

## The Search for Democracy in Fiji

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*The whole liberal world order appears to be falling apart  
— nothing is as it once was.*

–Wolfgang Ischinger, Food for Thought: “Who Will Pick Up the Pieces?”

### Introduction

This Discussion Paper is the third of a trilogy written after the November 2018 election in Fiji. The first, [In Brief 2018/28](#), considered the consequences of how reporting the results using competing media outlets affected popular understandings of the election. The second, [Discussion Paper 2019/2](#), examined the continuing importance of land for elections, even as the conditions under which the indigenous population, the majority Taukei, live are commercialised and urbanised. Finally, this essay locates the search for democracy in Fiji, which is expressed in domestic and international objections to existing political circumstances.

The evaluations concern two main themes covered in this paper. The first is whether there is room for any further advance in liberal democracy. The second relates the condition of liberal democracy to the development of capitalism. Fiji provides an important location to assess the prospects for this democratic form, as the tussle between authoritarian, conservative and liberal democracy has been constant in the country. The conclusion developed here is that, as with liberal democracy’s condition in many other parts of the world, its prospects in Fiji are not favourable.

To an important degree, the decline of liberal democracy globally is associated with the terms of the continuing advance of capitalism. While the connection in Fiji between capitalism and the dominant political forms is rarely considered (for

a nearly forgotten exception, see Knapman 1987), it is undergoing a major revival internationally. A prominent billionaire in the United States of America acknowledges the existence of class warfare (Stein 2006; Sargent 2011). There are accounts of ‘ruling the void’ in hollowed Western capitalist democracies, where reductions in electoral participation have given way to an increasing importance of non-representative institutions, including the European Union polity (Mair 2013). Others go further, emphasising ‘democracy against capitalism’ (Meiksins Wood 2016). This Discussion Paper inserts the important international arguments about the relationship between democracy and capitalism into considerations of the search for democracy in Fiji. In doing so, the conclusion is reached that liberal democracy, as ‘thin’ as it has been in Fiji (MacWilliam 2001), is unlikely to be extended when faced with the changes capitalism is undergoing globally. The militarisation of politics in Fiji is a powerful local expression of the challenges liberal democracy faces.

As the 2018 election was being held in Fiji, disputes continued regarding whether the event represented a step forward for democracy in the country. While an observer group pronounced the election as free and fair, with only minor reservations, other international assessments were less sanguine about the country as a democracy. The UK-based Economist Intelligence Unit’s *Democracy Index 2018* rated Fiji as a flawed democracy (The Economist Intelligence Unit 2018), while the Washington, DC-headquartered Freedom House’s *Freedom in the World 2018* index classified the country as one of 58 partly free countries, with a rating of 59 out of 100 (Freedom House 2018; see also University of Gothenburg 2018). For Freedom

House's index, Fiji scored less than maximum on both political rights and civil liberties.

Criticisms continue to arise over both the conduct of the elections and longer-term conditions in the country (Ravuwai 2019; Geraghty 2019). Most of these complaints repeat objections made about the 2014 elections, the first since the 2006 military takeover, and regard the importance of the military and other government institutions in limiting political and other freedoms. The general thrust of the criticisms remains that democracy in Fiji is not merely fragile, but also still limited (Carnegie and Tarte 2018). The search for democracy, it is claimed, remains a work in progress. Further, the critics of what exists in Fiji by way of constitutional arrangements and electoral laws still do so by reference, implicit and explicit, to other international conditions (Carnegie 2017). The protracted debates about the 'best' election system for Fiji are invariably conducted by comparison with arrangements in other countries (Narsey 2018).

This essay argues that any consideration of democracy's prospects in Fiji must first recognise what exists. Fiji remains a capitalist state,<sup>1</sup> subject to international as well as local determinations. This overriding condition, of a nation–state among a world of nation–states where accumulation reigns, is rarely acknowledged in calls by critics for further democratisation in Fiji. In such states, rights, including the distinct property rights of capital and labour, are determined by accumulation, yet this determination continues to be ignored. Secondly, it is vital to understand how the country's existing political form sets limits to what can occur in Fiji now and in the foreseeable future. In Fiji, there is a compressed relationship in terms of institutions and personnel between military and civilian authority.<sup>2</sup> It remains a militarised democracy. Thirdly, once it is recognised that the search for democracy in Fiji involves a continuing tussle between capitalist democratic forms, the confined character of the search is better understood and the limited possibilities for the future acknowledged. Central to this acknowledgment is the recognition that democracy is not reducible to liberal democracy (Riley 2019:xxi; Keane 2009).

Edmund Fawcett (2014) noted that liberalism, conservatism and socialism were, from the outset, distinct, different responses to the uncertainties for social order capitalism brought. As the quotation by

the chairman of the 2019 Munich Security Conference which commences this essay suggests, there is considerable doubt if liberalism can any longer contain global changes where accumulation reigns. There is also increased questioning regarding the future of the broader relationship between democracy and capitalism (Keane 2009; Mair 2013; Meiksins Wood 2016; Streeck 2014, 2016). Given that both capitalism and democracy remain integral components of Fiji's post-colonial political economy, there is good reason to assume that uncertainty about future possibilities should extend to this country as well. If there is a 'hollowing of Western democracy' (Mair 2013), including the decline of representative institutions (Williams 2003) is there any good reason why this should not apply also to Fiji?

### Part 1: Internationalising Democracy and the Creation of Fiji

While there is no shortage of comparisons between the condition of democracy in Fiji and elsewhere, what is often missing is to what extent democratisation in this South Pacific country depends upon, and is driven by, the character of democracy internationally. Perhaps the best-known instance of denying the international determinations of what exists as democracy in Fiji was the view expressed by Taukei nationalists in early 1987. Coup leader Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka even declared that democracy was 'a foreign flower unsuited to Fijian soil' (Lal 2001:84; see also Lal 1992:272). Just 17 years previously, Fiji as a state expressing national sovereignty had come into being, passing from a colonial state into a nation–state. That this occurred was in part a product of two ideas with foreign, primarily European roots: anti-colonialism and development.

The recognition of Fiji as a nation–state among many was an expression of how these two ideas met in a series of international institutions, including the United Nations. As Brij Lal noted (1992:186), a 1959 debate in the House of Commons resolved 'that Britain should "evolve a positive policy for those small territories where difficulties might arise in regard to the achievement of complete independence within the Commonwealth"'. Positive policy is central to the modern idea of development (Cowen and Shenton 1996) and had an important place in late 19th and early to mid-20th century liberalism (MacWilliam 2019a). Fiji was one such territory.

