For example, the sale of food and other items is often sporadic and related to surpluses in subsistence production or an opportunity to ship goods to town, so few households would keep accounts of how much they earned from such activity. Similarly, remittances often comprise goods, rather than cash, so are difficult to quantify.” (Solomon Islands Government 2009:13). This is best illustrated in the Respondent surveys where 11 percent of Respondents claimed that farming was their primary work sector.

This seems in opposition to the percentages of households deriving income from agriculture in Honiara, which is quite low in comparison to rural households (Solomon Islands Government 2009:13).

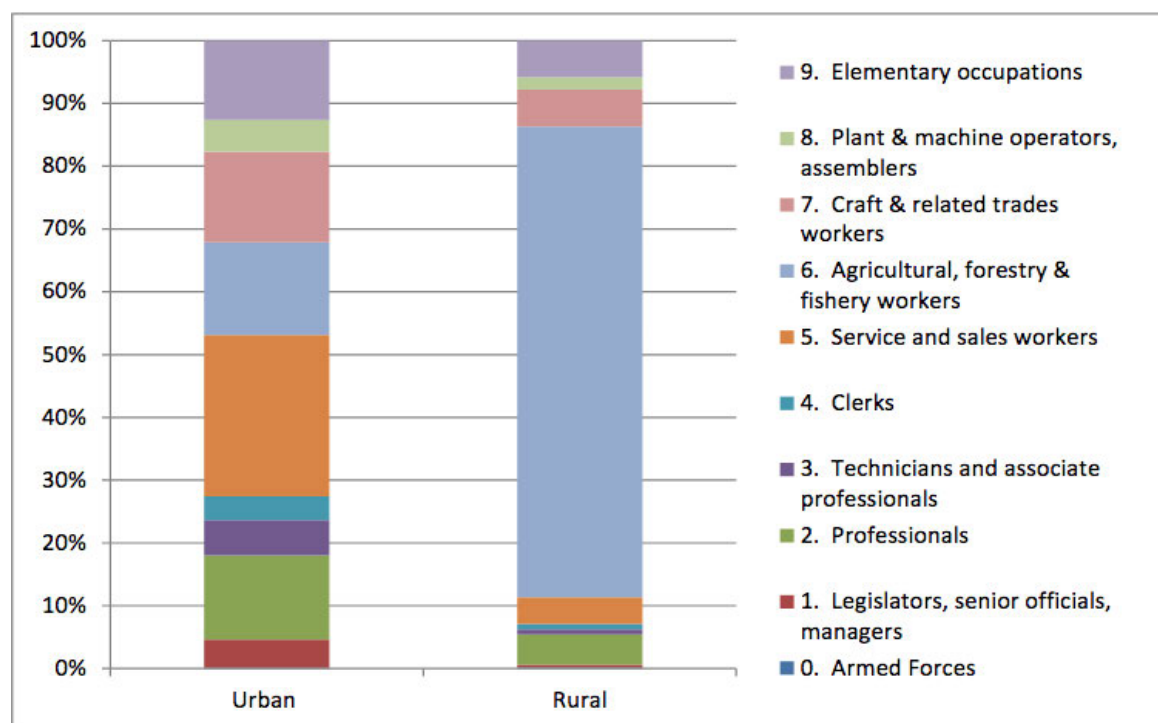


Table 4. Labour force by occupation & residence 2009, Solomon Islands Government, 2009:13).

Most households, even those in the immediate suburbs of Honiara, maintain cash crops such as vegetables, fruits, poultry and pigs. Surplus is traded, exchange in kind or sold for cash. Thus, there is a requirement to disambiguate between employment in agricultural industry, such as work on a cocoa plantation, versus market gardening at the village or peri-urban level (Sale 2014). Therefore, the response rate of 11 percent will in large part correspond not to formal employment in the agricultural sector, but informal market gardening. Indeed, considering that most income for Honiarans is derived from multiple means and sources, it is misleading to make such clear distinctions. Anecdotally, it was my experience that as much as half of available cash flow or acquisition of goods of value in the households I visited in peri-urban Honiara was because of ‘micro-farming’ of cash crops and/or a planned surplus from subsistence family plots. This would appear to contradict the census data, which appeared to show a low percentile involved in agriculture.

