COUP-COUP LAND

A Comparative Analysis of the Political Coups of Fiji

by
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1 This is a phrase coined by journalists because of the fact that Fiji has had four coups within the span of two decades.
ABSTRACT

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A thesis presented on the political history of Fiji from cession to Britain in 1874 compares and analyses the country’s four political coups. A military coup occurred in 1987 by Lt. Col Sitiveni Rabuka. Six months later he staged a self-coup. In 2000 George Speight staged an armed civilian coup or putsch, and in 2006 Commodore Frank Bainimarama, head of Fiji’s military forces, overthrew the government of Laisenia Qarase. This paper is an internal comparison of the four coups of which the aim is to examine why coups occur in Fiji. The conclusion is that the level of influence of the country’s traditional paramount chiefs is a strong causal factor in events leading to the political overthrows. Issues such as ethnicity, constitutionalism, democracy, traditionalism, and modernity make the study of the Fiji coups complex. All of the major actors involved have been present or have been somehow linked to each coup. Questions of leadership arise as do issues regarding pluralism and multiculturalism. These issues are discussed in this paper. The end result is that if the question of traditional leadership is not addressed within a democratic framework then Fiji will continue to have coups.

Key Words: Fijian, Indo-Fijian, Indian Migrants, Indians, Indigenous, Ethnic, Military Coup, Putsch, Traditional Chiefs, Cession,
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Illustrations  
List of Abbreviations  
Explanations of Terms  
SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION  
1.2 Synopsis of Fiji’s Coups  
1.2.1 Rabuka’s Two Coups of 1987  
1.2.2 Speight Putsch of 2000  
1.2.3 Bainimarama Coups of 2006  
1.3 - Research Aim  
SECTION 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW AND STUDY RELEVANCE  
2.1 Literature Review  
2.1.1 Leadership Models in the Pacific  
2.1.2 Traditionalism vs. Constitutionalism  
2.1.3 Ethnicity Identity  
2.2. Study Relevance  
SECTION 3 – METHODOLOGY  
3.1 Research  
3.2 Comparative and Analytical Framework  
3.3 Expectations and Limitations  
SECTION 4 – ANALYTICAL AND THEORETICAL MODELS  
4.1 Models for Comparative Analysis  
4.1.1 The Most Different Systems Design (MDSD)  
4.2 Theoretical Models for Analysis  
4.2.1 Barth’s Instrumental Model of Ethnicity  
4.2.2 Political Opportunity Structure (POS)  
4.2.3 Collective Action Framing  
SECTION 5 – FIJI’S POLITICAL & SOCIAL BACKGROUND  
5.1 Indigenous Fijians  
5.2 Indian Migrants/Indo-Fijians  
SECTION 6 - DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS  
6.1 Comparative Analysis Using MDSD  
6.1.1 Political Styles  
6.1.2 Governance Structures  
6.1.3 Ethnicity and Race  
6.1.4 The Traditional Chiefs  
6.2 Summary of Main Points within Comparative Analysis  
6.3 Theoretical Application  
6.3.1 First Theoretical Application- Barth’s Instrumental Model of Ethnicity  
6.3.2 Second Theoretical Application – Political Opportunity Structures  
6.3.2.1 The Political System in POS  
6.3.2.2 Political Alignments in POS  
6.3.2.3 Presence of Influential Allies in POS  
6.3.2.4 Conflict and Division among the Elite in POS  
6.3.3 Third Theoretical Application –Collective Action Framing  
6.3.3.1 Framing the Social Cause  
6.3.3.2 – Movement Entrepreneurs (ME) in Collective Action Framing  
6.3.3.3 – Targeted Audience in Collective Action Framing  
6.3.3.4 – Promoting the Movement’s Cause within a Frame  
6.4 Summary of Main Points from Theoretical Application  
SECTION 7 - CONCLUSION  
BIBLIOGRAPHY
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Table 1 – MDSD Agreement   pg 18

Map 1 - Map of Oceania   pg 25

Map 2 – Political Map of Fiji   pg 26

Chart 1 – House of Representatives under the 1970 Constitution   pg 28

Chart 2 - The Senate under the 1970 Constitution   pg 29

Chart 3 – Fiji's Chiefly Confederacies   pg 31

Map 3 – Chiefly Confederacies pg 32

Table 2 – Population Demographics of Fiji (1996 – 2007) pg 34

Illustration 1 - Variables in the Four Coups of Fiji pg 48a
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AP</td>
<td>Alliance Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AV</td>
<td>Alternative Voting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>Colonial Sugar Refining Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAP</td>
<td>Fijian Association Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLP</td>
<td>Fiji Labour Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTUC</td>
<td>Fiji Trade Union Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCC</td>
<td>Great Council of Chiefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFMF</td>
<td>Royal Fiji Military Forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDSD</td>
<td>Most Different Systems Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PANU</td>
<td>Party of National Unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POS</td>
<td>Political Opportunity Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDL</td>
<td>Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SVT</td>
<td>Soqosoqo ni Vakevulewa ni Taukei Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VLV</td>
<td>Veitokani ni Lewenivanua Vakarisito</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXPLANATION OF TERMS

Before commencing on the discussion of the political coups of Fiji, a brief explanation of the terms used throughout this paper is necessary. There is always contention surrounding terms used to describe an ethnic group but for the purpose of this paper the following terms will be used as indicated below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Reference or Usage</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>Indigenous people of Fiji.</td>
<td>This term recognises their status as the first settlers of Fiji which in turn is used to justify their policy of indigenous paramountcy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijian Voters</td>
<td>Indigenous Voters&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Migrants</td>
<td>Indentured labourers from 1987 up until independence in 1970.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indo-Fijian</td>
<td>Indian community after independence i.e. 1970 onwards</td>
<td>Literature on the Fiji coups interchangeably use ‘Indian migrants’, ‘Indo-Fijians’, ‘Indians’ or ‘ethnic Indians’. This is dependent on the focussed time period of the literature concerned. This paper takes its starting point from the Deed of Cession in 1897 and so a necessary distinction between the Indian communities at different phases of Fiji’s modern political history is necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Community/Indians</td>
<td>General description particularly when providing an overview of this community from past to present.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiji Citizens</td>
<td>All inhabitants of Fiji.</td>
<td>The term ‘Fijian Government’ is not used as it could be interpreted as the government of the indigenous Fijians and NOT the country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiji Government</td>
<td>Parliamentary system of the country.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The term 'other' is used to refer to the European, Chinese and Rotuman communities as well as people of mixed ethnic heritage in official policy or government white papers. I have tried to avoid using this term and have in most cases, and where possible, distinguished each group.

<sup>2</sup> I have borrowed usage of this term from Rory Ewins in his 1991 work Colour, Class and Custom: The literature of the 1987 Coup (see bibliography)
The term 'coup' has been used to refer to all of the government takeovers in Fiji. The Oxford Dictionary defines a coup as "a sudden, illegal and often violent, change of government". Examples given to support this definition includes a military coup. This is a rather broad definition and if taken literally could encompass all of the four coups in Fiji. The Oxford definition emphasises the similar outcome of coups, i.e. the overthrow of an elected government but it does not take into account the characteristics which make a coup unique.

The following usage of the term ‘coup’ is based on consensus within established literature on the Fiji coups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Reference or Usage</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Military Coup/Coup d'état</td>
<td>First 1987 overthrow by Rabuka</td>
<td>Had the support of the military forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2006 takeover by Bainimaram</td>
<td>Had the support of the military forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-coup/Auto-golpe</td>
<td>Second 1987 overthrow by Rabuka.</td>
<td>The second overthrow &quot;did not displace a legal government&quot; (Tarte, S 1987:75). Rabuka's second military clampdown in 1987 displaced an illegally established interim government. This paper follows the opinion of Roderic Alley (2001) who explained that Rabuka's overthrow his own illegally-appointed interim government, and appointed himself head of state, abrogated the 1970 constitution and declared Fiji a republic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putsch</td>
<td>2000 overthrow by Speight</td>
<td>This takeover was conducted by armed civilians.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

The 19th of May 2000 started out as any other news day at Radio New Zealand International (RNZI). My day shift as a Pacific regional reporter began with a brief handover meeting between the early morning reporters, the day shift journalists, and news editor to finalise which stories needed following up, possible investigative reports as well as opportunities for breaking news stories. Much of our focus was on the escalating ethnic conflict in Solomon Islands. However a tip-off from a contact regarding a rumour of gunshots in Fiji’s parliament diverted our focus.

Fiji’s 1999 elections eventuated in Mahendra Chaudhry, leader of the Fiji Labour Party, becoming the country’s first Indo-Fijian prime minister. The elections were held under the 1997 constitution which not only declared Fiji a multi-cultural country but it opened up key political positions reserved for indigenous Fijians to other ethnic groups.

Therefore the tip off from our source was something unexpected. We contacted our correspondent in Suva to find out whether or not the gunshots were genuine; not long afterwards we received confirmation that they were. After flurry of phone calls to various contacts in Fiji, RNZI reported that the Pacific nation was going through its third coup.

The so-called 1997 multi-racial constitution and the ensuing elections brought hope that perhaps Fiji had left its coup culture behind but, now living in Sweden, news of the 2006 coup in Fiji made me realise that Fiji has a long way to go before it is able to hold democratically fair and multi-ethnic elections.

Democracy has been described as a foreign flower (Larmour, P. 2002) and the fact that Fiji has had four coups within a two decade period may support that view. While this statement is partly correct such a view oversimplifies the complex intricacies behind the four coups. These issues are long-running and Fiji is a country where its colonial political past plays havoc on the present which in turn creates a pessimistic outlook for the country’s future. I have been privileged to have interviewed and reported on many of the key players in the 2000 coup and their thoughts on the country’s future reveals resignation and desperation for a way out of the coup culture which has developed. Below is a synopsis of the four coups to be analysed.
1.2 - SYNOPSIS OF FIJI'S COUPS

1.2.1 - Rabuka’s Two Coups of 1987

Since Fiji’s independence in 1970, the Alliance Party (AP) government, led by Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, had dominated the nation’s political arena. Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara is considered one of the founding fathers of the Fiji republic as he helped lead the country towards independence in 1970 (Keith-Reid, R. 2004). “Publicly the Alliance campaigned as an inter-racial coalition, dominated by the Fijian Association, but also comprising organisations representing European, Chinese, and Indo-Fijians.” (Alley, R. 2001:219).

The main opposition party was the National Federation Party (NFP) supported by the Indian community of which many were “Indo-Fijian rural, white collar, and small business sectors.” (Alley, R. 2001:218) The other opposition party was the Fijian Labour Party (FLP) formed in 1985 to lobby for Fijians frustrated by corruption and the lack of governing transparency prevalent in the AP government rule (Alley, R. 2001). In order to break AP’s political dominance, the FLP aligned itself with the NFP to contest the 1987 elections. This eventuated in victory and the coalition leader, a Fijian, Dr Timoci Bavadra led the new administration. However,

on the morning of May 14 1987, Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka sat witnessing proceedings in Parliament dressed as a civilian. At a pre-determined signal, he ordered balaclava-clad military personnel into the chamber where they arrested Prime Minister Bavadra and his colleagues...According to Rabuka, this was a coup executed to pre-empt a bloody situation...Behind this claim lay recent street disturbances, sporadic arson attacks and overtly racist vituperation castigating the newly elected Bavadra administration. Most support was mobilised by the Taukei Movement, a collection of Fijians variously linked to the defeated Alliance Party. (Alley, R. 2001, 291)

Sitiveni Rabuka was a young Fijian lieutenant-colonel at the time and he had the support of ten soldiers (Ramesh, S. 2007). Fiji, as an independent nation, had democratically elected a multi-racial government but this historical event was hijacked by a military coup, making it the first in the history of the South Pacific. (Spikard P 2001)

After the coup, discussions between the Great Council of Chiefs (GCC) and the Governor General, Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau, eventuated in a compromise plan which included the establishment of an interim council of ministers led by Rabuka and involved Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara and other Alliance Party members. The purpose was to rewrite the country’s 1970 constitution. Yet negotiations between the Governor General, Ratu Mara, and Bavadra
amounted in an agreement “designed to gradually return the country to civilian rule. This agreement...was barely days old when Rabuka sprang a second coup...Rabuka declared himself head of state, suspended the 1970 constitution, and declared Fiji a republic.” (Alley R, 2001:220). Rabuka’s self-coup occurred six months after his military coup. (Ramesh, S. 2007)

1.2.2 - Speight Putsch of 2000

In 1990 the Rabuka-led government implemented its racially-weighted constitution. At this stage, Rabuka had formed his own political party, the Soqosoko ni Vakevulewa ni Taukei Party (SVT). This constitution was formulated by a review constitution committee of which the members comprised of those who supported Rabuka’s coups. This constitution stated that

"no cross-voting seats were provided for, so all representation became communal. In the seventy-member House of Representatives, thirty-seven seats were reserved for Fijians...The registration of all Fijian voters was now tied to the traditional rule of descent for each subordinate communal from within Fijian society. (Ghai Y & Cottrell J 2007: 639)

The 1990 Constitution also paved the way for affirmative action policies favouring the indigenous community in employment, job training, education scholarships etc. (Alley R, 2001:221). Elections in 1994 saw the unlikely alliance between Rabuka’s SVT Party, and the NFP party led by Indo-Fijian, Jai Ram Reddy. This coalition paved the way for a constitutional review under the auspices of the Reeves Commission consisting of New Zealand’s former Governor General, Sir Paul Reeves, Fiji’s former speaker for the House of Representatives, Tomasi Vakatora, and Brij V Lal, an Indo-Fijian historian and academic (Herenkio V, 2000: 168). The Reeves Commission produced Fiji’s third constitution which “proclaimed Fiji a multi-cultural society” (Alley R, 2001:221) and was implemented in 1997. In 1999, elections were held under the new constitution. The results saw Mahendra Chaudhry, leader of the Fijian Labour Party (FLP) party; become the first Indo-Fijian to assume the post of prime minister to lead his People’s Coalition government.³

Fijian voters had heavily punished Rabuka’s SVT party and its coalition partners because of concern that too much of their indigenous rights had been given away under the 1997 constitution (Alley R. 2001).