### *Capitalist democracy through national sovereignty*

After World War II, national sovereignty was placed at the centre of both conservative and liberal democracy, which contrasted sharply with the previously dominant form of liberalism, liberal imperialism (Sullivan 1983). As it is constructed, ‘no democracy, no Fiji’ is a useful summation. The principal form the ‘foreign flower’ took during the post-war years in Fiji was of a nation–state bearing many of the same characteristics as others, which Rabuka’s polemical pronouncement ignored.

That Fiji’s political economy is of the capitalist democratic species is rarely noted: a major consequence of this absence is that the fundamental connection between accumulation (of capital), state form and politics rarely appears. During the colonial era as well as since independence, there has been no political challenge to capitalism’s hegemony. Contrary to the accusation that the People’s Coalition government that came to power at the 1999 election ‘had indicated a strong socialist agenda’ (Prasad 2000, 162), a more accurate description is ‘mildly liberal–social democratic reformist’. That a reform proposal (to reverse the privatisations implemented over the previous two decades) was regarded as expressing socialist ambitions only indicates how far the political–ideological terrain had been shifted internationally and locally since the 1970s (Stedman Jones 2012). The subsequent policy platforms of all the major parties, including those of the National Federation Party (NFP), during the 2014 and 2018 elections demonstrate the hyperbole in Biman Prasad’s assessment, as well as the unchallenged hegemony of capitalism in the country (MacWilliam 2019b; see also the following).

Capitalism’s regular absence from accounts of democracy, including in Fiji (Lal 1998), says much about how this underlying global condition has been excised from many contemporary international descriptions. J.K. Galbraith’s warning about the role of the ‘free market fraud’ (2006) in perpetuating the myth of a classless condition should be borne in mind for Fiji as well (see also Stein 2006; Sargent 2011).

### *Parliamentary elections defining capitalist democracies*

Elections as the means for determining parliamentary representation and the shape of governments came to be a, even the, defining international characteristic of the constitutions that held and continue to hold

together capitalist democracies. This became the case for liberal and conservative democracies, as well as in some authoritarian democratic regimes. A contemporary instance of another militarised authoritarian democracy that now also holds elections is Myanmar. As Joseph Schumpeter noted writing of the destructiveness of the 1930s depression and during the hostilities of World War II, what he termed the ‘civilisation of capitalism’ was being ‘surrounded by crumbling walls’. Both the ‘protecting strata’ and ‘the institutional framework of capitalist society’ were suffering ‘destruction’ (1979:131–142). Subsequently, and partly to sustain capitalism against the threat of socialism, constitutionalism had parliamentary elections as a centrepiece for rebuilding the framework. This was especially so for the former colonies, including Fiji, as these became nation–states within capitalism’s post-war reconstruction and further global advance. Even though it was acknowledged that placing elections central to democracy constituted a minimalist criterion, nevertheless their importance has remained.

This importance accompanied a further reshaping of democracy, with parliamentary representatives chosen through elections rather than directly by heredity, patronage and other similar means (Keane 2009:159–581). Liberalism was, for a while, central to the change in democracy as well as its global expansion, contributing to the ascendancy of anti-colonialism in the 20th century and the decline of European imperial powers. Liberalism’s emphasis upon representative democracy had an extended influence in the constitution of newly independent countries, including Fiji. During negotiations over independence, representative parliamentary democracy was consistently placed at the centre of reforms, with elections of various forms the mechanism for selecting representatives. Also included in the reformed institutions were a national flag and a national development plan.

### *US-led democratisation*

As liberal European imperialism faded, an even more powerful empire emerged: the US. This empire became authoritative in part because it could be portrayed as distinct from the previous variants, not even imperialism or colonialism (Panitch and Gindin 2013; Immerwahr 2019). While never consistently liberal in their favoured foreign policy direction, US academic advisers, including Samuel Huntington, did not try to

conceal that the attachment to the global expansion of representative electoral democracy was coupled with that country's national interest.

In his widely read *The Third Wave* (1991), Huntington joined his previous concern for political decay and the desirability of order, democratic and otherwise (1968), with advocacy for electoral democracy. While his emphasis upon a minimalist description of democracy constituted by 'free and fair' elections has captured the most attention, it is his fifth basis for accepting this limited form that is of importance here. As Huntington explained, while trying to 'keep my analysis as detached as possible from my values', even as he switched from US academic social scientist to US government political consultant, there are five reasons for espousing democratisation. In addition to being a 'good in itself', democracy has 'positive consequences for individual freedom, domestic stability, international peace, and *the United States of America*' (1991: xv, emphasis added). Possible connections between capitalism as a process of accumulation, imperialism and electoral representative democracy remained unexamined by Huntington, even as the latter was undermined in the US itself (Williams 2003; Mayer 2016). The minimalist parliamentary electoral democratic form now in place in Fiji was the centrepiece of international demands, including from the US, Australia and New Zealand, made after the 2006 military takeover for the country's 'return to democracy'. Currently in Venezuela, the worldwide connection between electoral legislative democracy and US national interest remains apparent in the proposition that preferred electoral outcomes will provide the basis for stability in the former's political economy to reduce the flood of refugees to the latter.

### *The changing nature of the relationship between capitalism and democracy*

The global disjunction between capitalism and democracy (Streeck 2014, 2016) is important for the prospects of further liberal democratic reform, including in Fiji. The growing concentration of wealth in the hands of fewer and fewer people, and the increasing absolute and relative impoverishment of many bodes ill for the liberal political ideology that purports to be based in equality. Conservatism, of course, has no such difficulty. As Oxfam noted in a recent report:

Eighty two per cent of the wealth generated last year went to the richest one per cent of the global population, while the 3.7 billion people who make up the poorest half of the world saw no increase in their wealth ... Billionaire wealth has risen by an annual average of 13 per cent since 2010 — six times faster than the wages of ordinary workers, which have risen by a yearly average of just 2 per cent (Oxfam International 2018).

Further, this concentration of wealth, which has arisen at a particularly fast pace over the last 40 years, continues to increase, including in China (World Inequality Database 2018; Ryan 2019; Walsh 2019; Zucman 2019). Greater inequality appears even as by particular metrics there have been substantial rises in absolute living standards for some people in specific countries. For the World Bank, there is a recognition that for South Asia, the much-vaunted, export-oriented growth strategy is coupled with higher wages, poverty reduction and increased unemployment for more people. The Bank also has 'lingering concerns about jobless growth and poor job quality' (Artuc et al. 2019). Fiji has not been immune from the global trends, as noted in the following (see also MacWilliam 2019b:5–7).