This confusion in definition is troublesome in as much as statistically at least, it doesn't accurately reflect realised income of households in real terms. This is also where the term 'unemployed' can be misleading. It is misleading in as much as while the Respondent may not have paid work, they are likely engaged in ad hoc casual labour, as well as contributing to family plots, including the transport and sale or exchange of these goods at market, or in most cases, to the nearest roadside stall or stand. In communities where fresh food and casual menial work is readily available, there is not enormous pressure for many to seek active salaried employment. Indeed, considering the former is particularly inaccessible for most, barter, exchange and subsistence form the true economy that underpins the survival of most households.

Respondent Electoral Participation

Have you voted in National elections?

Participation Rate: 77.98%

Yes	176 Respondents:	77.98%
No	41 Respondents:	18.80%
Nil Response	1 Respondent:	0.45%

Have you voted in Provincial elections?

Participation Rate: 57.33%

Yes	125 Respondents:	57.33%
No	91 Respondents:	41.74%
Nil Response	2 Respondents:	0.91%


Do you return to your home province to vote, or do you remain in Honiara?

Home	140 Respondents	64.22%
Honiara	38 Respondents:	17.43%
Not Applicable	32 Respondents:	14.67%
Nil Response	8 Respondents:	3.66%

A very large proportion of Honiara's population are indeed effectively migratory. Their loyalty or sense of responsibility to provincial political life points to a strong socio-cultural and socio-political connection to their home provinces. News reporting during my initial feasibility trip, and during the survey period itself made numerous references to the enormous annual logistical difficulty of dealing with a mass exodus of Honiarans during not only election periods, but also during school holiday periods, certainly reflects this migratory preponderance.

C. Sample Interview and Survey Consent Form

The following is an example of the Participation Information Sheet handed to participants during the field phase when conducting the surveys.

	University of Southern Queensland	
	Interview and Survey Consent Form	
Project Details		
Title of Project:	Centralism or Federalism? Structural change and recovery in the Solomon Islands	
Ethics Approval Number:	H16REA227	
Purpose of Research	To gather information about what Solomon Islanders think about governments and what they think government's role is in their lives.	
Research Team Contact Details		
Principal Investigator Details		Other Investigator/Supervisor Details
Name: Phone: Email:		Name: Phone: Email:
Statement of Consent		

By signing below, you are indicating that you:

- Have read and understood the information document regarding this project.
- Have had any questions answered to your satisfaction.
- Understand that if you have any additional questions, you can contact the research team.
- Understand that the interview will be audio recorded.
- Understand that you are free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty.
- Understand that you can contact the University of Southern Queensland Manager of Research Integrity and Ethics on +61 7 4631 2214 or email researchintegrity@usq.edu.au, if you have any concern or complaint about the ethical conduct of this project.
- Are over 18 years of age
- Understand that any identifiable data collected may be used in future research activities.
- Agree to participate in the project.


Participant Name	
Participant Signature	
Date	

☐ Please tick this box and provide your email address below if you wish to receive a summary of the research results.

Email: _____

D. Sample Participant Information Sheet

The following is an example of the Participation Information Sheet handed to participants during the field phase when conducting the survey.

	University of Southern Queensland Participant Information Sheet Survey and Interview
Project Details	
Title of Project:	Centralism or Federalism? Structural change and recovery in the Solomon Islands
Ethics Approval Number:	H16REA227
Purpose of Research	To gather information from Solomon Islanders about what they think about governments and what they think government's role is in their lives.
Research Team Contact Details	
Principal Investigator Details	Other Investigator/Supervisor Details
Name: Mr. Aaron Pearce Phone: [REDACTED] Email: [REDACTED]	Name: Assoc Prof. Lara Lamb Phone: [REDACTED] Email: [REDACTED]
Statement of Consent	

Description

This project is being undertaken as part of a PhD thesis. It is investigating the structure, effectiveness and impact of centralised governance in the Solomon Islands. Using your opinions and ideas, this research will evaluate whether some change in how government works could help issues like land use, managing the environment, infrastructure development and social justice. The research team requests your assistance because the research is based on your opinions and experiences as Solomon Islanders.

Participation

Participating in this study will involve completing a survey with a researcher. It will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Questions will be a mixture of multiple choice and open-ended. They relate to the participants' experiences of politics and policy in their daily lives. It is designed to gather information about the effectiveness of different types of government. With your permission, I may follow-up the survey with additional clarifying questions. The survey will take place at a time and venue that is convenient to you. Questions may include: What do you think about traditional laws and customs and their use in government decisions? If there were something you would like to change with either provincial or central government in the Solomon Islands, what would it be? Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to take part, you are not obliged to. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage prior to the commencement or during the interview. However, you will be unable to withdraw data collected about yourself after you have participated.