³ Mahendra Chaudhry’s People’s Coalition Government comprised of the Fiji Labour Party which he led, the Fijian Association Party led by Adi Kuini Speed, widow of Dr Timoci Bavardra, and the Party of National Unity led by Apisai Tora. The last two parties are Fijian-dominated. Tora, a noted Fijian nationalist, resigned from his party shortly after the election and was replaced by Ratu Tu’akitau Cokonauto from Tailevu Province in the Kabuna Confederacy (Alley, R. 2000:517, Ramesh, S. 2007)
Chaudhry’s term as Prime Minister was not going to be easy, and his abrasive and confrontational leadership style would not help. In late March of 2000, 10,000 Fijians marched through the streets of Suva protesting against his handling of the country’s lucrative mahogany forests growing on land owned by Fijians. George Speight was negotiating for an American real estate developer, who put in a bid of $210 million, to log the forests. However Chaudhry awarded the logging tender to a “preferred bidder” – a British concern with a forty-year track record in Fiji. [This] concern valued the mahogany at $65 million” (Hereniko, V. 2003:84). Fijians were demanding that Chaudhry stop making decisions regarding the mahogany forests and “the renewal of land leased for sugar cane farming.” (ibid) As explained more extensively in Section 5, Fijians own almost 90 percent of land in Fiji and Indo-Fijians lease land for sugar cane farming. Speight meanwhile was garnering the support of landowners angry at Chaudhry’s decision. On the 19th of May 20,000 people marched through Suva of which many were looting and destroying businesses owned by Indo-Fijians (ibid). On that same day, failed businessman...George Speight and accomplices seized Mahendra Chaudhry’s constitutionally elected government at gunpoint in Fiji’s parliamentary complex. This action was supported by members of the Army’s Counter Revolutionary Warfare unit, an entity Rabuka established in 1987, led on this occasion by Major Ilisoni Ligary. (Alley R, 2001:223)

The Prime Minister and his cabinet were held hostage for 56 days after which the military, led by its chief, Commodore Frank Bainimarama, intervened, suspended the 1997 constitution, and installed an interim government led by Laisenia Qarase.

In 2001, Fiji’s Court of Appeal ruled that the constitution had not been lawfully abrogated thereby making the interim government illegal. Qarase then went on to form the Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua (SDL) Party. (Ramesh S, 2007)

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5 The New York Times, (see footnote 5 above) speculated that Chaudhry needed the support of the UK in negotiations with the European Union over exports supports for sugar.
1.2.3 - Bainimarama Coup of 2006 6

In May the 2006 elections were held and Qarase’s SDL party won 36 seats in parliament while Mahendra Chaudhry’s FLP party won 31 seats. “Commonwealth observers present reported that...Qarase became prime minister and, in accordance with the constitution, appointed a cabinet in which nine posts were filled by the FLP. FLP leader Chaudhry declined a position for himself (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2006).

In November the Prime Minister announced that the country’s laws would be amended to offer clemency to those who instigated the 2000 coup – a coup which Bainimarama was instrumental in quelling (BBC World Service 2005). On the 5th of December, Commodore Frank Bainimarama staged the country’s fourth coup by assuming executive powers and dismissing Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase.

This coup was a slow burning event as opposed to the quick operations seen in 1987 or in 2000. The first signs of a possible takeover took place in 2003, when Bainimarama revealed to soldiers dining at the officers’ mess at the main headquarters and barracks in Suva that he intended taking over the government if his military contract as not renewed. The next three years would see a series of high profile arguments between Bainimarama and the Prime Minister. The Royal Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) would publically criticise the government’s policies and personnel. Threats would be followed by half-hearted negotiations. Bainimarama would use each public argument to test the loyalty of his soldiers; those which had divided loyalties were dismissed or transferred elsewhere.

Qarase sacked Bainimarama while the Commodore was in the Middle East in October 2006 and replaced him with a Lieutenant-Colonel. Before leaving for the Middle East, Bainimarama issued a three week ultimatum to Qarase not to go through with his policy promises. Talks in Wellington, New Zealand, to heal the rift between Bainimarama and Qarase were held resulting in the Prime Minister accepting the RFMF’s demands. Having arrived in Fiji, Bainimarama accused Qarase of lying about the talks in Wellington eventuating in his coup.

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1.3 RESEARCH AIM

Political instability in the South Pacific region, particularly in Melanesia, ranges from civil war, political stalemates, party-hopping, to political non-transparency, and corruption. Melanesia is often referred to as the “arc of instability” and the politically and economically unstable conditions in the relevant countries make them candidates for coups. Out of the Melanesian countries, Fiji is regarded as the most politically and economically stable with its tourism, agricultural and manufacturing industries. Yet Fiji is the only country to have repeatedly used the coup as a type of election tool in the South Pacific.

Why do coups occur in Fiji? Is Fiji a case where democracy is failing to take hold in the country? Is there something wrong with the political infrastructure and if so does the problem lie with the formal or traditional political structures? What about the relationship and allegiance of Fiji’s military to various traditional chiefs? Is it problematic? Is a class system developing thereby changing the customary and traditional hierarchies as well as the communal nature of Fiji society?

The aim of this paper is to address these issues by comparing the coups to determine the factors contributing to the execution of the coups in Fiji. This is an attempt to systematically analyse the four coups as this is an area which is lacking in the current literature. This study can be placed within the current and wider debate on Western-style democracy, its transplantation in Pacific cultures which are not necessarily democratic because of their hierarchical structures, and perhaps the need to develop a type an alternative democratic system better suited to Pacific cultures.

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7 A phrase coined in the 1990s by Australian academic Paul Dibb. His credentials include: Secretary of Defence, Director of Australia’s joint intelligence organisation, head of the National Intelligence Committee, and Ministerial Consultant to the Defence Minister. The phrase was coined originally to describe the geopolitical consequences for Australia of the collapse of the Suharto regime, the economic impact of the Asian economic crisis in effectively destroying Indonesia’s growth economy, and the possible foreshadowing of the break-up of that republic by the East Timor’s bloody separation. Since then Indonesia has been dropped and the phrase is now used to refer to Melanesian countries in the Pacific: Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.
SECTION 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW & STUDY RELEVANCE

2.1 – LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a wealth of literature on the political coups particularly the 1987 coups instigated by Sitiveni Rabuka, and the 2000 putsch of George Speight. Literary analysis of the Bainimarama Coup in 2006 is still in its infancy.

The themes and approaches in analysing the political coups are wide and varied, depending on the perspective taken by the writer i.e. anthropological, cultural, political, sociological, and so on. Some of the themes discussed are: traditionalism versus nationalism (Lawson S, 1996), nationalism versus constitutioalism (Lawson S, 2004), Indo-Fijians versus indigenous Fijians (Alley R, 2001), post-colonial political structures and occurring problems in the transplantation of the forms of democracy in indigenous cultures (Larmour P, 2001; 2002), economic factors behind the coups (Flanagan M, 2007), conflict resolution measures (Norton R, 2000), (Johnson H, 2005), (Murray W.E & Storey D, 2003), and good governance or the lack thereof (Bhim, M 2005), (Klinghofer S & Robinson D, 2001). Note that these are only a very small sampling of the profuse literature on the topic of politics in Fiji.

Such an overabundance of literature indicates several aspects 1) the ‘relative newness’ of Fiji as a democratic nation produces up-to-date and step-by-step accounts of the processes a country experiences during the transition from a colonial to post-colonial era, 2) the complexity and dynamism of such a transition, for example unlike most Western democracies, Fiji still has in place traditional customary structures which parallel and/or intersect with modern formal governing institutions, and 3) fascination with the cultural other.

In researching the Fiji coups, the main problem has been dealing with the fragmented nature of available literature. The foci is so varied and the topics wide-ranging. This in turn produces a numbers of theories, speculations, and assumptions.

A perceived weakness of most of the literature is that regardless of the academic areas in which most of the authors come from the perspective is mainly western. Literature from indigenous academics postulating an indigenous perspective is small when compared to the large number of literature produced by European, American, New Zealand or Australian academics or commentators.

The application of Western ideology to indigenous cultures which have different traditional political structures perpetuates a colonial perspective in a post-colonial age. Teresia Teaiwa is of
Banaban and I-Kiribati heritage, and raised in Fiji. Currently the head of the Pacific Studies faculty at New Zealand’s Victoria University of Wellington, she calls on the Pacific’s indigenous peoples to engage in the creation of alternative models of leadership more akin to their cultures. “Many multi-ethnic nation states have inherited an ‘authority vacuum’ which needs to be filled with a new style of Pacific leadership.” (Teaiwa, T, 2000). Mosmi Bhim (2005) from Fiji’s University of the South Pacific noted that

> in most Pacific countries, traditional modes of authority were acknowledged in some manner in the constitutions...However, it does not necessarily mean that the Pacific peoples also regarded the constitution as the absolute monarchy. In fact, Pacific peoples appear to be having great difficulty in accepting the constitution as the highest authority of their country. (2005)

In essence “the constitutions did not fail the people but the people of Fiji failed the constitutions.” (Lal B.V. 2002: 161) Why? Is it because such constitutions were written by foreign hands? Peter Larmour’s political status report on the Pacific to the Commonwealth Secretariat indicated that constitutional and liberal democracies promoted liberty, equality and fraternity over the more traditional [indigenous] concepts of mutual recognition, continuity and consent (2001:8).

The answer to solving this problem perhaps is summarised in ‘the Pacific Way’ - a phrase coined by Fiji’s former president and head of the country’s traditional Great Council of Chiefs, the late Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara. Yet there is still little theory on what the Pacific Way or Pacific Democracy is or what it should entail.

A common thread of the literature is that the 2000 and 2006 coups are unfinished business of the 1987 coups. According to this perspective the 1987 coups were surprising but the 2000 and 2006 coups less so. (Robertson R & Sutherland W, 2001) Arguments supporting this perspective theory are strong due to the large number of variables common to all of the coups e.g. political actors, the role of the military and historical issues such as land ownership. “Part of the argument is that the interests of the Fijian elites have always been represented as communal interests. This reinforces ethnic antagonism while concealing the fundamental class interests of contending elites. Socioeconomic issues have either been deliberately or unconsciously expressed as ethnic issues” (Ratuva S, 2002: 147 – 148).

The problem with this macro perspective is that it lacks or undermines analysis at the micro-and meso-levels. Such a viewpoint focusses on the formal institutions and visible political factors, while underplaying the traditional/informal social and political structures. The intricacies and complexities of the relationships and interactions between ethnicity, class, traditional and modern
elements etc are not fully realised. The perceptions of ordinary Fijians, whether indigenous or of Indian descent, are not given space in a macro –analysis. (Ratuva S, 2002:147 – 148).

As part of the literature review discussion of the main themes of the Fiji coups: the question of leadership models in the Pacific, traditionalism versus constitutionalism, and ethnicity will be provided.

2.1.1 - Leadership Models in the Pacific

As mentioned above, one of the major exploratory themes regarding the Fiji coups is the issue of leadership in the Pacific. Mosmi Bhim (2005) has criticised Pacific leaders as being ethically challenged. This is partly due to the acknowledgment of traditional leadership models within the constitution leading to non-acceptance of the constitution as the highest authority. An example is Fiji which, since its independence, has had three constitutions (Yash G & Cottrell J: 2007). Bhim’s statement raises several issues. The first concerns the current leadership model which is based on Western values. Are Pacific leaders ethically challenged or does the Western-based leadership model, which they are supposed to follow, create situations which lead to ethically challenging situations? The second issue concerns the incorporation of traditional leadership frameworks within a foreign-based model of democracy. This begs the question as to whether Pacific leaders are ethically challenged within their own cultural and ethnic framework, or has the foreign leadership model they adopted changed their roles to the point where they can be criticised as such? While Bhim’s observation may appear relevant, the problem with his view of Pacific leadership is its cursory nature.

Anthropologists such as Marshall Sahlins (1963) describe the different types of customary leadership as: ones based on inheritance, the ‘big man’ system in Melanesia, and ones based on achievement. Evidence of the categories of leadership is prevalent in the Pacific (Larmour 2002).

Sahlin’s characterises the Big Man as having personal power, status achievement through an extraordinary skill, maintenance of status through generosity, and having influence over factions within the clan. Meanwhile the characteristics of a chief are that: power resides in the position and not the person, a chief’s authority is over permanent groups as opposed to fluctuating factions, and status is achieved and such a person has the authority to call upon support without using any form of inducement to guarantee loyalty. (Sahlin 1963)

A criticism of Sahlin’s analysis is that 1) it oversimplifies Pacific societies, and 2) fails to take into consideration the diversity and variations of the leadership types in the Pacific (Douglas 1979, Linstrom 1981).
Peter Larmour (2002) presents a typology of Pacific leadership. Basically Pacific leaders fall into three categories: the statesman, the bureaucrat, and one who supports traditional or peripheral interests. What is taken into consideration is the impact foreign democratic systems have on the roles of traditional chiefs. “All [Pacific nations] were strongly influenced by contact with introduced political systems. Monarchical systems emerged in parts of Polynesia...Colonial governments recognised or created chiefs through whom they could work...[and] decolonisation often involved the recognition, restoration or reconstruction of chiefly systems” (2002:2).