### *Electoral democracy, plutocracy or authoritarianism?*

When such indicators suggest conditions that threaten the relationship between capitalism and democracy, particularly of the liberal variant, attention needs to be directed at the process of accumulation itself. This process includes relations between capitalists, as larger companies swallow small in the continuing process of centralisation and concentration of capitals (Marx 1979: esp. 775–77). The compulsive drive to accumulate threatens relations among rulers, and between rulers and ruled, making political mediation ever more difficult (MacWilliam 2015). In Fiji, where more concentrated wealth, in the form of millionaires, has been associated with Indo-Fijian dominance of some forms of commerce and industry, and Taukei are more recently prominent commercially, the rise of the latter has been associated with considerable political instability (Grynberg et al. 2002; MacWilliam with Daveta 2003).

As work for so many becomes increasingly precarious globally (Standing 2011), households are forced to straddle between several low-paying, casual jobs, or as in the case of Fiji, join wage employment, with attachment to rural smallholdings and marketing

household produce (MacWilliam 2019b). Where elections are the principal distinguishing feature of capitalist democracies, the battle between representatives of the plutocracy spills over into electoral politics via parties in campaigns noted for their financial extravagance. In the US and other countries, electoral democracy is now characterised by plutocratic authority. In some countries with a dominant party, elections result in a further entrenching of authoritarianism, often with low voter turnout. Without living standard increases, and with greater inequality, liberal democracy is forced to compete with other democratic and non-democratic forms. It is now necessary to turn to the specific case of Fiji, where variants of democracy have jostled for ascendancy throughout the country's colonial and post-colonial history.

## Part 2: Strands of Democracy in Fiji

### *Liberalism, conservatism and authoritarianism*

In the formation of Fiji as a nation-state, authoritarianism, conservatism and liberalism have continually jostled for ascendancy. At each phase of the tussle, the advance of capitalism, with its penetration into more and more areas of daily life, has remained a constant. The principal political question has been how this advance will be facilitated by one or the other forms of rule, for each form has also been instrumental for particular processes of accumulation and specific accumulators. What follows here is a necessarily truncated version of some of the connections between capitalism, colonial and post-colonial states, and political authority.

### *The late colonial legacy*

The first connection is so well known that it need not be examined in detail. British colonial rule was reluctantly imposed to deal with the disorder created by European settlers when civil war in the US affected supplies of cotton to Europe and prompted a search for new sources of production. The absence of a unified indigenous political structure that could deal with the spontaneous process of accumulation at a frontier of capitalism prodded a reluctant British government to add yet another colony (for one summary see Lal 1992:5–11). In 1874, the 'self-styled king of all Fiji, or Tui Viti' (Lal 1992:9), Ratu Seru Cakobau accepted annexation by the British government and Fiji became

a British crown colony. The Deed of Cession was 'signed by the leading chiefs of Fiji' (Lal 1992:9) and by the lieutenant governor of New South Wales, representing the British crown. Liberal imperialism, which had become central to the terms of British colonial rule after the 1857 Indian Mutiny, was placed at the core of colonial policy for Fiji, particularly in the form of land policy.

### *Not a static dualism*

Indigenous attachment to land was maintained while industrial capital moved into agriculture, shipping and trade. However, the purpose of keeping Taukei on smallholdings under chiefly authority was not to retard capitalism's advance but, as Bruce Knapman pointed out:

From the beginning of colonial rule, government policy on indigenous commercial development aimed at a controlled and gentle integration of Fijians into the world capitalist economy through cash-cropping in Fijian-owned land ... contrary to some opinion ... a static dualism of noncapitalist and capitalist sectors was never planned (1987:26).

Similarly, the insolvency that accompanied European settlers' commercial efforts provided space for centralisation and concentration of activities under industrial capital once a landless labour force was relocated to the colony in the form of Indians, a relative surplus population from another British colony. Beginning in 1879 and ending in 1916, over 60,000 men, women and children were transported to Fiji, mostly as indentured labourers. Working and living under brutal, impoverished conditions (Lal 1992:40–45), this landless population and their descendants would subsequently provide a major challenge for liberal imperial rule, often showing its shallowness and easy retreat into conservative reaction. These workers formed a substantial part of the reason why, by its independence, Fiji rated among the countries that had experienced considerable economic growth (Knapman 1987:1).

Concurrent with the increasing international challenges to colonial rule, growth in Fiji also stimulated domestic political pressure for reform. Representative parliamentary democracy was introduced in a form that provided limited space for local representation while securing colonial authority.

These local representatives assisted in the maintenance of order among the indigenous and immigrant populations as well as provided challenges for colonial officials with their demands for advancement. The legislative council, first provided for in the 1875 founding charter for the colony, became a constant battleground as it was enlarged to accommodate both liberal and conservative demands for reforms. Simultaneously, the colonial administration retained complete power on the executive council. Liberal imperialism was buttressed by authoritarian democracy.

### *The pre-independence battle for reform*

The Colonial Sugar Refining Company's move in the 1920s from being both plantation and mill owner to buyer and miller of cane from tenant farmers and independent contractors was a major change in the country's political economy. Another was the increasing commercialisation of indigenous households, both for those who remained on smallholdings and for others who became wage workers in rural and urban areas. Organising and controlling the cane growers and tightening control over indigenes, even as the latter rejected chiefly authority and demands for financial and other contributions, politicised governing institutions in new, more volatile ways. To cite one instance: 'During the 1920s, the Great Council of Chiefs [a product of the 1874 settlement, noted previously] asked the government to impose a more stringent control on Fijian labour recruitment practices' (Lal 1992:68).

The battle between different demands for reform based on the major changes in agriculture, manufacturing and commerce continued up to and through the final drive for self-government and independence in the 1960s. The contest for power would also strengthen the appearance of a society divided into races, ethnicities or communities, depending upon the preferences of politicians, academics, journalists and other observers. (For the continuing confusion over which of the three identities is foremost, see, for one instance among many, Lal 2006:1–2). Racial, ethnic and or/ community representation became the badges worn in political tussles over the shape of national institutions. At the same time, Fiji industrialised and commercialised further (Lal 1992:214–266). It should not be necessary to repeat that these badges are not expressions of so-called 'false consciousness',

but the political-ideological representation of specific material conditions. The fight over the terms of the independence constitution, discussed in the following, provides one illustration of the point. In the 1960s, Taukei chiefs, with their rural bases and numerically weak European settler allies, united against Indo-Fijian political leaders to define an outcome favourable to their hold on state power.

The arrival of Indo-Fijians, who were not indentured labourers like their predecessors, added a further tension to the political economy of Fiji. As Lal notes:

In the 1920s and 1930s, small but steady numbers of free Indians migrated to Fiji. ... Most of the new immigrants ... were enterprising agriculturalists from the Punjab or artisans or petty traders from Gujarat ... Nearly all the Gujarati immigrants in Fiji lived in towns and engaged in such petty business activities as hawking, tailoring, laundering, boot or jewelry making or merchandising. The most prominent Gujarati-owned companies today — Motibhais, Punjas, Narseys — are products of such humble beginnings (1992:76).