If you wish to withdraw from the project, please contact the Research Team (contact details at the top of this form). Transcripts will not be available to interviewees.

Expected Benefits

It is expected that this project will not directly benefit you. However, it may benefit you and your families in the longer term as this research will contribute to our understanding of how to improve how the Solomon Islands functions politically, socially and economically.

Risks

There are minimal risks associated with your participation in this project. There will be low risk for participating Respondents, as surveys will remain anonymous. If at any point you are unwilling or unable to participate, you are free to opt out.

Privacy and Confidentiality

All responses will be treated confidentially unless required by law. Once the surveys have been completed, they will be transcribed and loaded into software for analysis. Answers to questions will be represented in the research, publications, reports and presentations. Legal names will not be utilised, and data will remain anonymous. The full reports and any subsequent tables, charts or other data generated material will be accessible by request from the principal investigator at: W0002085@uqmail.edu.au. Any data collected as a part of this project will be stored securely as per University of Southern Queensland's Research Data Management policy. This includes audio-visual recordings of interviews.

Consent to Participate

You will be required to sign a consent form, and you will be provided with a Participant Information Sheet.

Questions or Further Information about the Project

Please refer to the Research Team Contact Details at the top of the form to have any questions answered or to request further information about this project.

Concerns or Complaints Regarding the Conduct of the Project


If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project you may contact the University of Southern Queensland Manager of Research Integrity and Ethics on +61 7 4631 2214 or email researchintegrity@usq.edu.au. The Manager of Research Integrity and Ethics is not connected with the research project and can facilitate a resolution to your concern in an unbiased manner.

Thank you for taking the time to help with this research project.

Please keep this sheet for your information.

E. Sample Survey

The following is an example of the survey handed to participants during the field phase.

		University of Southern Queensland	
		Survey	
Project Details			
Title of Project:		Centralism or Federalism? Structural change and recovery in the Solomon Islands	
Ethics Approval Number:		H16REA227	
Research Team Contact Details			
Principal Investigator Details		Other Investigator/Supervisor Details	
Name:	Mr. Aaron Pearce	Name:	Assoc Prof. Lara Lamb
Phone:	[REDACTED]	Phone:	[REDACTED]
Email:	[REDACTED]	Email:	[REDACTED]
Participant Name (Optional)			
Participant Signature (Optional)			
Date			
Sector/Date (Researchers Use Only)			

Participant Details			
Gender	<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
Age	<input type="checkbox"/> 18-25	<input type="checkbox"/> 26-35	<input type="checkbox"/> 36-45
	<input type="checkbox"/> 46-55	<input type="checkbox"/> 56-65	<input type="checkbox"/> 66+
Place of Birth	Town.....	Province.....	Country.....
Marital Status	<input type="checkbox"/> Married	<input type="checkbox"/> Defacto	<input type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed
Your Ward			
What languages are spoken at home?			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Pijin	<input type="checkbox"/> English	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (i.e., Kwara'ae, Lengo, Cheke Holo, etc Please Specify)		
Religion	<input type="checkbox"/> Church of Melanesia	<input type="checkbox"/> Christian Fellowship Church	
	<input type="checkbox"/> South Seas Evangelical	<input type="checkbox"/> Roman Catholic	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Seventh Day Adventist	<input type="checkbox"/> No Religion	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Uniting Church	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	

Education	<input type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/> Primary	<input type="checkbox"/> Secondary	<input type="checkbox"/> Tertiary
	<input type="checkbox"/> Trade School	<input type="checkbox"/> On the Job	<input type="checkbox"/> Home School	
Employment	<input type="checkbox"/> Full-time	<input type="checkbox"/> Part-time	<input type="checkbox"/> Casual	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-employed	<input type="checkbox"/> Un-employed	<input type="checkbox"/> Student	<input type="checkbox"/> Retired
Job Sector	<input type="checkbox"/> Farming	<input type="checkbox"/> Fisheries	<input type="checkbox"/> Mining/Energy	<input type="checkbox"/> Construction
	<input type="checkbox"/> Retail	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Medical	<input type="checkbox"/> Finance
				<input type="checkbox"/> Manufacturing
Dependents		Age	Gender	
	Child 1			Child 4
	Child 2			Child 5
	Child 3			Child 6