If we return to Bhim’s statement above it would appear hasty calling Pacific leaders ethically challenged given Larmour’s implication that colonial rule had set the basis for leadership problems in the future. This is a common analysis of the performance of chiefs in the Pacific. (Appana S 2005; Prasad S, 2007; Quentin-Baxter, A 1999; Fraenkel J, 2000) Changes in traditional leadership models alter the way the indigenous societies are governed (Norton, R 2002; Premdas R, 2002). Traditional forms of governance no longer operate in traditional ways. This eventuates in commoners complaining about their leaders using their traditional authority to further personal economic and political interests. (Finin G. A & Wesley-Smith T.A 2000). This is evident in pluralist societies such as Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands or Fiji. The diversity of cultures/ethnicities in those countries reveals the government machinery as being unable to cope with such divergence. Traditional leaders who are part of the government system are expected to unite and lead such cultural diversity when in a customary or traditional system they would only govern a smaller and closely knit community or clan. This is slightly different in Polynesia where the populations are homogenous (Finin G.A. & Wesley-Smith. T.A. 2000).

Another problem with the incorporation of customary leadership styles in western governing systems is the assumption that customs and traditions remain the same despite the changing roles of chiefly leadership. As a result the traditional political customs and ideals [become] the work of chiefly classes fighting to maintain those customs in their pure form. (Helu. ‘I Futa 1997) While there is some merit to this observation, what is lacking is the understanding as to why traditional-leaders-turned-political-leaders would want to maintain the purity of their customary practises and roles within a foreign governing system. One possible solution is that presenting an illusion of traditional leadership governing communal needs disguises self-seeking agendas.

2.1.2. – Traditionalism vs. Constitutionalism

In section 2.1.1 discussion on the principle of traditional leadership was outlined. A brief exploration of the notion of traditionalism and its relationship to constitutionalism is pertinent in relation to Fiji which has had three constitutions since independence in 1970.
The purpose of a constitution is to "make up for a deficit of common social bonds and solidarity" within multi-ethnic societies (Ghai Y & Cottrell J. 2007). Constitutions help define the boundaries between the private and public spheres (Ghai Y & Cottrell J 2007; Salevao, I. 2005). However the abrogation of Fiji’s 1970 and 1990 constitutions and the attempted abrogation of the 1997 constitution illustrate that they have "borne less relationship to the reality and structures of society and have tended, in fact, to produce tension and conflict." (Ghai Y & Cottrell J 2007)

The democratic principles which a constitution enshrines go against the principles of indigenous societies which may not necessarily be democratic. Therefore traditional governing systems clash or become incorporated within the constitution creating situations which in the long-run become untenable. Larmour defines constitution as "law setting out the basic framework of government" (2002:7). This elaborate and complicated document establishes the roles of the government and the rights of the people. However the problem with constitutional democracies is that they assume their society to be homogenous (Larmour 2002; Tully J, 1995). Modern constitutions, therefore, replaces and opposes older governing frameworks based on tradition or customs individually suited to specific groups. As seen in the case of Fiji, or in extremely culturally and linguistically diverse countries like Papua New Guinea, their constitutions, based on Western models, are unable to cope with cultural differences in those societies (Tully J 1995).

The ability of a constitution and the government depends on society’s perceptions of its legitimacy. Applying Weber theorems of legitimacy to the Pacific, Salevao (2005) notes that constitutions embody a rational-legal authority based on rational grounds. Constitutions help legitimise that authority and present it as the dominant form. On the other hand traditional authority (pre-modern societies) is based on "customs and traditions of a community, embodied in the people's way of life and transmitted through cultural traditions" (2005:152). This is helped in part by the principle of consensus, of mutual recognition and consent. The opposition to these principles are the Western values of liberty, equality and fraternity. (Larmour P. 2002:8)

2.1.3 – Ethnicity Identity

The constitutions in Fiji have either enshrined ethnic paramountcy or refuted it. Thus the tension between Fijians and Indians has been, and continues to be, centred on ethnic identity which necessitates the promotion of paramountcy. “Ethnicity is the product of actions undertaken by ethnic groups as they shape and reshape their self-definition and culture, however, ethnicity is also constructed by external social, economic, and political processes and actors as they shape and reshape ethnic categories and definitions” (Nagel, J. 1994: 152). This is not a definition of
ethnicity per se; it is a description of the characteristics of ethnicity. The interesting aspect of this description is that the concept of race has limited relevance in the determination of ethnicity as ethnicity is a product of actions. This implies that ethnicity is constantly in flux. It is shaped by elements within and outside the ethnic group as either a reaction to circumstances or to anticipate circumstances. There is the constant negotiation of boundaries, either physical or metaphorical, among ethnic groups as well as among individuals within a group (Barth 1969, 1998). Ethnicity is both inclusive and exclusive. Ethnicity is individual but it is also the property of the group. (Nagel, J. 1994) Richard Jenkins (2003: 40) presents his view of ethnicity by stating that it highlights cultural differentiation. It is cultural and is based in shared meanings which are then produced and reproduced in social interaction. Ethnicity is variable and manipulative; it is not fixed or unchanging. Ethnicity is a social identity; it is collective and individual, externalised and internalised.

The above descriptions, of course, try to address the complexity of the concept of ethnicity. A criticism is that they are too broad. For instance what does Jenkins mean by culture? Is culture based on race or is it based on common interests, goals, practices etc? For example at one end of the spectrum, Fijians can say their culture is Fijian and so this will exclude non-Fijians such as Indians. At the other end of the spectrum, people who are not indigenous Fijians can be called Fijian because they speak the language, and have acquired deep knowledge of the customs.

The basic features of Barth's model of ethnicity framework are: "First, the definition of the situation held by social actors... Second, the maintenance of ethnic boundaries... Third, ethnic identity depends on ascriptions, both by members of the ethnic group in question and by outsiders...Fourth, ethnicity is not fixed...Fifth, ecological issues ...competition for economic niches." (Jenkins, R. 2003: 19). A criticism with this approach is that ethnicity is opportunistic. It implies that the endgame of ethnic groups is to gain political, social or economic advantages – possibly at the expense of other ethnicities, resulting in conflict; ethnicity can be competitive.

In examining ethnicity, Barth recommended three levels of analysis. The first level is the micro-level which focuses on "the embracesments and rejections of symbols and of social fellowships that are formative of the person's consciousness of ethnic identity" (Barth 1994:21). The median level "depict[s] the processes that create collectivities and mobilize groups for diverse purposes by diverse means. This is the field of entrepreneurship, leadership and rhetoric; here stereotypes are established and collectivities are set in motion" (1994: 26). The macro-level concentrates on "state policies: the legal creations of bureaucracies allocating rights and impediments according to formal criteria.' (1994:21)
Clifford Geertz’s (1993) primordial concept of ethnicity is “an attachment that stems from the subject’s, not the observer’s, sense of the ‘given’s of social existence” (1993:6). These givens include language, religion, blood, custom, residence, history, physical appearance. These characteristics will “vary in the strength of their hold from society to society, situation to situation, person to person.” (ibid). When compared to Barth’s more instrumental approach, Geertz’s ethnic model appears to be contradictory however, both theoretical models can complement each other. Geertz’s primordial ‘givens’ create a sense of belonging which in turn develops loyalty. This then leads onto the use of ethnic identity to create economic, social and political advantages.

How do these theories of ethnicity relate to the political situation in Fiji? Fijian paramountcy was protected by the British colonial administration and enshrined in the racially-weighted 1990 constitution and debated in the 1997 constitution. The question is whether indigenous paramountcy is based on race or ethnicity. Primordial identification or markers to ethnic identity is the first step but, as seen in the case of Fiji, Fijian ethnicity is fluid.

If we apply Barth’s concept of ethnicity, Fijian ethnic identity is based on the reflected opposite of Indians. For example, Fijians are Christians, non-Fijians are non-Christian, Fijians are the original settlers, non-Fijians were introduced, Fijians are communal, non-Fijians are individualistic etc. This follows that Fijian ethnicity is defined in opposition to non-Fijian but at the median level is Fijian ethnic identity relevant when speaking of membership within their confederacies? Therefore other definitions of ethnic Fijian identity are created in order to establish opportunities. For example Fijians living in the Western regions are slightly different from those living in the Tovata or Kubuna Confederacies. Fijians from the West have slightly different hierarchies, different dialects and different way of doing things. Those from the Lau group of islands in the Tovata Confederacy are not purely ethnic Fijians as they have a mixed Fijian and Tongan heritage. So within the Fijian community itself, the concept of ethnic identity is far from fixed or defined.

Rabuka’s supporters created a slogan which said Fiji for Fijians - but how is Fijian ethnicity defined? Barth may have been criticised for the opportunistic element in his ethnicity model but in the case of Fiji, ethnicity has been used for economic purposes and has been defined by those holding power at the time.
2.2  - STUDY RELEVANCE

My initial research has indicated that there were no comparative analyses of the four coups or attempts to investigate why coups did not occur in countries in similar or worse political and economic circumstances in the Melanesian region. This study is an attempt to systematically compare and analyse the four coups themselves and not use them to aid in the discussion of themes or issues arising from the coups e.g. Fiji’s three constitutions, economic studies in poverty and ethnicity, post-colonialism and so on. Thus this study can aid in filling this gap in the literature.

Academic writing analysing the coups are mainly descriptive or reflective, regarded as continuous and “unfinished business” of the 1987 coups, or are aids to compare other research themes. There is enough literature to require that the 1987 coups, the civilian putsch of 2000 and the coup d’état in 2006 should not be regarded as a continuum but as unique events with subtle but influential differences. This approach was taken by Roderic Alley (2001) in his comparative analysis of the 1987 and 2000 coups. The implication is that the circumstances surrounding each coup were unique because of significant changes at the micro-and meso-levels.

By developing and expanding the approach adopted by Alley to all four coups, this study will help open avenues for further research with particular regard to the development of alternative models of democracy suitable to Pacific cultures.
SECTION 3 - METHODOLOGY

3.1 - RESEARCH

As this paper is essentially a qualitative analysis, research will rely mainly on secondary sources. The 1987, and to some extent 2000 coup, as well as the political situation across Melanesia spawned a plethora of analytical and descriptive literature across Oceania.

The various genres of literature on the coups will be drawn upon to 1) provide a political and cultural background, and framework, 2) to illustrate the national and regional politics and policies at the time of the events, and 3) to assist in the comparative analyses.

Available historical, analytical and descriptive literature specialising on the South Pacific from the libraries, relevant faculties of universities in the region, e.g. Australian National University, the University of the South Pacific, as well as various non-government organisations will be utilised.

Briefing and policies papers, and communiqués from the Commonwealth Secretariat, the South Pacific Forum, the different governments of Fiji and relevant foreign governments and lobby organisations will provide an understanding of the region’s socio-political and economical policies at the time of the coups.

Other types of sources used will be eye witness accounts and interviews recorded by the media within the Pacific region, as well as from my own journalist work particularly regarding the 2000 Putsch.

3.2 - COMPARATIVE AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The objective of the aim of this study is to answer the question as to why coups in occur Fiji particularly when Fiji was considered the more political stable and economically progressive country in comparison to its Melanesian neighbours. In other words “What explains Y?” (Anckar C 2007). In order to answer that question a deductive perspective is utilised. The non-experimental chosen for this paper is the comparative method.
Identifying variables of each of Fiji’s coups necessitates a comparative analysis of the 1987, 2000, and 2006 coups. The comparative design chosen for this analysis is the Most Different Systems Design (MDSD), based on John Stuart Mill’s Method of Agreement. (Landman, T: 2004)

A more detailed explanation of this comparative model as well as reasons why this was chosen will be given in more detail in Section 4 of this paper. But in summary, this model will help identify variables which are common to all four coups as well as their differences.

Once the variables are identified, theoretical application is necessary to explain the circumstances which led to the establishment of the identified variables and the role of the various social network and actors in the coups.

Theories used in this analytical study are: Fredrik Barth’s model of ethnicity (1998: 1-30), Political Opportunity Structures (Tarrow S 1996), and Collective Action Framing. (Johnston, H & Noakes, J.A. 2005: 1-29). The aim of these theories is to analyse the political and traditional structures in Fiji to test their involvement in causing the coups.

The politics of Fiji necessitates a theoretical analysis of how ethnic identity is used by the various actors concerned. Politics in Fiji is best described as race politics. The governing policies are based on the supremacy of one ethnic group and the suppression of another. What is also discussed, through Barth’s theoretical model, is how ethnic Fijian identity or ethnic Indian identity is not homogenous within the groups themselves. Therefore ethnic identity is socially and politically constructed in order to fulfil the agendas of the main players involved.

Of importance is to examine the political opportunities of not only Fijians and Indo-Fijians but to discuss the political opportunities of key players in events leading up to the coup, during the event, and post-coup. The opportunities that exist or do not exist will determine the type of politics which in turn add to possible causality.

Ethnicity and race are issues which link the four coups as the question of ethnicity is used as a means of framing agendas in order to make them appealing to wider sections of the communities. Framing will help examine the ways in which ethnicity or race rhetoric is used to garner support, to maintain it as well as maintain divisions within ethnic groups. The theory of framing will also aid in investigating how groups within an ethnic group frame themselves within appropriate cultural contexts i.e. how do the Fijian chiefs maintain support despite the fact that, in some instances, they were proven to be corrupt or inapt?
As this is an internal comparison of the Fiji coups, identified variables will assist in further studies of alternative democracy models appropriate for the Pacific. There are studies currently examining this possibility. Leaders as well as academics in the region have used the term “the Pacific Way” when discussing the possibility of formulating alternative democracy paradigms. Due to the scope of this paper, it is not possible to investigate this issue further but a systematic and simultaneous comparison of the coups themselves is a start.

3.3 - EXPECTATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The aim is to identify variables which not only explain the reason behind the Fiji coups, but which are also unique to Fiji. The expected findings of this study are that these unique features will mean further political coups if these variable are ignored.