By the 1950s and 1960s, the commercial significance of Indo-Fijian businesses became especially important during a period of growth (Chandra 1985). While international, mainly Australia-based firms including Burns Philp and WR Carpenter retained considerable operations, the local European presence in agriculture and commerce was increasingly squeezed. Indo-Fijian capitalists expanded in trade and manufacturing, the latter primarily of goods for the domestic market, which required political power to safeguard protected industries. Initially, indigenous ambitions were confined mainly to agriculture and commercial partnerships with Europeans and Indo-Fijians. This would change with dramatic effects in the 1980s and 1990s (MacWilliam with Daveta 2003; see also the following).

The political consequences of the Indo-Fijian commercial expansion and the parallel shift from indentured labourers into leasehold cane farming became especially pronounced after World War II and evolved into tussles during the passage to self-government. After 1960, when prime minister Harold Macmillan made his ['Wind of Change' speech](#) to the South African parliament, British governments accelerated efforts to rid the country of colonies. However, the changes were to be made with Britain

maintaining the ability to influence future relations with post-colonial governments. Conservatism versus liberalism became the central axis of political battles over the shape of post-colonial capitalist democracies. Liberalism was most often espoused by the political representatives of increasingly important Indo-Fijian commercial concerns. With immigrant population growth substantial and threatening to reduce the indigenous population to a permanent minority, liberalism was expressed by these same representatives in calls for a common, rather than segmented, electoral roll (Lal 2011). Conservatism became even more central to the cause of Taukei representatives, many of whom were chiefs, and local Europeans. Both sides, however, saw democracy in elected-representative, parliamentary terms with no serious challenge to the further advance of capitalism. Only the terms of the advance were contested (Lal 1992:164–213).

#### *Post-independence conservatism and the veneer of liberal democracy*

During the 1960s, discussions over the shape of the post-colonial state produced what Lal (1992:206) terms a 'growing feeling of rapprochement between Fijians and Indo-Fijians'. Rapprochement was elevated in importance among political leaders as the effects of commercialisation resulted in labour militancy of urban workers and cane growers. The political hold of the country's rulers was weakened further as the chiefly aristocracy's grip loosened over rural and urban indigenes. The result, in the form of the 'compromise — some said a compromised — constitution' (Lal 1992:212), was independence in which conservatism triumphed over liberal democracy. The political-economic alliance between indigenous chiefs and European settlers, which had been forged over the nearly 100 years since the signing of the Deed of Cession, retained supremacy. The constitution included a bicameral legislature and elections for the lower house.

While appearing to give parity between Taukei and Indo-Fijian representatives, the procedures for selecting politicians to the house of representatives locked in the importance of the general electors, a mere four per cent of the total population. Mostly Europeans, these electors had a significance beyond their numbers and, as constant allies of the Taukei chiefs, ensured an anti-Indo-Fijian majority in this chamber. Electoral rules also contained a major rural malapportionment against

the population movements to urban areas. The upper house, the senate, as an entirely nominated chamber, guaranteed the 'paramountcy of Fijian interests' (Lal 1992:212). As Lal notes (1992:212), in addition to the procedures by which the majority of senators were nominated, 'paramountcy' was assured by 'the veto powers that the Great Council of Chiefs' nominees (had) over all legislation affecting Fijian interests and privileges'. Fiji became independent with a constitution that had a veneer of liberal democracy, due almost entirely to the fact that governments were formed after elections, but it was already a very 'thin' democracy. When one or two coups — the number dependent on how the period between the first and second is assessed (see Tarte 1987) — and a parliamentary takeover occurred within the first decades after independence, the thinness of the parliamentary electoral democracy in the country's political economy became apparent (MacWilliam 2001).

#### *State power through the military*

The nature of the move from colonial to post-colonial states was to an extent also disguised because a critical component of all state power remained in the background. While internationally even conservatives, including US president and former military commander Dwight Eisenhower, warned of the danger of the military-industrial complex gaining too much power, the role of the apparatuses of organised force in Fiji's national politics was often underestimated. Underestimation occurred even as there remained a very compressed relationship between the military and other state institutions. Compression has been in part due to the political sociology of a country where for many years the top levels of the military were chiefs who also occupied other state positions of importance.

An institution constructed under, and critical for, colonial rule was the Fiji military. Until recently, the importance of British rules and practices has remained unreformed for the Fiji military (RFMF Media Cell 2019). Changed from warriors loyal to chiefs for local fights into a colonial force used mainly for overseas engagements, the military remains recruited almost entirely from indigenes. If the overseas deployments did little to change conditions in indigenous life at home, they did instil a strong sense of Taukei nationalism among personnel. The military, which was expanded in number considerably beyond what was needed for

local purposes, subsequently became an overt bulwark to defend conservative, even authoritarian, democratic order within Fiji. This role would have heightened significance after independence.

### *Post-colonial rule*

As the long post-war global boom provided a brief economic cushion for the first independence government, the economic conditions also stimulated two important changes. The Alliance Party government headed by eastern Fijian chief Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara was forced to deal with labour militancy and demands for increased wages by introducing a series of measures that followed the practices of that period. As Ganesh Chand noted:

On Independence, Fiji inherited a labour market with all the signs of potential vibrancy, an economy similarly raring to take off, and a set of labour laws, largely inherited from Britain, providing a regulatory framework for the labour market (1997:34).

The regulatory framework included a wages council, the registration of trade unions, shop regulations and rules governing terms of employment and workers' compensation. Continuing labour militancy and a rapid increase in inflation from 4.5 per cent in 1970 to a peak of 14.4 per cent in 1975 resulted in further legislation to establish machinery to mediate disputes and control trade union activities, as well as provide for price controls (Chand 1997:35). Liberalism, as then constituted, reached its industrial heyday with the formation in 1977 of a national Tripartite Forum. The forum, comprising representatives of employers, unions and the national government, lasted until 1984. It succeeded in pulling the teeth of labour militancy even before the declining economic growth of the 1980s and subsequent military rule took full effect. Liberal reform had achieved the required outcome in an important field of state power.

The collapse of this forum once again illustrated the close connection between the development of Fiji's political economy and international conditions. After 1979, structural adjustment became the catch-cry of the main international financial institutions, particularly the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Although first promulgated for Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank 1981), its central tenets soon flooded rather than trickled into the South

Pacific. Faced with a budgetary deficit, in November 1984 the Alliance government headed by Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara imposed a wage freeze. The freeze was encouraged by an IMF report that claimed wages were 15 per cent 'more than desirable' (Chand 1997:37). Other dimensions of the global attack on workers and unions under an elected government soon appeared in Fiji, setting the scene for an accelerated onslaught under a succession of military- and military-backed governments.