Survey Questions					
1. Have you voted in PROVINCIAL elections?			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
2. Have you voted in NATIONAL elections?			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
3. Do you think traditional laws and kastom should be used in government decisions?					
	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. If your family is from another region, do you return home to <i>vote</i> or do you remain in Honiara?					
<input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable		<input type="checkbox"/> Return home to vote		<input type="checkbox"/> Stay in Honiara to vote	
5. How much does kastom help guide your decisions in your daily life with the following issues?					
	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Job security	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Safety/Security	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corruption	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Land management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family matters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relationships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Business	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. What role do the following factors play in your decision to vote for a PROVINCIAL candidate?					
	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Ethnicity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trust	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Law/Order	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jobs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Housing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wantok	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Economy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Does the PROVINCIAL government address the following issues?					
	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Job security	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Law/Order	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corruption	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Land management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Housing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Do you think PROVINCIAL government is doing an effective job?					
	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Do you think that PROVINCIAL government has enough authority to do an effective job?					
	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. How confident are you that PROVINCIAL government is free of corruption?					
	Very	Mostly	Somewhat	Not	Never
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. What role do the following factors play in your decision to vote for a NATIONAL candidate?					
	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Ethnicity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trust	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Law/Order	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jobs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Housing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wantok	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Economy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Does the NATIONAL government address the following issues?					
	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Job security	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Law/Order	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corruption	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Land management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

F. Prime Ministers of the Solomon Islands

No	Name	Tenure		Party
1	Peter Kenilorea (1943–2016) POB: Malaita.	07/07/1978	31/08/1981	SIUP ⁱ
2	Solomon Mamaloni (1943–2000) POB: Makira.	31/08/1981	19/11/1984	PAP ⁱⁱ
3	Sir Peter Kenilorea (1943–2016) POB: Malaita.	19/11/1984	01/12/1986	SIUP
4	Ezekiel Alebua (1947–2022) POB: Guadalcanal.	01/12/1986	28/03/1989	SIUP
5	Solomon Mamaloni (1943–2000) POB: Makira.	28/03/1989	18/06/1993	PAP/GNUR ⁱⁱⁱ
6	Sir Francis Billy Hilly (1948–) POB: Western Province.	18/06/1993	07/11/1994	Independent/NCP ^{iv}
7	Solomon Mamaloni (1943–2000) POB: Makira.	07/11/1994	27/08/1997	GNUR
8	Bartholomew Ulufa'alu (1950–2007) POB: Malaita.	27/08/1997	30/06/2000	SILP ^v /SIAC ^{vi}
9	Manasseh Sogavare (1955–) POB: PNG/Choiseul).	30/06/2000	17/12/2001	PPP ^{vii}
10	Allan Kemakeza (1950–) POB: Central Province.	17/12/2001	20/04/2006	PAP
11	Snyder Rini (1949–) POB: Western Province.	20/04/2006	04/05/2006	AIM ^{viii}
12	Manasseh Sogavare (1955–) POB: PNG/Choiseul).	04/05/2006	20/12/2007	SISCP ^{ix}
13	Derek Sikua (1959–) POB: Guadalcanal.	20/12/2007	25/08/2010	SILP
14	Danny Philip (1953–) POB: Western Province.	25/08/2010	16/11/2011	RDP ^x
15	Gordon Darcy Lilo (1965–) POB: Western Province.	16/11/2011	09/12/2014	NCRA ^{xi}
16	Manasseh Sogavare (1955–) POB: PNG/Choiseul).	09/12/2014	15/11/2017	Independent
17	Rick Houenipwela (1958–) POB: Malaita.	15/11/2017	24/04/2019	DAP ^{xii}
18	Manasseh Sogavare (1955–) POB: PNG/Choiseul).	24/04/2019	Incumbent	Our Party

- i. Solomon Islands United Party
 - ii. People's Alliance Party
 - iii. Group for National Unity and Reconciliation
 - iv. National Coalition Partnership
 - v. Solomon Islands Liberal Party
 - vi. Solomon Islands Alliance for Change
 - vii. People's Progressive Party
 - viii. Association of Independent Members
 - ix. Solomon Islands Social Credit Party
 - x. Reform Democratic Party
 - xi. National Coalition for Reform and Advancement
 - xii. Democratic Alliance Party
- POB: Province of Birth.

Note: Regarding PM Sogavare. He was born in PNG to parents from Choiseul Province.