The limitation of this study is mainly the availability of interviews of key players, particularly the 1987 coups. Over the years, Sitiveni Rabuka has conveyed reluctance to speak about his 1987 coups while others such as Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara are now deceased. However archive audio and transcripts from regional media agencies can help fulfil the required needs of this paper.
SECTION 4 – ANALYTICAL & THEORECTICAL MODELS

4.1 - MODELS FOR COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

4.1.1 - The Most Different Systems Design (MDSD)

The aim of MDSD is to “compare countries that do not share any common features apart from the political outcome to be explained and one or two of the explanatory factors seen to be important for that outcome.” (Landman T. 2003: 29). Table 2 below illustrates the MDSD comparative model.

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<th>Key Explanatory factors (independent variable)</th>
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<th>Outcome to be explained (dependent variable)</th>
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Adapted from Skocpol and Somers (1980:184)

*Based on J.S. Mills (1843) method of Agreement.

MDSD is chosen in this paper because the hypothetical thesis is that the Fiji coups share very little in terms of common features despite their occurring in the same country. An advantage of MDSD is that one can “distil out the common elements from a diverse set of countries [events] that have greater explanatory power. “ (2003: 29) A main disadvantage of MDSD is that it necessitates a constant dependent variable...If X is present in all cases where Y is present this does not tell us much about the explanatory power of X on Y. In order to fully understand the relation between X and Y, we need to know if Y can occur also in situations where X is not present and if there are cases where X is present but not Y. (Anckar C 2007)

While this is a rather acknowledged criticism of MDSD, there are possible counter-arguments. One such argument is to focus on the pattern of the causal relation to the dependent variable and whether that pattern is the same across the chosen case studies. This de-emphasises the necessity of the dependent variable being constant across the chosen studies (Prezeworski and Teune 1970; Anckar C 2002).

This leads of course to another problem with MDSD: spurious causality. In other words, “the mere fact that in every case of Y we find X is not by itself enough to prove that X is a necessary
condition for Y” (Dion D 2002:109). To avoid this it is important to determine whether the independent variable is 1) sufficient i.e. “X is sufficient for Y if the occurrence of X implies the occurrence of Y” (2002: 96), or 2) necessary i.e. Y will happen only if X is present. (ibid: 96-97)

The problem with deterministic (necessary) conditions is that they can be invalidated by a single observation i.e. there will always be exceptions to the rule. However, there are arguments which refute this. One is that deterministic or necessary conditions indicate what is possible as opposed to sufficient conditions which state what will definitely happen. Therefore deterministic conditions are compatible with our probabilistic world. Another argument is that the identification of deterministic conditions can only be achieved through empirical research while sufficient conditions are partly based on priori speculation. (Dion, D 2002: 106-107)

Regarding this study on Fiji, by systematically comparing the coups themselves, identifying the common variable will help analyse the level of that variable’s influence behind the coups. The advantage of this comparative study is that there are four events over a 20 year period within the same country involving the same ethnic groups. This internal comparison will determine the combination of actors, political and economic circumstances which, in turn, will affect the influence of the identified common variable. A weak or strong influence will impact the level of success, the level of support as well as the available opportunities.

After comparing the coups, theoretical application is necessary to establish the patterns or circumstances in which the dependent variable occurs. Theories will not only give credence to the empirical research but they will provide necessary guidelines to ensure that the aim of the research is adhered to.

4.2 - THEORETICAL MODELS FOR ANALYSIS

4.2.1 - Barth’s Instrumental Model of Ethnicity

Fiji politics is based on ethnic and cultural differences between Fijians and Indo-Fijians. These differences are used as an excuse to justify indigenous paramountcy. In his model of ethnicity, Fredrik Barth (1998) proposes five premises to analyse the relationships of cultural differences as opposed to the cultural characteristics of ethnic groups.

The first premise is that ethnic identity is a feature of social organisation and not culture. (Barth, F. 1998:13). Thus the implication is that one should begin with the social actor’s definition of a
given situation when analysing ethnicity (Jenkins, R. 1997:18-19). The second is “critical focus [on] the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses” (Barth, F. 1998:15). The focus here is on social boundaries i.e. “the structured interaction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ which take place across the boundary” (Jenkins, R 1997: 19) and their maintenance. This is aided through the production and reproduction of ethnic identity by social actors (1997:18-19). The third is that ethnic identity is dependent on ascription by members inside the social organisation as well as by those outside the social organisation (1997:19). The fourth element in Barth’s theoretical model is that ethnicity is flexible, able to change with the times or circumstances. In essence ethnic identity is situational. “The cultural features that signal the boundary may change, and the cultural characteristics of the members may likewise be transformed, indeed, even the organizational form of the group may change.” (Barth, F. 1998: 14) Lastly, “ecological issues are particularly influential in determining ethnic identity, inasmuch as competition for economic niches plays an important role in the generation of ethnicity” (Jenkins, R. 1997:19). Abner Cohen (Hylland Eriksen, T. 2002) expands on Barth’s model by stating that ethnic identity is more than a social organisation but a “kind of political organisation” (2002:44) Ethnicity exploits social interaction and organisation for specific purposes which are only known to the actors involved. Therefore ethnicity must have a purpose in order for it to be viable. Cohen argues that this explains “why some ethnic groups thrive while others vanish, and why only some ethnic identifications assume great social importance.” (ibid: 44-45).

Barth’s model has been criticised for the lack of focus on what he calls “cultural stuff” (language, customs, traditions, food, clothes etc) and for his primary focus on the ethnic boundaries. However a careful reading of Barth shows that he does not completely ignore or dismiss ‘cultural stuff’ as they are signals of identity and emblems of differences. ‘Cultural stuff’ is also used as a means of measuring and judging the performance of the group leaders. (Barth, F. 1998:14)

While this paper will use Barth’s model of ethnic identity to explore the relationship between Fijians and Indo-Fijians as well as the within each ethnic group, a brief mention should be made concerning the issue of ‘race’ as it is an issue which lurks in the background and therefore cannot be avoided.

Jenkins (1997) provides a clear summary of primordial theories of which some focus on ‘race’. Ethnic relations are not necessarily hierarchal, exploitive or conflicting. Race relations on the

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other hand appear as if they are. Ethnic boundaries involve power relations and social categorisation, but hierarchal differences are definitive of ethnic relations. Race appears to be more of social categorisation than group identification (1997:75). Jenkins argues that ethnicity may be a primary social identity (my emphasis)... [as it] is basic to the human condition in the sense that ‘race’ is not... ‘Racial’ categories are second-order cultural creations or notions (my emphasis); they are abstractions, explicit bodies of knowledge that are very much more the children of specific historical circumstances, typically territorial expansion and attempted imperial or colonial domination. (Jenkins, R. 1997:77)

While the concept of ‘race’ can be used as an ethnic boundary marker, Jenkins warns that it should not conflated. “Socially signified and visible phenotypical differences – such as hair colour – may be invoked in processes of ethnic differentiation without ideas about ‘race’ being involved.” (1997:78)

Barth’s model of ethnicity was chosen to analyse the Fiji Coups because of the continuous shift in the country’s major social and political structures which in turn affect the way in which Fijians and Indo-Fijians define themselves, define each other as well as interact within their own groups and between the two groups. Part of the focus will be on the maintenance of the groups’ ethnic and cultural boundaries but in order to do that emphasis must be placed on the groups themselves, more particularly how the groups have changed since colonialisation to the present day.

As mentioned earlier, Barth has been criticised for giving ethnic identity an opportunistic element. While there is some element of truth to this statement, it is not entirely correct. In reading Barth’s essay, he was very much concerned about the social group itself. Cultural boundaries were created out of deliberate and selective choices of available identity markers. The above criticism pushes the social group in the background. This assumes that the cultural boundaries determine the social group but not the other way round.

Barth’s ethnic identity model highlights the ways in which ethnic groups create opportunities to form or maintain cultural boundaries.

4.2.2 - Political Opportunity Structure (POS)

The Political Opportunity Structure or POS approach examines variables which are exogenous to a movement. Justification as to why this theory was chosen in this paper will be given alongside the following description. Sidney Tarrow (1996) defines POS as “consistent – but not necessarily formal, permanent, or national – signals to social or political actors which either
encourage or discourage them to use their internal resources to form social movements” (1996:54)

Elements which favour or disfavour political opportunities are: 1) the degree to which an institutionalised political system is open or closed, 2) the degree of stability or instability of political alignments, 3) the presence of influential elite allies, and 4) conflict and division among the elite (Tarrow S, 1996:54-56). The first element highlights political structures while the remaining three focus on the formation and distribution of power among the relevant actors. (Kriesi H, 1995: 167-198)

A noticeable feature of Tarrow’s POS model is that weak social groups can be presented with opportunities created by others, either unwittingly or deliberately, to challenge a dominant and stronger group. This could lead to fewer opportunities for the stronger group to maintain their dominance thus eventuating in that group becoming weaker. (Tarrow, S. 1996) This is evident in the Fiji case where the pendulum of political strength and weakness moved from Fijian to Indo-Fijian despite Fijians dominating in the political arena.

Regarding the first element i.e. open or closed system, Tarrow observes that “neither full access nor its absence encourages the greatest amount of protest.” (1996:54). Protest action is more likely if a system is mixed. (ibid) Fiji’s governing system is not entirely closed to Indo-Fijians as there are some constitutional openings for political participation and representation, especially in the 1997 constitution. The second element of the stability or instability of political alignments determines the level of encouragement available to insurgents and social groups for use when putting in action the limited power they have to force change in the status quo. (ibid) Fiji’s political history is filled with shifting political allegiances in which the Indian community used to its advantage. However the same rise and fall of political and social allegiances became excuses necessitating coups.

The element concerning the presence, or lack of, influential elites focusses on the roles of the elites. Influential groups or people can act as allies, mediators, and promoters for competing lobby groups in the various social structures. They can be the voice of reason or “guarantors” (ibid) against repressive action, “or as acceptable negotiators on behalf of constituencies which – if left a free hand – might be far more difficult for authorities to deal with.” (ibid). The elites in Fiji are the Great Council of Chiefs (GCC). These leaders have influenced the expanding of opportunities for Fijians as well as limiting opportunities for Indo-Fijians. The last element in Tarrow’s model: division among the elite encourages minority groups or unrepresented groups to
participate in politics. Quarrelling or disagreement at the upper echelons can provide windows of opportunities for resource-poor groups to mobilise. Divisions in the elite can also be used as a means for the different factions to act on behalf of minority groups, even if it is self-serving. In Fiji, divisions within the GCC were certainly an important factor for assisting Indo-Fijians to improve their political situation. Such divisions split the Fijian community because of its communal nature and loyalty to different chiefs leading different clans or tribes. However the same phenomenon is seen within the Indo-Fijian elite.

Social movements which take advantage of political circumstances or which fail to act upon favourable moments are dependent on what can be superficially described as good and elaborate ‘public relations’ as explained in the following sub-section.

4.2.3 - Collective Action Framing

The ability of various interest groups to work within and outside the political institution in building and maintaining support for their cause is essential. This leads to the “forging of collective action frames –or framing processes” (Johnston, H. & Noakes, J.A 2005:2). In essence, collective action framing are strategies social movement leaders use to assign cultural meaning to events and conditions in order to amass “bystander” support and sympathy as well as “mobilise potential adherents...and to demobilize antagonists” (Snow D & Benford R 1998:1:198).

Snow and Benford⁹ identified three core concepts of a “collective action frame – namely, what frames must do.” (Johnston H, & Noakes J 2005:5) The first is to present “a new interpretation of issues or events”, as a means of explaining the problem and the reasons behind the problem to potential recruits. The second are solutions to the problem, and the third is the presentation of present reasons why people should participate in a collective action. (Johnston H, & Noakes J 2005:5)

These “culturally constructed interpretative schemata” or frames carry two dimensions: discursive and organisational. The first dimension deals with the selection and shaping of ideas, while the second focusses on communication methods, persuasion processes and how to steer and control the action. (Van den Brink, M. Kuipers, K. & Lagendijk, A 2005:2).

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A collective action frame is dependent on frame resonance. Basically the idea is that it acts as a communication bridge between the collective action frame itself and the targeted audience. “A collective action frame is said to “resonate” with potential supporters if they “find its interpretation and expression of grievances compelling. This is achieved by “drawing on the symbols and themes found in the cultural stock of the target audiences.” (Johnston H & Noakes J, 2005:11).

The success of a frame’s resonance with potential constituents is linked with the social movement’s skill in manipulating the perspectives of its target groups in line with its objectives. Known as frame alignment, this can be achieved in four ways and which can be found at the discursive or organisational dimensions or both. The first is frame bridging which is “linking two or more frame that have an affinity but were previously unconnected.” (Johnston H, & Noakes J 2005: 12). The second is frame application i.e. “akin to coming up with a catch phrase or slogan to market a product, in this case the essence of the movement” (ibid). The third is frame extension namely “extending the boundaries of the (collective) action frame” (Van den Brink, M. Kuipers, K. & Lagendijk, A. 2005:2). The fourth method of frame alignment is frame transformation “involving the development and framing of a new (collective) action frame” (Van den Brink, et al 2005:2).