However, other industrial and financial changes begun pre-independence were harder to reform by a government espousing capitalism's spontaneity. As the international mantra became 'freeing up markets', it was impossible to displace the already gained commercial ascendancy of Indo-Fijian firms without mounting a more general assault on particular private property owners. The mid-1960s' arrival in Fiji of the Gujarat-based Bank of Baroda had given an extra boost to this industrial and commercial dominance (Chandra 1985; MacWilliam 2001), even as indigenous capital's aspirations received political support with the formation of the first post-independence government (MacWilliam with Daveta 2003). The Ratu Mara-led Alliance government represented a commercial and political alliance in which Indo-Fijian capital sheltered as indigenous commerce sought to gain a more important place in the national political economy. The tussle for ascendancy was not resolved when a Fiji Labour Party (FLP)–NFP Coalition victory at the 1987 election ended the Alliance Party's reign.

Against pre-election rhetoric that the coalition would bring socialism to Fiji, in its brief period of rule the government proposed little more than mildly reformist changes. However, even this gentle challenge was insufficient to contain an initial radical nationalist revolt and a subsequent conservative constitutionalism that eased the concerns of local capital while providing increased space for indigenous commercial ambitions (Chandra 1989; Lal 1992:214–315; MacWilliam 2001; MacWilliam with Daveta 20003; Ratuva 2013; Robertson 2017:61–128).

The changes in Fiji corresponded with the continuing international emphasis on the need for further reforms that stressed the privatisation of state instrumentalities, reducing wages, weakening labour organisations and limiting political rights to express dissent. What J.K. Galbraith termed the 'free market fraud' (2006; see also Stedman Jones 2012) descended

as a thick fog over the whole political economy, well suited to the militarised democracy of Fiji.

Privatisation potentially opened more space for local capital, in part because as the dominant Australian firms of Burns Philp and WR Carpenter began to withdraw from the South Pacific, indigenous capital had already begun to advance. An important instance of this move was the 1984 formation of Fijian Holdings Ltd (FHL), formed as an alliance between individual Taukei shareholders and provincial councils dominated by chiefly commercial interests. The 1987 overthrow of the elected FLP–NFP government brought to power a regime overtly expressive of indigenous ambitions. Military action, supported by radical nationalists, eventually resulted in the installation of a conservative constitutionalist regime (Lal 1992:267, 315; MacWilliam 2001). This regime took major steps to advance the cause of local, primarily indigenous capital while maintaining the assault on organised labour. Emblematic of these steps was the transformation of the National Bank of Fiji, which became the scene of the most substantial plunder by a Taukei bourgeois and would-be bourgeois (Grynberg et al. 2002). Successive governments, headed by coup leader Sitiveni Rabuka, also undertook other measures to advance Taukei capital. Government support included providing state funds to strengthen the power of individual shareholding in FHL (Lal 1992:316–320; MacWilliam 2001; MacWilliam with Daveta 2003; Ratuva 2013).

Manufacturing, notably in the form of an export-oriented garment industry, increased. In part, this was made possible by the greater use of female labour, paid at considerably lower wages and working in poor conditions. As Premila Devi and Ganesh Chand noted:

The female composition of total wage employees rose from 14 per cent in 1980 to 18 per cent in 1986 and to 28 per cent by 1993 ... The doubling of female workers as well as the rising concentration of females in wage employment is the result of the export orientation of the economy since the 1987 military coups (1997:69–70).

By the early 2000s, females employed in the garment industry included Chinese workers brought to Fiji. These women lived in secured compounds, one of which was proximate to where the author lived in Vatuwaqa. They were transported to and from work daily with very limited freedom of movement outside the residences.

### *The post-1987 coup period and the 1990 constitution*

After the 1987 coup(s), successive militarised governments continued to maintain a conservative democratic constitutionalist form. During the 1990s, the role of the military and military personnel became more overt and powerful. Increases in shares of government expenditure on the military show one dimension of its growing power in Fiji's government (Narsey 1997:124, 126). At the same time as Fiji became an overtly militarised, 'thin' conservative democracy with a further reduced distance between the institutions of civilian and military authority (MacWilliam 2001), the hold over the apex of the military was changed. While the military leaders continued to express allegiance to 'traditional' chiefly authority, they began to represent an important political–sociological shift. As Rabuka himself emphasised, he was a 'commoner', beholden to but not of the chiefly lineages. This shift became more important and noticeable in the early 21st century as the military maintained its grip on the country's political economy.

Under international and domestic pressure, the Fijian government led by Rabuka initially tried to reform its hold by the construction of a conservative nationalist 1990 constitution. This change reduced the power of the radical nationalists who had forced the removal of the elected coalition government. The government re-emphasised Taukei primacy and provided legitimacy for what became sustained attacks against Indo-Fijian businesses, cane farmers and labour organisations (Chand 1997; Naidu 2009). However, the crudity of the 1990 constitution and the scandals that followed the government's support for particular Taukei commercial firms strengthened demands for further constitutional change. Corruption and substantial reductions in economic growth aided the government's opponents. Their demands tended to be of the liberal developmental variety, calling for reconciliation (Kumar 1997). 'Re-engineering Fiji for growth' (Narsey 1997) indicated the closeness of the continuing attachment between liberalism and capitalism among reformers.

While the establishment of a constitutional review commission, which led to the formulation and implementation of the 1997 constitution, has been portrayed as the triumph of democracy, little critical attention has been paid to the form of the democracy advocated by reformers. In the focus on

constitutionalism, even less emphasis was paid to the shallowness of the coups, where conservative rule had been quickly reasserted through the militarisation of radical nationalism (MacWilliam 2001). Hailed as the ‘best constitution Fiji ever had’ (Lal 1999:4), hope was expressed that the division of Fiji ‘into ethnic compartments’ would end and a ‘transformation from a politics of race to a politics geared to human needs’ would take place (Lal 1999:34). How a politics geared to such needs would occur without displacing accumulation, which separates needs from capacities of those who labour (Kay and Mott 1982), was never articulated amidst the calls for change. What little hope existed for even a ‘thin’ liberal democracy was soon extinguished in May 2000 by another eruption of radical nationalism. Just one year after the Mahendra Chaudhry-led People’s Coalition government came to power through winning the first election held under the 1997 constitution, a small group of military personnel took over parliament and held the most important elected MPs hostage. After protracted negotiations and ultimately an effective military operation, the hostages were released and their captors detained. When another election was held in 2001, once again the military provided the base for governing authority.

### *Militarised democracy — with, without and with elections*

Since the May 2000 overthrow of the People’s Coalition government, the next phase of the search for democracy in Fiji has indicated once more that neither elected nor unelected governments can easily mediate the fundamental contradiction that lies at the centre of capitalism (MacWilliam 2019b). The constant drive for increased accumulation, represented by continuous changes in the various forms of production through which it occurs, incessantly alters and disturbs relations among people (MacWilliam 2019b; Endnote i). As noted previously, liberalism is one among a number of distinct political ideologies informing policy direction to mediate this contradiction and the disorder it creates. Conservatism also attempts to deal with the continuous disorder, albeit in a different direction. The nearly 20 years since May 2000 have seen a series of tussles between liberalism and conservatism over how to deal with this contradiction, while more deeply authoritarian militarised rule remains to settle disputes. International as much as domestic demands have

been important in pushing for negotiations between liberalism and conservatism, as well as defining the terms of democracy which will be ascendant.

In Fiji, where so much of the population still depends upon ownership and occupation of land, even as urbanisation and industrialisation have taken place (Devi and Chand 1997), it is unsurprising that the tussles continue to be centred upon land policy (Prasad 1997). Large farms, tourist resorts, commercial buildings and manufacturing factories are among the sites where bourgeois accumulate. Small holding production, waged work and self-employment are the principal means through which households, employees and others acquire income to meet consumption needs (MacWilliam 2019b). The terms of ownership and utilisation of land are therefore critical for the right to accumulate and to acquire consumption, the two most important rights of a capitalist society. If a government comes to power without elections, as after a military coup, land’s importance still remains. Elections and votes form just one major arena in which the struggle over land is consistently expressed. With the right to vote extended to all citizens 18 years and above, the arena has been enlarged by military government fiat. It was during the authoritarian democratic period of rule between 2006 and 2013 that the military government implemented land reform legislation that parties campaigned for and against at the subsequent elections (MacWilliam 2019b; Sakai 2015).

The significance of aggregate growth, and land’s utilisation central to such growth, remains critical to all classes and strata. This is obvious at elections when parties campaign on either their track record or future commitments to bring increases, usually expressed in terms of GDP. At the 2014 and 2018 elections, portrayed locally and internationally as being central to the ‘return to democracy’, the major parties were united on their objective while divided in their prescriptions of what should be done to promote further economic growth. For the 2018 election, senior FijiFirst (FF) officials, as well as the party’s manifesto, boasted about the government’s success over the previous nine years in securing unprecedented stability and growth. While accepting part of the government’s claims, the two main opposition parties, SODELPA and the NFP, both pointed to the limits of this achievement. The growth rate over the nine-year period referred to by FF was lower than for earlier decades of Fiji’s post-colonial history. Agricultural stagnation, the extent

of unemployment and underemployment, increased personal insecurity and continuing deficiencies in housing and other facilities featured prominently in the criticisms (for a summary see MacWilliam 2019b:5–7). Unsurprisingly for a party hoping to capitalise on rural discontent, the mainly Taukei-led SODELPA emphasised changing land policy as central to its proposed solutions. Ironically, for a party whose leader and main candidate was Rabuka, he of the 1987 ‘democracy as foreign to Fiji’ pronouncement, SODELPA emphasised the international character of the claim to indigenous rights over land.

It has already been noted that Fiji as a nation–state came into being out of the post-war global ascendancy of liberal democracy with anti-colonialism a centrepiece. Four decades later, when SODELPA, regarded as the conservative democrats in Fiji’s party firmament, pronounced the need to protect and secure indigenous rights, it did so by reference to local tradition and international instruments adopted by the United Nations (UN). Whether or not Fiji’s indigenous population are a minority peoples, as envisaged by the UN, SODELPA repeated (SODELPA 2014:46, 2018:9) the party’s attachment to the international idea of rights as expressed in the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 169 on the Rights of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples and the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Even the party’s intention to establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to investigate allegations regarding the 2001 and 2006 military actions had obvious international precedents in mind, including post-apartheid South Africa (SODELPA 2018:9). Clearly the ‘foreign flower’ in Fiji is produced by a plant with deep international roots, including liberal ones (O’Sullivan 2018).

While the significance of military power for political authority may have appeared to decrease with the formation of elected governments in 2014 and 2018, this is deceptive. The military still consists overwhelmingly of Taukei personnel, and senior military people (retired) fill many of the most important positions in government. The president, the prime minister, the leader of the opposition, the speaker of the current national parliament, many cabinet members and opposition spokesmen on numerous important matters are former military officers. There remains a prominent mix of people with high chiefly standing, lesser chiefs and ‘commoners’ who can call upon military authority to bolster their

power. FijiFirst, SODELPA and NFP personnel have close ties to the military, to such an extent that it is uncertain which party or party bloc would command most support from this institution in the event of a political crisis. Elections are held with repeated prominent warnings by the military and police against ‘troublemaking’ and guarantees against further coups. The monitoring of newspapers, radio and television is constant, as is the scrutiny of social media. When in early 2019 overseas journalists who had assisted the government by exposing a foreign firm that engaged in environmental degradation were subsequently arrested by police, the prime minister acted swiftly to secure their release and thanked the New Zealand radio crew for their assistance. At the same time, however, he made it clear that this did not indicate any reduced scrutiny of the media, domestic or international, under the newly elected FF regime (O’Sullivan 2019; RNZ 2019).

### Part 3: Prospects for Liberal Democratic Advance in Fiji

#### *Democracy in post-election Fiji*

When critics complain about the condition of democracy in Fiji, it is usually done in terms which make clear that it is extending liberal democracy, with its focus upon property, other individual rights and freedoms, that is being advocated. Freedom of the press, the right to hold public meetings without surveillance by state personnel and minority rights, including for what has become known as gay marriage, are contested. Opponents rebuff these demands, often in conservative democratic terms, including their threat to national stability, traditional values and customary practice that elevate wider obligations over individual rights. In a militarised democracy, with senior government personnel holding conservative views, state power is exercised to maintain conservative democratic authority over many such contests (Naidu 2015). Labour organisation continues to be sanctioned in a multitude of ways, including by barring union officials from retaining these positions while running for elected parliamentary office. The right to take industrial action, strike, is heavily circumscribed, much along the same lines as has occurred in many other countries over the last four decades. Most important of all, the right to accumulate is never challenged; contests occur only over which forms and by whom (MacWilliam 2015).