Variables which can affect a frame’s resonance are the key actors within the collective action frame. The first is the quality of the frame’s movement entrepreneurs (ME) particularly the level of credibility whether it be organisational, professional credentials, level of expertise knowledge or personality/charisma. These are important in creating the right perception of the targeted group. MEs must have the ability to employ different marketing strategies to different groups of audiences. (Johnston H & Noakes J, 2005) MEs for the Indo-Fijian cause have been charismatic and forthright. They have had experience lobbying for democratic rights in other countries or within the trade unions. Therefore their credentials and experience support their charismatic personalities. Fijians regard their leaders (MEs) as having a level of expertise knowledge and experience in Fijian affairs and culture. The chiefs are not as charismatic as the Indo-Fijian leaders but their talent lies in their strategic and organisational abilities. The second variable is the calibre of the targeted audience. People are more likely to support a cause if its ideology matches their cultural beliefs or values. (ibid) For instance, calls to maintain Fijian paramountcy is based on the Fijians being the original settlers, on the cultural use of land, as well as the communal values of Fijian society. The third variable is the qualities of the social frame itself. It has to be culturally compatible with the targeted group, be consistent and relevant. (ibid)
SECTION 5 – FIJI’S POLITICAL & SOCIAL BACKGROUND

The Pacific region is divided into three cultural and geographical regions: Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia. As indicated in the map of Oceania below, Fiji is an archipelago of islands situated in the Southwest Pacific referred to as Melanesia.

Map 1 – Map of Oceania

![Map of Oceania](source: student.britannica.com/eb/art-93829/Oceania)

Many of the islands within the Fijian archipelago have had human settlements for millennia however the first European contact with the islands occurred in 1643 with the Dutch explorer Abel Tasman. (Davies, J.E 2005) European contact with the indigenous Fijian population was sporadic until the mid 1800s with the arrival of Christian missionaries and traders. “In 1874 the islands became a British colony under a Deed of Cession and remained so until independence in 1970.” (Sriskandarajah, D. 2003:308) Fiji as a British colony was initially a request from the foreigners who lived on the islands and it was supported by a number of chiefs on the main island of Viti Levu (Cottrell, J. & Ghai, Y. 2004) - see Map 2.
Fiji’s first governor general, Arthur Gordon, steered a country that not only had a bankrupt administration but a country in which measles killed approximately 40,000 (more than a quarter) of the indigenous population. (Spikard, P. 2001)

Because of the limited resources available Gordon exercised indirect rule by using traditional chiefs who supported British colonial rule. He did this by forming the Great Council Chiefs (GCC). Regarding himself as a protector of the Fijians, Gordon enacted policies which maintained the indigenous language and cultural practices. (Ewins, R. 1998, Spikard, P. 2001)

However these policies also included limiting Fijian involvement in commercial and political developments, banning the sales of Fijian land, as well as taxing Fijians in agricultural produce and not cash. (Encyclopaedia Britannica Online) Another effect of indirect rule was more about transforming traditional customs and less about preserving them.

Each tribe and confederacy had its own ideas about chiefly rule. Their policies on land tenure varied as did the relationship between the confederacies and tribes and within them. The incorporation of the traditional chiefly system and traditional structures within the colonial model ignored “differences in the nature of authority and organization among various local communities” (Ghai, Y. & Cottrell J. 2007: 639). Thus homogeneity was imposed in Fiji. (Ghai, Y. & Cottrell, J. 2007, Lawson, S. 2004) For instance most of the prime land in Fiji was owned by Europeans thus land policies varied from region to region and from island to island within the archipelago. Gordon used the newly formed GCC to “standardize land tenure and sharply limit
the ability of Fijians to alienate land to foreigners, enshrining the new system as 'traditional'. (Spikard, P. 2001)

To help bring the Fiji administration out of bankruptcy, Gordon leased large areas of land to an Australian firm called the Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR) for sugar cane growing. Initially workers on the CSR sugar plantations were Fijians and peoples from neighbouring Pacific islands, but the Fiji colonial administration followed labour policies exercised on other British colonies and began importing tens of thousands of workers from India to Fiji to work the sugar cane plantations (Sriskandarajah, D.2003:308). The recruitment of indentured labourers from India began in 1879 and continued until 1916. (BBC World 2008)

During World War II, Fiji was occupied by Allied forces and Fijian troops served the British Crown by working as scouts in Solomon Islands. (Encyclopaedia Britannica Online) Fijian and Indian migrants dissent over low wages and poor working conditions in comparison to their European counterparts sparked racial tensions between the Indian migrants, Fijians, Europeans, and other ethnic groups as well as tensions between the general population and the military (Lawson, S: 2004). To counteract growing racial and economic discontent, the colonial administrators restructured the Fijian administration, reinforced chiefly leadership and encouraged the conservatism of indigenous Fijian society. (Encyclopaedia Britannica Online)

It was not until the 1960s that constitutional development in Fiji began working towards independence. For instance in 1963, the right to vote was given to all Fijian citizens regardless of gender or ethnicity (ibid).

Up to that time, there had been a legislative council composed of representatives from three racial communities, with each community’s representatives chosen by different rules. European men elected their representatives. Fijian members were chosen by the Great Council of Chiefs (those chiefs who had early on collaborated with the British government), and Indo-Fijian members were chosen by wealthy Indians. (Spikard, P. 2001)

The 1960s saw the creation and development of the Alliance Party (AP) led by Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, and the National Federation Party (NFP) led by local businessman, A.D. Patel, and his successor after his death, S.M. Koya. Officially both parties were multi-cultural but in truth, AP was Fijian-dominated and the NFP supported by the Indian migrants. (Spikard, P. 2001)

In 1965 negotiations between these two parties were facilitated by the then British Labour Government to hammer out a constitution allowing Fiji independence. The negotiations were difficult and took place over a number of years because of the opposing attitudes between those representing the two major ethnic groups in Fiji. (Cottrell, J. & Ghai, Y. 2004, Norton, R. 2002)
The Fijian elite and European population enjoyed privileged political or economical positions, and so were hesitant towards the idea of independence; they favoured the status of associated state. Inspired by growing nationalism in India, the Indian migrants lobbied for independence. Reasons for this ranged from their relatively low social status in Fiji, and their larger population number in comparison to that of the other population groups in the country. (ibid)

In order to make the concept of independence attractive to Fijians, the Indian migrant community made large concessions to their indigenous counterparts. These included permitting Fiji’s Senate

“as a second chamber to safeguard [indigenous Fijian’s land] and other traditional interests and institutions.” [Indian migrants also] accepted parity of representation despite their own larger population (and overrepresentation for other communities who had traditionally allied politically with Fijians)”. (Cottrell, J. & Ghai, Y. 2004:4)

Under Fiji’s first constitution in 1970 as an independent country, a bicameral legislature; the House of Representatives and the Senate; was adopted. The House of Representatives comprised of 52 members and was generally elected by popular vote. The allocation of the seats for the lower chamber is illustrated in Chart 1.

*Chart 1 - House of Representatives under the 1970 Constitution*

Key:
- Rotuman: From Cession in 1881 until 1970, Rotuma was administered by Great Britain as a Fijian colony. The Rotumans bear more similarity in language, culture, and physical type to the Polynesians to the east. The Council of Rotuma, is composed of the paramount chiefs of the island’s seven traditional districts, an elected representative from each district, and the senior medical officer on the island.  
- Others: refers to minority ethnic groups in Fiji i.e. Chinese, Fijians of mixed ethnicity and Europeans.

Members in Fiji’s upper house, the Senate, were nominated by the Prime Minister, the leader of opposition, the GCC, and the Council of Rotuma. Chart 2 below illustrates the number of seats nominated by each group.

*Chart 2 - The Senate under the 1970 Constitution*

The parliamentary structure outlined in the 1970 Constitution gave Fijians a political majority in both houses. In the Senate, the GCC had veto powers for amendments to laws which protected Fijian interests such as “land, development assistance, and the Fijian system of local government and the traditional system of chieftaincy through the Great Council.” (Cottrell, J. & Ghai, Y. 2004:5) The 1970 Constitution established a “state within the state” (Premdas, R. 2002:20) as Fijians were given large space to self-govern themselves. (Cottrell, J. & Ghai, Y. 2004) In essence the constitution was weighted towards the interests of the indigenous population.

Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, the leader of AP, became the country’s Prime Minister, Ratu Sir Edward Cakobau his deputy. Ratu Sir George Cakobau became Governor General or the British monarch’s representative in Fiji. Although Fiji was independent, the country chose to recognise the reigning British monarch as the head of state. When Fiji became a republic in 1987, Ratu George was the country’s first president.

### 5.1 INDIGENOUS FIJIANS

The original settlement of Fiji by people now referred to as Fijian dates back to around 1500BC. Since then the indigenous culture has been affected by Polynesian and Melanesian influences. “At the time of European contact, then, ‘Fiji’ named a quite disparate collection of socio-political
entities.” (Lawson, S. 2004:524) These entities comprised of chiefly confederacies which controlled various regions or island groups within the Fiji archipelago. In order to understand the significance and influence of various chiefly confederacies and their regional power in and on Fijian politics, it is necessary to briefly outline the structure of Fiji’s traditional chiefly system and the Fijian social structure.

Traditional chiefs preside over provinces, districts, sub-districts and villages. These divisions reflect the social units of the extended family (tokatoka), clan (mataqali), tribe (yavusa), and land/regions or vanua. Each mataqali is presided over by a chief, Ratu if male or Adi if female. 11

The identity of Fijians is partly derived from links to the land to which they belong. All Fijians belong to a tribe led by a chief. Each tribe comprises of several clans whose social positions are determined by lineal proximity to the tribe’s founding ancestor. Finally, each clan comprises of several branches of the extended family (Appana S, 2005).

“Toward the end of the 18th century circumstances pushed various vanua into combining larger units called matanitu (confederacy)” (Appana S, 2005). In terms of Fiji’s political development the confederacy is significant as “Fijians speak of Fiji in terms of Kubuna, Burebasaga, and Tovata” (ibid) namely the three main chiefly confederacies in Fiji. Each of these confederacies is ruled by a paramount chief “who receives loyalty, respect and obedience. More significantly these confederacies are seen as separate ‘governments’ that combine to form Fiji.” (ibid)

I.S. Tuwere (2002)12 explains bonds that unite the three confederacies are based on three customary principles 1) vei ngờ oro ci (willingness and commitment to listen to each other), 2) vei va kaliuc i (respect a higher rank than oneself), and 3) vei va karo korokotaki (reciprocal respect).

In essence there is a chief at every level of the Fijian social hierarchy. There are about 70 chiefly titles of various ranks in Fiji13 but at the top of the chiefly hierarchy are the paramount chiefs for each of the three confederacies (see chart 3 below). The office of a chief is usually achieved through warfare, conquests, an outstanding characteristic or skill unmatched by anyone else, or through circumstance. However

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in contemporary Fijian society, seniority of descent and political dominance has become key factors in the selection of chiefs. Chiefly authority, on the other hand, rests on the consent of his people. This support is now dependent on generosity with personal wealth, knowledgeability, political clout, traditional as well as modern power networks, and official positions in the formal administration. Thus it is in the chiefs’ personal interests to aspire to positions within the bureaucracy and politics (Appana, S. 2005).

*Chart 3 - Fiji’s Chiefly Confederacies*

The **Kubuna Confederacy** comprises of the north-eastern provinces of the main island of Viti Levu as indicated in Map 3 below. (Lal, B. 1992: 323 – 325) This confederacy is grouped around the powerful island of Bau. (Ewins, Rod 2000) The paramount title of *Vunivalu of Bau* has been vacant since the death of Ratu Sir George Cakobau in 1992. This paramount chiefly title is considered to be the highest-ranking chief in the country (Toren, C. 2000).

The **Burebasaga Confederacy** comprises of the south-western regions of Fiji’s main island of Viti Levu, and Kadavu Island - see Map 3 below. (Lal, B 1992: 323 – 325) *Roko Tui Dreketi* is the paramount chief for this confederacy.

The **Tovata Confederacy** covers Fiji’s northern island of Vanua Levu as well as the Lau Group of islands - see Map 3. (Lal, B. 1992: 323 – 325) This confederacy was formed by a 19th century alliance of the two smaller confederacies of Cakaudrove and Lau. (Ewins, Rod 2004) The confederacy’s paramount chief is *Tui Cakau*. Former holders of this title include Ratu Epeli Ganilau, the son of the former President Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau who had been the *Tui Cakau* until his death in 1993, Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna who helped set the ground work for Fiji’s independence in 1970 also held the *Tui Cakau* title (Toren, C. 2000). Other significant chiefs from this confederacy include Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara who was the paramount chief for Lau or the *Tui Lau* (Ewins, Rod 2000).
The west and northwest of the main island of Viti Levu as well as the far west Yasawa group of islands were originally not part of these three confederacies. These regions have a slightly different hierarchal structure and to make administration easier, the colonial government wrote in part of the Western regions into the Kubuna Confederacy and "to a lesser extent into Burebasaga. Being "drafted into the eastern confederacies has never sat easily with western Fijians." (Ewins, Rod 2000)

Fiji's pre-colonial history is filled with power struggles between the three major chiefly confederacies. In the lead up to British colonialisation, one of the leading chiefs at the time, Seru Epenisa Cakobau, was instrumental in both uniting the various chiefly factions in 1871. (Ewins, R. 1998) He later called himself Tui Viti or King of Fiji. (1874 Deed of Cession) During the British colonialisation of Fiji, the power struggle between the chiefs of the confederacies had subsided. Seru Cakobau also played a key role in placing Fiji on the path towards modernisation as well as setting the seeds for eventual independence (ibid), albeit unintentionally.

Seru Cakobau was the Vunivalu of Bau, the paramount chief for the Kubuna Confederacy, and he petitioned the British government to annex the islands. "The request was at first declined but arguments elucidating certain advantages to British interest eventually overcame objections and on 10 October 1874 Britain accepted an unconditional Deed of Cession" (Lawson, S. 2004:524).

The secession of Fiji to Great Britain was orchestrated by Cakobau and chiefs from the Eastern regions.

*Map 3 - Chiefly Confederacies*
Since Fiji’s independence in 1970 there has been a re-emergence of the struggle between the chiefly confederacies for political, economical and social dominance. The modern day struggle has been fought “along the lines of provincial and confederacy allegiances” (Lawson, S. 2004:524).