The conditions that were so important for liberal democratic advance from the middle of the 19th century included the connection between urbanisation and industrial, factory employment. So too was the development of an intermediate strata, often dubbed ‘the rise of the middle class’, members of which were critical in pushing for reforms, including to representative institutions. While in Fiji there has been considerable urbanisation and some limited development in manufacturing, one early base for labour militancy, self-employed cane growers and rural workers, has been undercut with major reductions in their numbers. The generalised attack on labour of the last four decades has been especially damaging to the prospects for liberal reform advancing this aspect of labour rights. The effect of out-migration, pronounced among rural and urban populations, has been severe. Increases in formal, including tertiary, education have made emigration easier — and are not confined to Indo-Fijians who faced violence and property damage after coups. During the 2018 election campaign, when the NFP leadership drew attention to the casualisation of labour through short-term employment contracts, the focus immediately drew responses from employer representatives and the FF government that this was now normal, and not to be legislated against. The chief executive of the Fiji Commerce and Employers Federation claimed that his organisation’s views were ‘apolitical’ and ‘based on business practice throughout the world’ (Pratibha 2018).

Despite the major changes in the conditions that were so important for advances in liberal democracy, there remains some hope that in Fiji further advances in liberal democracy can occur. Often, the purported motor behind proposed changes is a mix of international pressure, as through the International Labour Organisation and UN agencies, and local organisations operating from what is broadly described as civil society on a range of ‘rights issues’.<sup>3</sup> The rise of social media and the extension of the franchise to citizens 18-years and older have encouraged some to consider these changes as likely to stimulate increased political participation and provide support for campaigns of a liberal character.

### *Monetary democracy and a cautionary note on participant citizenry*

Such optimistic thought too follows international lines, which have a history extending back to the 19th century. The hoped-for direction is often associated with the ideas of French sociologist and political theorist Alexis de Tocqueville. His claims that democracy in the US derived considerable impetus and strength from the existence of a participant citizenry have had a continuing influence on examinations of modern democracy. The influence extended to the work of US political scientist Robert Putnam on both Italy (Putnam, Leonardi and Nanetti 1993) and the US (Putnam 2000). In the case of the former, a participant citizenry was critical for democracy in that country, while for the US rampant individualism had weakened citizen participation, including in civic organisations that de Tocqueville thought formed the underpinnings of democracy there.

The emphasis upon a participant citizenry as providing the basis for extending and consolidating democracy, particularly the liberal variant, has been further examined by John Keane (2009). He notes that after World War II in India and elsewhere, there arose forms of what he termed monetary democracy. In the Indian case, Keane described forums in which local issues were discussed and resolutions proposed by rural dwellers meeting in local spaces as instances of ‘banyan democracy’ (banyan trees were often growing at the centre of public spaces where village meetings were held). The gatherings were not to overthrow the decisions taken in formal representative institutions, national and state legislatures, and so forth. Instead, their purpose was to deal with the localised effects of decisions and make them applicable. That is, representative democracy would be reshaped by people acting locally.

In support of the rise of monetary democracy, Keane claims that:

On a scale never before seen in the history of democracy, the trend towards public scrutiny is strongly evident in all kinds of policy areas, ranging from public concern about the maltreatment and legal rights of children and bodily habits related to exercise and diet ... Experiments with fostering new kinds of citizens’ participation and elected representation have

even penetrated markets, to lay hands on the sacred cow of private property (2009:710).

Citing the cases of workers' representatives on coal company boards in post-war Germany, and the development of participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre and Santo Andre in Brazil, Keane claims that while monitory democracy is not a method for taming the power of governments, it does gradually spread 'power-scrutinising mechanisms into areas of social life that were previously untouched by democratic hands' (2009:708–709).

Keane does not demonstrate how private property and accumulation are in any way threatened by monitory democracy. A notable omission from his account is the relationship between this democratic form and the growing concentration of wealth over the last 40 years detailed above. There is a more serious caveat that needs to be issued regarding the political significance of this applauded change when examining the prospects for democracy in Fiji. An active, participant citizenry may, in some circumstances, lead to not liberal nor even conservative democracy, but extremely authoritarian forms. Dylan Riley (2019:2; see also Keane 2009:708-709) has noted how 'contemporary political culture is suffused with civil society romanticism: the term itself is now treated as virtually equivalent to liberal democracy'.

Instead, Riley argues:

Civil society development facilitated the emergence of fascism, rather than liberal democracy, in interwar Italy, Spain and Romania because it preceded, rather than followed, the establishment of strong political organisations (hegemonic politics) among both dominant classes and nonelites ... Fascist movements and regimes grew out of this general crisis of politics, a crisis that was itself a product of civil society development (2019:2).

For Fiji, where there are no parties with a mass base and continued operation between elections, the room is open for the appearance of a form of authoritarian democracy, fascist or otherwise. With the establishment of secularism as a defining element of the 2013 constitution, important institutions of civil society, religious organisations — particularly the Methodist Church — have been not just marginalised in national politics but formally required to be apolitical in a particular sense of not challenging government

determinations, including secularism as a constitutional requirement (Ryle 2015; Weir 2015). Trade unions and other civil society organisations have been placed under heavy scrutiny and otherwise repressed. Encouraging citizens to direct their demands and complaints directly to the prime minister and his deputy, as is now regularly done in Fiji, both downplays the importance of representative organisations and strengthens the individualised ties between citizens and the leader typical of authoritarian regimes.

### *The clash of imperialisms and democracy in Fiji*

Lastly, it is difficult to see how the growing clash between the major imperial powers, including in the South Pacific, will enhance the prospects for liberal democratic reform in Fiji. In the 19th century, it was the struggle between European imperial powers that had important long-term consequences for the political economies of countries in the South Pacific, as noted previously for Fiji. Currently, for the US and its allies (including Australia), regime stability, favourable investment climates and assistance in stemming China's advance in the region take priority.

Caught between the US and China in its own foreign policy concerns, Australia remains impotent and seemingly unconcerned officially to support the calls for further liberal democratisation in Fiji. Shifting aid from health and education to infrastructure projects, as is currently being advocated for in the new Australian 'Pacific step up' (Dziedzic 2019), does not suggest a deep concern with advancing liberal democratic reform in either the region or any country in it.

In Fiji, holding elections according to constitutionally acceptable rules, ratified by rapid and necessarily brief internationally constructed observer missions, has satisfied most of the overseas governments' demands after periods of direct authoritarian democratic rule. Domestic suppression of regime opponents and extensive use of the state's repressive apparatuses against local critics is not subject to any form of sanctions. The provision of international aid for general purposes and at specific moments, including when reconstruction is necessary after devastating cyclones, strengthens the regime's hold through its capacity to take credit for any benefits provided. Fiji's international purpose seems to be of greater importance for the main liberal and

conservative democracies than the character of its domestic politics.

Although there are some uncertainties about how China's increasing role in Fiji's political economy will affect domestic conditions, pressure for liberal democratisation is not apparent. The international sanctions imposed against the regime after the 2009 military takeover made Fiji's rulers reconsider their international alliances and become more amenable to the role of China and, to a lesser extent, India. Part of the difficulty in evaluating what might be the effect of China's growing power lies in how that country is characterised in terms of the forms of democracy discussed here. In China, building 'capitalism with socialist characteristics' (Oi et al. 2006) has taken place under an authoritarian democratic regime, with little more than shallow forms of popular representation in a one-party system. As already noted, growing inequality and massive accumulation by members of the ruling class characterise that country too. China's increasing power in Fiji has so far been exercised in support of the FF regime with no signs that it is advocating liberal democratic reform. The gathering clash with US imperialism seems less likely to shift power toward the regime's opponents, even in the unlikely event that its main party rival, SODELPA, would suddenly become a supporter of liberal democratic reform.

## Conclusion

From the second half of the 19th century, capitalism was joined to liberal imperialism. The joining occurred during the phase characterised by Karl Polanyi as comprising a double movement when reform saved capitalism from its own destructive tendencies (1957; see also Goodwin 2018). Since World War II, with the decline of European imperialism, the US has become the most important international force determining how political power has been shaped and joined to the international advance of capitalism. Democracy, of both liberal and conservative forms, initially stressed national independence, constitutionalism and representation in legislatures and other state institutions. Over the last 40 years and with a massive increase in inequality worldwide, reductions in real income increases and growing unemployment/underemployment, the connection between liberal democracy and capitalism in particular has become increasingly strained in the US and elsewhere.

Since democracy of all forms 'dwells in a house of contingency' (Keane 2009:161), the residence has both international and local foundations. This Discussion Paper describes how several strands of the idea of democracy continue to be in conflict in Fiji. When liberalism remains 'as much a search for order as a pursuit of liberty' (Fawcett 2014:xix), so too is conservatism driven by the demand for stability when, as in Fiji, capitalism threatens a form of rural and urban order. In Fiji, the conservative form of democracy is expressed in a drive to sustain what is labelled 'tradition', represented by chiefly authority, supportive institutions and a continuing attachment to forms of land ownership and occupation. Conservatism, as with liberalism, aims to temper the uncertainties of capitalism by reforms that enable continued accumulation. Tradition is modernised (MacWilliam 2019b).

International conditions and domestic circumstances continue to limit what is possible by way of liberal democratic advance in Fiji. While this conclusion is unlikely to satisfy most of the critics of current conditions in Fiji, nevertheless major changes toward a more powerful and entrenched liberal democracy are unlikely. Although internationalisation,<sup>4</sup> commercialisation and urbanisation encourage those who imagine a more democratic future driven by the resuscitation of the labour movement in Fiji (Naidu 2009:249), or along the lines of John Keane's monitory democracy (2009:632), this appears unlikely. Not only does the current militarised democracy in Fiji act against the development of an active citizenry, any means by which this citizenry might be involved outside the realm of parliamentary representative democracy is blocked and political activists repressed. There are few public channels permitted through which citizens' concerns can be expressed; politics is overwhelmingly parliamentary electoral politics for the bulk of the population. As much as there are country-specific conditions that inhibit and frame the search for democracy in Fiji, as the quotation which appears at the commencement of this Discussion Paper suggests, liberalism is increasingly marginal worldwide and therefore unlikely to add political weight for political reform in Fiji. The as-yet unanswered question is: What will replace liberalism in Fiji and elsewhere as the search for democracy goes on?

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## Author notes

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## Endnotes

1. It has been pointed out elsewhere (MacWilliam 2019b) that the description of Fiji as having a mixed political economy of capitalist and subsistence 'sectors' is misleading. That many households are attached to smallholdings engaged in self-provisioning as well as producing for markets so as to obtain income for the purchase of manufactured and other goods indicates their subsumption by and subordination to capital. Capitalism has never required all labour to be landless for accumulation to take place (Perelman 2000). As cited below, Bruce Knapman (1987) previously noted that the long-term aim of British colonial policy in keeping indigenous Fijians attached to land was not preservation of a pre-colonial, non-capitalist existence, but to make an orderly passage to colonial capitalism possible. That is, colonial policy did not presuppose or intend any form of 'static dualism'. Subsumption has been advanced further as the population urbanised, with smallholdings now central for urban workers to reproduce consumption when underemployment, unemployment and uncertainty characterise much existence in cities and towns (MacWilliam 2019b). An important indicator of the capitalist character of the political economy and the Fiji state is the constant preoccupation, indeed obsession, of all governments with maintaining and extending economic growth. Advocates of the dual 'capitalist and subsistence' economy description invariably fail to note that the yardstick used to price all transactions in the country is the Fiji dollar, the national currency, which

trades internationally, where its price is validated against currencies of other capitalist countries.

2. I have used the term 'compressed relationship' in this context in other writings and first used the term at a 1999 seminar at the University of the South Pacific that became the 2001 essay 'Shallow Coups, Thin Democracy' (MacWilliam 2001; see also MacWilliam 2015:225; MacWilliam 2016). One obvious indicator of the compression of the relationship between the military as a specific institution and more overtly civilian state apparatuses is the systematic and long-term occupation of important positions in the latter by former officers (Fraenkel 2019). Less obvious and sometimes overlooked when this description is questioned is that the current constitution and laws, now critical to the political economy, including over land, were imposed between the 2006 military takeover and the 2014 election when an unelected military government held state power (Narsey 2013). An alternative constitution constructed by a civilian lawyer brought to Fiji, which would have reduced the importance of military authority and the future chances of the government then in power, was quite literally shredded. The existing constitution gives the military the major role of securing internal as well as external authority. Both the 2014 and 2018 elections were conducted under this constitution after campaigns in which there were repeated public pronouncements that the military and police would maintain public order.
3. This Discussion Paper does not examine the internal operation of organisations that are broadly termed civil society, as its focus is the character of the relationship between class power and state power. For the author, all politics is concerned with gaining and maintaining a hold on political power; such terms as power politics are either an unnecessary repetition of words, a tautology or meaningless. This description of politics applies also to organisations that profess to be not interested or involved in politics (for example, welfare societies), even as these are constantly riven apart by fights over office-holding and the use of funds and other assets, including status obtained by office-holding. The relationship between civil society, democracy and state power is examined in the following.
4. I use the term 'internationalisation' rather than 'globalisation' as my position is that the latter refers to forms of internationalisation that became prominent in the period since WWII (e.g. mobile phones and motor cars with parts built in several places and consolidated into a final product in a third). Globalisation is a form of internationalisation. Fiji was created in the period of a specific form of internationalisation long before globalisation.

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