Some of the key players in Fiji’s coups were paramount chiefs for the powerful confederacies. The paramount title of Roko Tui Dreketi for the Burebasaga Confederacy was held by Ratu Josefa Iloilo, the President of Fiji from 2000 until his removal in the 2006 military coup. President Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau was Fiji’s governor general from 1983 – 1987. He was governor general during the first 1987 coup and he held the paramount title of Tui Cakau for the Tovata Confederacy (Tuimaleali’ifano, M. 2007). Prominent commoner Fijians include Sitiveni Rabuka, and the deposed prime minister in the 2006 coup Laisenia Qarase. Both men are from the Tovata Confederacy. Commodore Frank Bainimarama is from the Kubuna confederacy as is George Speight.

5.2 INDIAN MIGRANTS/INDO-FIJIANS

Fiji comprises of various ethnic groups of which the main groups are indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijian. “The remaining population categories are European, mixed races and those from other Pacific Islands.” (Premdas, R. 2002:20)

The country’s 2007 population figures\(^{14}\) show that the total population is over 806,000 (see Table 1 below). At present Fijians make up a little over 50 percent of the population while Indo-Fijians approximately 45 percent. However during the mid 1940s until the 1980s, Indians outnumbered Fijians. In 1986 for instance, 46 per cent of the population were Fijians and 49 percent were Indian and 5 percent were from other ethnic groups (Quentin-Baxter, A. 1999: 60).

Despite the current and historical population statistics the Indian community feels, and has felt, marginalised due to Fijians “propound[ing] a doctrine of paramountcy to safeguard their interests.” (Premdas, R. 2002:21)

The 1874 Deed of Cession between Britain and Fiji opened the way for the establishment of three political pillars which would shape the relationship between Fijians and Indo-Fijians. The first concerned land. Land which was not owned by Europeans or reserved for the European population remained under Fijian ownership. This comprised of nearly 90 percent of the country. The second was the importation of indentured labour from India to the Pacific nation in order to preserve the indigenous culture and tradition. The third were introduced mechanisms for the colonial administrators to rule Fijians indirectly. These mechanisms included the establishment of the GCC and the Native Fijian Administration (Premdas, R. 2002: 19-20).

The consequences were that the economic development of the country, particularly in agriculture, was dependent on the willingness of Fijians to lease land for commercial use; the social inferiority of Indian migrants brought to the country to work while their indigenous counterparts were spared labour recruitment; and finally, the establishment of the GCC and the Fijian Native Administration protected Fijians to the extent that it left them unprepared to compete economically with the other ethnic groups (ibid). This also encouraged the long-term Fijian domination in the decision-making processes within the local and national bureaucracies and excluded the input of the Indian community.

As mentioned previously, ethnic Indians were first brought to Fiji from India in 1879 as indentured labourers to work the sugar cane plantations owned by CSR. The term of indentured labour was five years. After that they were given the option of returning to India at their own expense or of getting free passage if they completed another 5-year indenture. “Later they were given the option to stay in the nation as free citizens of the British Crown, possessing rights no whit inferior to any citizen of the British Empire” (Lodhia, S. 2001:164). In 1920 the indentured
system was abolished and many Indians chose to stay in Fiji. Many of those who chose to stay in Fiji leased land from Fijians to continue growing and harvesting sugar cane. Others moved to the urban centres such as the capital of Suva to establish small businesses in trade and retail, finance or professions like medicine or law. (Lawson, S. 2004)

Since the abolition of indentured labour to the present, the Indian community has played a major role in the political and economic development of the South Pacific nation (Lodhia S 2001:164). At times this has clashed with the intentions of their indigenous counterparts. For example, “the Indo-Fijians wanted independence [from Britain] whereas the Fijians wanted to maintain British sovereignty, under which they believed Fiji had prospered and would continue to be protected.” (Yash, G. & Cottrell, J. 2007:644)

The Indian community lobbies for, and still does, opportunities for land ownership, and increased representation within the administration and bureaucracy of the country (Yash, G. & Cottrell, J. 2007). This meant promoting a multi-cultural political platform as opposed to political hegemony favoured by Fijians.

The differences in political perspectives partly reflect the differences found at levels where the Fijian and Indian communities intersect. The two major ethnic groups are worlds apart despite their co-existing in the same country.

“In Fiji, [these] cleavages...are erected around several criteria: race, language, religion, culture, occupation and residence. Religion is a major divider with practically all Fijians adhering to Christianity while Indians overwhelmingly adhere to Hinduism or Islam. Language is also a pervasive separator, for when in their own company, Fijians and Indians speak their own tongue. Cultural practices ... [also] separate the two groups. (Premdas, R. 2002:21-22)

Therefore to conclude this section British colonial practices and governance of Fiji laid the foundation for a clash between Fijians and Indians. The 1874 Deed of Cession established the political doctrine of indigenous paramountcy but it did not allow room for flexibility or forethought on how to deal with, and merge, the growing number of indentured Indian migrants in the country. Indian migrants were expected to conform to the already established political pattern. What ensued was the establishment and ongoing confirmation of racial stereotypes which transcended into the political arena.

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15 Ralph Premdas (2002) in his treatise ‘Seizure of Power and Indigenous Rights and Crafting Democratic Governance in Fiji’ states that English is the lingua franca of Fiji.
SECTION 6 – DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

6.1 - COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS USING MDSD

The question is why did the coups in Fiji occur? The fact that four coups have taken place in two decades indicates that perhaps Fiji had developed a coup culture which observers, such as academic and politician Dr Tupeni Baba, say began with Lt Sitiveni Rabuka in 1987. (Gregory A. 2007) Such observations imply that Fiji will continue to have coups in the future because the coup concept is ingrained in the country’s political culture and as such has become ‘naturalised’.

Once tasted, the coup experience can regenerate and mutate, providing local operational knowledge (how to do it), or arousing expectations that, once disappointed, inspire fresh recourse to violence. This compounds risk and uncertainty. (Alley, R. 2001:218)

In this comparative analysis, the MDSD model will aid in determining the independent variables in all four coups as well as the shared or dependent feature. The underlying principle is that the four coups are basically distinct events.

The perception of a 'coup culture' in Fiji can be thought of as an ideological link which join the four coups thereby creating an illusion of 'unfinished business'. It also gives the appearance of the coups becoming naturalised within the country’s democratic system and thus part of the country’s political culture. At first glance the four coups appear to have a number of common elements because of the repetitive involvement of Fiji’s main political actors, administrative, and military structures at the macro-levels. Beyond that, however, the subtleties and differences of each coup are described in the following sub-sections. The first three sub-sections of this part of the paper will discuss the independent variables of each coup under broad headings. The last section will discuss the dependent variable for all four coups.

6.1.1 - Political Styles

The first Rabuka coup in 1987 was both surprising but at the same time expected. The 1874 Deed of Cession and the 1970 Constitution sowed the seeds for the development of identity politics. For the purpose of this paper identity politics is defined as:

limiting social capital formation and public co-operation. Loyalty is maintained irrespective of economic performance. Governments afford higher priority to delivering patronage than supplying services to the median voter. Kin groups offer networks of reciprocal obligation, a primary function devised for societal insurance. (Alley, R. 2001: 228)
Both the 1874 Deed of Cession and the 1970 Constitution ensured the long-term primacy of Fijians to land ownership, administration, and economics. Fijian interests (more particularly the Fijian elite) were protected by, and they dominated in, Fiji’s politics. This of course alienated the large Indo-Fijian community.

Prior to the second coup of 1987 the practice of identity politics was threatened by the introduction of performance politics. Here performance politics is defined as where the basic principles are “economic growth, social capital formation, and community cooperation” (Alley, R. 2001: 228).

After his first coup in 1987, Rabuka established a military council, while the Governor General, Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau, formed a constitutional review committee. (Ramesh, S. 2007) Those who supported the first coup were appointed as committee members and their goal was to rewrite the 1970 constitution because of its failure to protect indigenous interests. Included on the committee was Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, leader of the Fijian-dominated Alliance Party (AP) (Ramesh S. 2007, Alley, R 2001). In addition the Governor General promoted Rabuka as Fiji’s military chief, and granted him amnesty. (Ramesh, S. 2007) The principle of indigenous paramountcy was guaranteed in the 1970 constitution yet democratic provisions necessary for independence in the document clashed with the Fijian preference for identity politics.

In spite of the plans laid by Rabuka, Ratu Mara held talks with Dr Timoci Bavadra, leader of the Indo-Fijian dominated coalition. The aim was to form a framework for a government of national unity (Ramesh, S. 2007). The term ‘national unity’ implies accountability particularly from those who orchestrated and supported the first coup and this could have been used as a tool to heal the rift between Fiji’s main ethnic groups. A government of national unity would be inclusive thereby allowing greater political representation for Indo-Fijians and ‘commoner’ Fijians. For such a government to work this would require the implementation of performance politics.

Threatened by this, Rabuka staged his “self-coup”, six months after his military coup, to overthrow his own illegally-appointed interim government (Alley, R. 2001). By doing so he eliminated possibilities of cooperation, and social capital formation – ideas behind performance politics - by appointing himself president of the Great Council of Chiefs (GCC), declaring Fiji a republic, abrogating the 1970 constitution and, later, introducing a racially-weighted constitution.

The Speight Putsch of 2006 saw a completely different style of political leadership - a type of corporate-style politics. Speight’s utilised ultra-nationalistic rhetoric to propel a political agenda to ensure the business-middle class elite access to the financial windfalls from a recovering economy. The main feature of Speight’s style of politics is that it is agenda-seeking as observed
by the New Zealand Foreign Minister at the time, Phil Goff, who commented “these people are self-serving ... they don't like democracy because democracy didn't serve their own ends.” (Zinn, C. 2000)

This self-serving agenda of Speight, his inner circle and supporters deliberately divided groups across the entire social spectrum. He not only sidelined constitutional democracy but he also set aside the basic principles of the communal Fijian society: 1) veirogoroci (willingness and commitment to listen to each other), 2) veivakaliuci (respect a higher rank than oneself), and 3) veivakarokorokotaki (reciprocal respect). (Tuwere, I 2002)

By gaining political primacy Speight hoped to secure economic gain. This type of ‘corporate-style politics’ is individualistic and exclusive. Speight employed brinkmanship tactics when he took Mahendra Chaudhry and his cabinet hostage. This was a huge gamble and the stakes were high.

After the political upheavals of 1987 the country’s economy was making a slow recovery. According to a Fiji economic report from the Bank of Hawaii (1993) the economic rebound was to last five years with an average growth of 3 percent in 1992 and 1993. The Bank of Hawaii report noted that tourism replaced sugar as the largest export earner while the garment manufacturing industry recorded notable performances partly due to strategies to develop an export-oriented economy and resource-based industries such as forestry, e.g. mahogany, pine, and mining. Developing and promising industries included the fishing industry because of the country's the large tuna, Beche-de-mer, and mother of pearl resources. Mining, particularly in gold and copper, was an upcoming industry as were construction, telecommunications and transportation. Professional industries such as health, finance, insurance, and real estate were also fast growing business sectors.

Fiji was preparing its economy for globalisation by opening up the country to tourism and tendering mining, logging, and fishing rights to international companies. Economic internationalisation was profitable and Speight’s corporate-styled politics suited his self-serving agenda. Many would benefit from his coup, and there was speculation as to who funded or was behind his government takeover. 17 Mahendra Chaudhry’s government was a threat as he

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17 Fiji-Chinese multi-millionaire and opposition politician in the Chaudhry government, Jim Ah Koy was linked with Speight thereby assuming that he helped finance the coup. Ah Koy, as the finance minister during the Rabuka-led government (1994 – 1997) had employed Speight as chairman of the Fiji Pine and Fiji Hardwood Corporations. Speight was negotiating with American real estate developers the logging of Fiji’s mahogany. When Mahendra Chaudhry was elected he sacked Speight. Ah Koy issued press statements denying any link to the Speight coup. (Pacific Magazine, and Robie Revington, from the Listener Magazine – full description of sources are given in the bibliography)
promised to implement policies to limit indigenous paramountcy such as introducing changes to land leases.

In comparison to the 2000 Putsch or the 1987 Coups, the Bainimarama Coup of 2006 aimed at “clean[ing] up” the remnants of the Speight work's (Fraenkel J 2007: 420 – 449). Unlike the 1987 coup or the 2000 putsch, this was not a swift occurrence but a slow take over of power executed with military preciseness. The seat of political tension was not between ethnic or class groups but between individuals: the Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase and the military commander, Frank Bainimarama who quelled the 2000 coup. (2007:420 – 449)

From 2003 until the takeover in 2006, the military chief had been involved in a series of high profile spats with Qarase. These arguments revolved around plans by Qarase’s government to downsize the military forces as well as use a reconciliation act to pardon the 2000 coup instigators who were at that time serving prison sentences. (ibid)

Therefore in summary, identify politics was an element in the first 1987 coup, while the second reacted to performance politics. The 2000 putsch saw the rise of a corporate –styled politics fitting a country focussed on economic development and consumerism. Speight’s style of politics was agenda seeking and self serving. Banimarama in 2006 exercised military rule as a pretext for a return to democracy.

6.1.2 - Governance Structures

In 1987 strong traditional social networks and customary practices were needed to legitimise Rabuka’s first coups. Fijian identity, as mentioned in Section 5, is founded on links to the land. All Fijians are members of a clan, tribe, extended family, and confederacy. Chiefs are found at all levels of the indigenous social structure and the paramount chief is the highest authoritative figure in major tribal and district confederacies. The implication here is that Fijians view their country as Kubuna, Burebasaga and Tovata - the three biggest and most powerful confederacies - and not as a nation. Thus the problem with Fiji is that “there is no Fiji nation” (Teiawa T. 2001: 31) and this makes the transplantation of the traditional social structures within the Western governing structures difficult.

In order for the 1987 coups to be successful, support from various groups within the Fijian social network was salient. Rabuka had to have the backing of the chiefs which in turn secured the support of Fijians who were loyal and obedient to their customary leaders. Military support for
the first 1987 coup was possible as individual soldiers pledged loyalty to their clan, tribe and confederacy first and their country second.

This kind of loyalty is only possible through customary practices and the traditional leadership structure. Based on the information already presented in this paper, an examination of the relationship between the traditional and colonial structures shows an initial parallelism of the two frameworks before independence. After independence, through the following constitutions, the traditional and customary structure, its accompanying attitudes and practices were merged with the Westminster – style system. This gave indigenous paramountcy constitutional credence and, later, legitimacy to Rabuka’s actions and downplayed his overthrow of a democratically elected government.

In 2000, Speight’s putsch saw a changing Fijian society as it “had become a consumer society” (Walsh, C. 2000). This evidenced the disintegration of the traditional social and hierarchal networks and the rise of the business-middle class. Therefore the perspective of this paper is that unlike the 1987 coups, loyalty in the mid to late 1990s was based on economics and financial gains rather than clan or tribe. “Chiefs became businessmen or bureaucrats, and some put their own interests or those of the tribes, before communal or national good...the “safety net” of the extended family was no longer there to catch as many of the old, the disabled and the poor.” (Walsh C 2000)

This could explain why Speight’s putsch was not widely supported by the entire traditional network or whole-heartedly by the military in comparison to Rabuka’s coups. Instead of uniting Fijians, Speight's putsch divided them. For instance factions within the military were unsure as to whether they should be loyal to their province, the Fiji nation and its constitution, or to their chiefs who neglected their communities. In another example, the 1987 coups had the general support of the chiefs but in Speight's civilian coup the chiefs were divided for example the sacking of elder statesman, paramount chief and GCC President, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, while chiefs within the GCC who supported Speight were promoted and given wealthy and powerful cabinet portfolios in Speight's interim government. Most of the chiefs who backed Speight were from the Kubuna Confederacy. Mara was a paramount chief in the Tovata Confederacy. The clash of chiefs is seen as a clash of dynasties (Frankel, J. 2000). In addition, chiefs from the Western region, Yasayasa Vaka Ra (See map 3 in Section 5) resentful of their missing out on their share of political and economic power threatened to breakaway from Fiji or to form their own confederacy. (Lal, B. 2000) The Western region was divided between the Burebasaga and Kubuna Confederacies at the time of colonialisation. The Western Chiefs believed their region to be the economic powerhouse for Fiji. “Sugar pine, gold, and tourism are produced from its
soil, and they want representation in national councils proportionate to the contribution to the national economy.” (Lal, B. 2000:283). As if the east-west divide was not enough, there was an apparent divide in the powerful eastern confederacy of Tovata which has driven the politics of Fiji. The Cakaudrove province on the northern island of Vanua Levu, threatened to leave the confederacy and form its own. “What this indicated was the willingness of the Fijian people to consider options unthinkable in the 20th century.” (2000: 283)

In 2006, the Bainimarama coup exposed indigenous figures of respect and authority as no longer serving their clans, extended families or regions. The aim of this coup garnered support from a surprising sector: Indo-Fijians. This was partly because of Bainimarama’s aim to clean up the remnants of the Speight Putsch such as institutionalised corruption. (Fraenkel, J. 2007). Fijians on the other hand were wary of military rule. In 2000, the Royal Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) was quick to act against Fijians who supported Speight and they were scared of repeat repercussions because of its loyalty to Bainimarama (Fraenkel J 2007).

At the upper end of the Fijian social structures, the elite was divided on how to react to Bainimarama’s coup. The commodore and the military became increasingly isolated from their own traditional structures and support networks. The only network which sheltered Bainimarama and protected his goals was the military. It is of no surprise that Bainimarama is often referred to in local news headlines as the "self-proclaimed president" or the "dictator."18

To summarise this sub-section, a strong traditional social structure and hierarchy was essential in Rabuka’s first coup. In his second 1987 takeover this support was waning. The growing business/middle class in 2000 aimed at replacing the traditional Fijian establishment, while in 2006, Bainimarama’s support network was the military structure.

6.1.3 - Ethnicity and Race

In the first coup of 1987, Rabuka emphasised the issue of racial and ethnic differences to justify his take over. Dr Timoci Bavadra, a Fijian, was heavily criticised for leading an Indo-Fijian dominated government. However, Bavadra’s politics was not based on ethnicity even though his FLP party was dominated by Fijians. The goal was to open up the economic and political

opportunities normally reserved for the Fijian elite. During his election campaign, Dr Bavardra pointed out in the Fiji Times that voting was a free choice. Fijians should not be compelled to vote for their chiefs. (Lal, B. 2003, Dec) “By restricting the Fijian people to their communal way of lifestyle in the face of a rapidly developing cash economy, the average Fijian has become more and more backwards. This is particularly invidious when the leaders themselves have amassed huge personal wealth by making use of their traditional and political powers.” (Fiji Times, 1987, November 17).

The cultural, social, religious and linguistic differences between the Indo-Fijians and Fijians were emphasised by Rabuka to created stereotypes which were then exploited to shore up support for the coup. Already stigmatised as being indentured labourers, the emphasis on racial and cultural differences further marginalised Indo-Fijians. In addition the formation of the Taukei Movement - an ethnic nationalistic movement comprising of mainly members of the Tovata Confederacy to which Rabuka and Ratu Mara belonged - gave Rabuka another reason for the coup i.e. to avoid bloody violence in the country. (Alley, R. 2001)

Having publically illustrated stereotypical and ethnical differences between Fiji’s two main ethnic groups, the next goal was to guarantee indigenous paramountcy. This was achieved through the abrogation of the 1970 Constitution and the introduction of a racially-weighted constitution in 1990. This constitution legitimised the creation of affirmative action policies “designed to alleviate discrimination against individuals and groups” (Mahendra, R. & Prasad, B. 2002: 58).

A Fijian Initiative Group comprising of indigenous Fijian professionals, civil servants and entrepreneurs was created to formulate affirmative action policies such as the enhancement of government concessions for Fijian businesses, a compulsory saving scheme for Fijians, and minimum ownership of resource-based industries for Fijians, among others. (Ratuva, S. 2002). This, of course, assumed that Fijians were economically disadvantaged while Indo-Fijians were rich (Reddy, M. & Prasad, B. 2002). However it should be remembered that Indo-Fijians were former indentured labourers and those who continued to farm were growing and harvesting crops on land leased from Fijians who owned 90 percent of the country.

In 2000 “Speight had his own private grievances, which he carefully hid behind a fiercely nationalist rhetoric” (Lal B, 2002:284). Speight was the chairman of the Fiji Pine Commission and the Hardwood Corporation before being sacked by the Chaudhry government. He had been negotiating on behalf of an American company to secure tenders to harvest the country’s

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19 Quotation from Fiji Times taken from Brij Lals’ citation and quote in his 2003 article called ‘Heartbreak Islands: Reflections on Fiji’ (see bibliography for full reference information.)
mahogany forests. He was unsuccessful as the government chose a British-based company which had been operating in Fiji for 40 years. (Hereniko, V. 2003) In addition, Speight was facing court proceedings for bankruptcy. (Lal, B. 2002)

Political observers, such as historian and member of the Reeves Commission, Brij Lal (2002), noted that the Speight’s coup was divisive. The divisions were not between ethnic groups but within ethnic groups. The race and ethnicity issue was to disguise the growing influence of the business-middle class to which Speight belonged.

Rabuka’s use of race and ethnicity to secure indigenous paramountcy gave him folk hero status. Speight tried to emulate this using the same methods. However those who heeded his ‘heroic’ calls were

> The Fijian social underclass [who] provided the brawn [for Speight’s coup]. The bedraggled unemployed, unskilled Fijian youth armed [who] acted as a human shield for Speight and his men had little understanding of the larger, hidden personal agendas and complex forces at work. They were in some sense the human casualties of globalisation and economic rationalisation. (Lal B, 2002:285)

In 2006, Bainimarama used the issue of ethnicity against the Fijians. His coup was targeted towards those who lobbied for ethnic hegemony to disguise alleged acts of corruption. “The world [had] witnessed a transformation that is not supposed to happen in democratic societies: The emergence of a “good” military coup”. (Finin, G. 2007) Bainimarama justified his actions by citing rampant corruption in the government which led to the doctrine of necessity to justify military intervention. Bainimarama dismissed the Qarase government, dissolved Parliament and established an interim government. (Finin, G. 2007) Many chiefs/politicians associated with the Qarase government, as well as those who opposed the Bainimarama interim regime were sacked. Key positions in areas such as immigration, police, advisory positions to the Prime Minister, public corporations, telecommunications, electricity, airport and port authorities, the Sugar Cane Growers’ Council, Fiji Pine Corporation were filled with loyal military officers. (Fraenkel J. 2007:428) Even Qarase himself was exiled to his home village on a remote island in the Lau Group (Sydney Morning Herald, 2006, Dec 9). “The RFMF had transformed itself from the guarantor of indigenous Fijian paramountcy into its nemesis” (Fraenkel J 2007: 443).

Alienating Fijians through military retaliation, exposing traditional leaders for their dishonesty, and using the Fiji military as a watchdog over civil and governance matters have worked against Frank Bainimarama. (Singh, S. 2006) as many supported the ousted Qarase government.
6.1.4 - The Traditional Chiefs.

The dependent variable in the four coups is the role and influence of traditional chiefs, particularly those who exercised their authority and political clout within the GCC. Their customary status was given political legitimacy through Fiji’s first governor general who created the GCC to exercise indirect rule. Consequently traditional chiefs enjoyed economic privileges under the 1874 Deed of Cession. The GCC comprised of traditional leaders who supported colonialism thus they became minor functionaries where matters of importance to Fijians were consulted upon and deliberated within the council.

The GCC comprised of the President of Fiji, the Vice-President, the Prime Minister, six chiefs, 42 provincial council members, three Rotuma Island Council members and the sole life member Sitiveni Rabuka. (Ralogaivau, Ratu Filimone 2006) The other indigenous body established by the colonial administrators is the Fijian Affairs Board which the GCC restructured in 2000. Up until its dismissal in 2006, the council consisted of seven chief council members, five parliamentarians, the Minister for Fijian Affairs and the chairman of the GCC [which is the President of Fiji]. Total membership is 14 and the meeting is to be chaired by the Minister for Fijian Affairs. (Ralogaivau, Ratu Filimone 2006)

Before independence the traditional relationship between the chiefs and commoner Fijians was exercised through the colonial administration (Appana, S. 2005). This eventuated in a redefinition of the chiefs’ roles. Chiefs became less traditional leaders and more administrators or bureaucrats and this changed the normal relationship dynamics between commoner Fijians and their chiefs. As mentioned in Section 5, a chief was a position achieved either through some outstanding act, ability or circumstance. If one became chief it was only through the consent and consensus of the Fijian people. In order to have a long reign, it was necessary that the chief served his people.

However during colonialism and through independence, institutions to oversee indigenous matters, such as the Fijian Affairs Board, reflected the Fijian social structure. The administration was run by indigenous leaders operating at district levels. Chiefs working within the administration system adapted quickly to their new roles as bureaucrats. This set in motion new relationship dynamics. Commoners were becoming dependent on chiefs as opposed to the other way round, and the chiefs were becoming less dependent on the colonial leaders to keep them in their governmental positions. (Appana, S, 2005)
Chiefs becoming politicians was a natural progression from their roles as bureaucrats. Working as government officials, forging careers as politicians, and eventually participation in business aided in increasing their traditional sources of power (Appana, S. 2005). For example from independence to the 1980s Fijian politics have been dominated by the “Bau/Lau” group i.e. the Tovata and Kubuna Confederacies (Ewins R, 2000). More particularly, as indicated below, “by the Ratus, particularly the big four” (Tuimaleali’ifano M: 2007:262)

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<tr>
<td>Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau</td>
<td>Fiji’s governor general from 1983 – 1987. When Rabuka declared Fiji a republic in the second coup, Ratu Ganilau was appointed the Republic’s first President – a position he kept until his death in 1993. Ratu Penaia held the paramount chiefly title of Tui Cakau for the Tovata Confederacy. (Tuimaleali’ifano M. 2007:262)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ratu Sir Edward Cakobau</td>
<td>Fiji’s Deputy Prime Minister in the 1970s. He is a cousin to Ratu Sir George Cakobau and a great grandson of Ratu Seru Epenisa Cakoabu who petition Britain to colonise Fiji. Therefore he comes from the Kubuna Confederacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ratu Sir George Cakobau</td>
<td>Fiji’s first Governor General (1972 – 1982) He was the Paramount Chief of the Vunivalu of Bau for the Kubuna Confederacy. (Tuimaleali’ifano M. 2007:262). This paramount title is the highest and most powerful title in Fiji.</td>
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The changing role of the chiefs may not necessarily meet with approval from commoner Fijians but they continued to influence the general populace because many still clung to the ideal that chiefs embodied and guarded the value of Fijian culture. “Political parties actively court chiefs for blessings as this assures them of votes. Rewards are then expected through appointments to public offices or partnerships in businesses enterprise.” (Appana, S. 2005). So it is of no surprise that the paramount chiefs of the powerful Kubuna and Tovata confederacies supported Rabuka’s coup.

Rabuka met with the President Ratu Penaia Ganilau and received his blessing to conduct the coup. (Lal B. 2008) The intention was to stave off the increasing political participation of the Indo-Fijians through the FLP-NFP coalition which threatened the concept of indigenous paramountcy and the chiefs in the GCC were expected to find a solution.

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The second 1987 coup was Rabuka’s attempt at reminding Fiji about the goals of his coup i.e. indigenous paramountcy. In the build up to the second 1987 coup, the paramount chiefs played a significant role. Rabuka weighted the administration with supportive chiefs but this was undermined by other traditional leaders, namely Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara and Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau wanting a return to normalcy, civilian rule, and reconciliation. Rabuka was willing to risk disobeying his own paramount chiefs, who were cooperating with Dr Timoci Bavadra, and so stage his "self-coup."

In 2000, George Speight challenged the authority and paramountcy of the Fijian chiefs. What he subverted was the Fijian custom of deference and respect to the chiefs. The objective was to shift the loyalty of the Fijians away from clan, tribes and chiefs towards himself. Speight regarded himself as a people’s hero. The loyalty he garnered was from the poor, unemployed and hardliners; those who expected financial rewards for their support. (Lal, B. 2000)

Because of Speight’s business links and interests, the role of the traditional chief was problematic. In the 1987 coups, the Fijian elite and middle class comprised of the paramount chiefs; they enjoyed the financial, social and political privileges. Speight and his generation were upwardly mobile and brash. They were a new type of 'Fijian chief'. Speight’s public and humiliating sacking of Fiji’s elder statesman and paramount chief, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, during his putsch signalled the end of the traditional role of chiefly paramountcy. The old guard in the GCC were replaced by younger and more assertive chiefs with ambitions similar to Speight. This forced “many Chiefs retreat[ing] to protect their own limited regional interests, rather than those of the nation as a whole. “ (Cawthorne; 2001)

In the build up to the 2006 coup many linked the concept or ideal of chiefs with corruption, dishonesty and self-interest. The 'mana' (prestige or honour) which a chief should display was missing from many traditional leaders – both old and new. The patronage system, a prominent feature in the chiefly systems in Rabuka’s time and adapted in Speight’s putsch, was a 'public secret'. Bainimarama dealt with this by outing chiefs as either inept or corrupt. The Bainimarama coup “turned Fiji politics upside down” (Fraenkel J. 2007:422) by limiting or confiscating the authority and status of its chiefs thereby undermining the Fijian establishment.

After overthrowing the SDL-dominated government led by Laisenia Qarase, Bainimarama established an interim administration to organise new elections (of which a date is yet to be revealed), declared an emergency, and assumed presidential powers. In defiance to chiefly authority, Bainimarama sacked “his own high chief of the Kubuna Confederacy, the Vice-President and Roko Tui Bau, Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi.” (Kabutaulaka T. 2007) Ratu Joni
Madraiwiwi is a former high court judge, and attorney general. He is well respected by the Fijian people and so his sacking will be frowned upon by the people of Bau and the Kubuna confederacy. (Kabutaulaka T. 2007). In addition to sacking the Vice-President, Bainimarama sacked and exiled the prime minister, Laisenia Qarase to his home village. The Commodore also appointed a military doctor as prime minister, dissolved parliament and replaced the officiating head of police with a loyal colonel. He has warned Fijian ministers not to intervene, threatening military use of force if necessary, and he has told the international community not to meddle in Fiji’s local affairs. (Fraenkel J. 2007)

A number of chiefs had called on their people within the military not to support the commander’s take over but rather than pledge loyalty to their clan and paramount chiefs, the soldiers pledged their loyalty to their commodore; evidence of increasing defiance against the chiefs. (Kabutaulaka T. 2007) Recent reports state that Bainimarama has warned his critics within and outside the country that there will be no turning back to the pre-coup system of governance. He indicated that he will push ahead with plans to change the country’s electoral system by scrapping the communal voting system (TVNZ April 2008). This is pivotal in eliminating any influence of the chiefs as the communal system was vital to the sustainability of the council of chiefs as it ensured Fijian loyalty.

Therefore to surmise, the strength or weakness of the role of the traditional chiefs is an explanatory variable for Fiji’s various coups. Strong chiefly organisation and support gave Rabuka the green light to stage the 1987 coups, while the changing role of customary chiefs encouraged Speight to challenge the traditional system and replace it with business deals based on economic globalisation. In 2006, Bainimarama publically exposed what most Fijians secretly acknowledge. He exposed a government practising patronage as corrupt and inappropriate in ruling a democratic country. Through his actions, Bainimarama dismissed the concept of indigenous paramountcy which can be interpreted as a step towards multiculturalism.

It is important to note that the reasons behind Fiji’s coups are complex and other comparative studies have identified other various and plausible variables contributing to the coup. This is of course dependent on the perspective and aim taken in the research. However for the purpose of this paper one cannot ignore the role of the traditional chiefs and their strength or diminishing strength in each of the coups.
6.2 - SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS WITHIN COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

A summary of the independent variables in the coups is given to conclude this comparative analysis. The first coup of 1987 saw the maintenance and practice of identity politics. The second coup of 1987 was a reaction against the threat of the introduction of performance politics. Speight’s putsch of 2000 saw a type of politics which divided and conquered, was economically driven and self-serving. In 2006, Bainimarama is noted for exercising an authoritarian or military style of political leadership. A former UN commander, Fiji’s Military chief declared the country to be in a state of emergency - a precursor to military rule with the aim of restoring democracy. The latest coup is a far cry from Rabuka's intentions of preserving the status quo of the traditional Fijian hierarchy in 1987

In 1987 Rabuka was dependent on the traditional social structure and hierarchy. In 2000 Speight undermined this structure by promoting the growing business-middle class. The 2006 coup saw fear and reluctance among Fijians and support from Indo-Fijians. Bainimarama and the military were isolated from their own social communities. The loyalty of trained soldiers to their military chief was the support network Bainimarama needed to execute the coup.

Rabuka emphasised the issue of racial and ethnic differences to justify his first take over, and in his second coup, he constitutionalised indigenous paramountcy. In 2000, Speight used race to detract loyalty from the chiefly establishment to himself as a means of disguising his personal agenda as well as those within the middle/business class aimed. Bainimarama in 2006, used race and ethnicity to expose alleged corruption from the government and to usher in a new political era of democracy and multiculturalism. In the end he received support from the Indo-Fijians in his ‘clean up’ coup while Fijian support for the ousted government grew.

The role and influence of the chiefs is identified as the dependent or explanatory variable here. In 1987 a strong chiefly system as well as the full backing of the chiefs were essential in the success of the first coup. In Rabuka’s second coup, this support was waning as major players within the GCC were moving away from the aim of his first coup. In 2000 the old guard was replaced with the new. In other words, the GCC was hijacked by a younger rising and upwardly mobile generation of new chiefs unwilling to share gains from economic growth. Undermining the GCC and its current leaders was salient. In 2006 the chiefs are equated with corruption because of the aims of Bainimarama coup. Illustration 1 below gives a visual summary of the variables within Fiji’s four coups.
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<tr>
<td><strong>Independent Features</strong></td>
<td>Identity Politics</td>
<td>Threat of Performance Politics</td>
<td>Agenda or self-seeking politics</td>
<td>Military Democracy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Strong traditional social network and support</td>
<td>Waning support from indigenous network</td>
<td>Support from lower socio-economic levels of society in return for financial gains</td>
<td>Support from Indo-Fijian community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Race differentiation</td>
<td>Indigenous Paramountcy</td>
<td>Rise of the educated business/middle class</td>
<td>Multiculturalism</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Explanatory factor</strong></td>
<td>Influence of Chiefs (Strong)</td>
<td>Influence of Chiefs (divided)</td>
<td>Influence of Chiefs (weak)</td>
<td>Influence of Chiefs (dismissed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome</strong></td>
<td>Military overthrow of elected government</td>
<td>Self-overthrow of appointed government</td>
<td>Civilian overthrow of Elected government</td>
<td>Military overthrow of Elected government</td>
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6.3 - THEORECTICAL APPLICATION

6.3.1 - FIRST THEORECTICAL APPLICATION
BARTH’S INSTRUMENTAL MODEL OF ETHNICITY

As indicated in Section 5, Fiji politics is based on ethnic and cultural differences. The differences between Fijians and Indo-Fijians are used as an excuse to justify indigenous paramountcy. Fredrik Barth’s theory (1998) assumes that ethnic identity is socially constructed and as such consists of five premises: 1) ethnic identity is a feature of social organisation and not culture, 2) the ethnic boundary that defines the group, 3) self ascription and ascription by others outside the social group, 4) ethnicity is flexible, and 5) competition for niches within an environment. (Jenkins, R. 1997)

Barth stated that cultural differences are the "sum of objective differences…which actors themselves regards as significant" (Barth F 1998: 14). The selective choice of ethnic differences is based on the overt signs or signals, and basic value orientations (ibid). The divide between Fijians and Indo-Fijians is deep and, based on the political history of the country, may appear unbridgeable. The differences between the two communities are founded on overt markers and their accompanying values from race, cultural traditions, religion, language, occupation, and residence. (Premdas R.1993:11) These markers were encouraged by the colonial administration to help it carry out its governing model. Fijians as 'natives' to the country already had in place a governing system and so the British colonialist could rule them indirectly. Indian migrants as 'visitors' were ruled directly. The 1987 coups and the 1990 constitution further reinforced the colonial construction because of the cultural threat from Indo-Fijians.

Social movement leaders have drawn upon various cultural traits to distinguish who is or is not Fijian to set the social boundaries between the two ethnic groups. In 1987 Rabuka overthrew the Bavadra government under the banner of 'Fiji for Fijians'. (Premdas, R. 2002) Here Fijian is defined by its opposition to what is perceived as typically Indian. It is an 'us' versus 'them' ideology which defined ethnic identity.

Fijian identity was altered in 2000 by Speight who turned the Fijian establishment on its head. Speight's actions divided the Fijian community by pitting confederacies against each other through his dismissal of paramount chiefs who opposed to his plans. Consequently the signals and values of 'Fijianness' defined in the 1980s and 1990s were now regarded as non-Fijian. In 2006 the notion of Fijian was modified by Bainimarama. The support of Indo-Fijians for his action indicated a new concept of Fijian i.e. one that is multi-cultural, democratic and not corrupt. From 1987 until 1999 Rabuka presumed an indigenous Fijian identity which was
homogenous and unified. This was reinforced in his emphasis of the Indian diversity. Yet Speight's putsch in 2000 showed that Rabuka's 'us' versus 'them' categorisation failed to "capture the complexity of Fijian society: group boundaries are not always clear and divisions within a group can be as significant as those between groups." (Sriskandarajah, D. 2003: 309)²¹.

The 2000 overthrow uncovered the divisions of the Fijian community based on "lineage, region, and dialect" (Sriskandarajah, D. 2003: 309). For instance, members of the nationalist Taukei Movement came from Speight's Tailevu region within the Kubuna Confederacy. In 1987, members of the Taukei Movement were from the Tovata Confederacy. Speight dismissed many of the Tovata Chiefs and replaced them with supportive chiefs from his own confederacy. The dismissed president of the GCC, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara was even criticised for being the wrong kind of Fijian (Lal, B. 2002). Ratu Mara was the paramount chief for the Lau region within the Tovata Confederacy which was founded by a Tongan. (Ewins, R. 1998) Rabuka was a commoner, while Dr Timoci Bavadra, because of this earlier coalition with the Indo-Fijian dominated NFP party, could not be trusted. (Lal, B. 2002) This is an interesting aspect given that Speight himself is of mixed Fijian-European heritage, was educated overseas, and is a permanent Australian citizen. (BBC World, Lal, B. 2000) Yet the support he received from his own clan and the Fijian business class disguised his lack of 'Fijianness'

The extremity of the divide between the two groups gives little incentive for Fijian and Indo-Fijians to try and bridge the gap. Convergence of the two cultures is perceived as a threat and must be dealt with quickly. For example the Bavadra Coalition government in 1987, negotiations between Bavadra and Mara for a reconciliation unity government in 1987, the 1997 constitution, and Mahendra Chaudhry's People Coalition government in 1999 were attempts for the two cultures to come together but they were quickly suppressed by the Rabuka's two coups, the 1990 racially weighted constitution, action affirmative plans favouring Fijians, and the 2000 Speight coup.

The indication here is that Fijian identity is reserved for indigenous Fijians. The political system and ideology established by the colonial administration gave elite Fijians economic and social advantages and helped them achieve and maintain their status of power. As a politically and socially constructed identity, Fijians established strict boundaries which excluded Indians and they maintained those social boundaries by formulating policies and executing extreme political actions. Their self-ascription asserted their ethnic primacy over others, the elements chosen to identify their ethnic identity varied as seen in the coups which revealed fluidities of Fijian identity.

and of the social boundaries which shifted from between ethnic groups to within Fijian community.

Indo-Fijians on the other hand feel that they have the right to call themselves Fijians despite their origins. Their construction of Fijian identity is based on their overall contribution to the country. A submission by an Indo-Fijian to the Reeves Commission overseeing the writing of the 1997 constitution stated:

> We Indians are not happy, because we are part and parcel of Fijian people. How are we omitted [from the 1990 constitution]?...when Fijians are photo, Indians are frame. When Fijians are shirt, Indians are buttons. You take the frame out, the photo drops. You take the buttons out, the shirt looks ugly and useless. (Singh Parmanand: 1995: Submission 024044)

This illustrates an interesting perception. Ethnic Fijians see Indians as a threat to their paramountcy yet Indians regard their relations with ethnic Fijians as symbiotic. Therefore based on their perspective Indians regard themselves as ‘Fijians’ and so felt entitled to political equality.

Indian self-ascription is based on socio-economic concepts. In 1987, the Bavadra-led FLP-NFP coalition tried to steer politics away from ethnicity and race and towards issues on poverty, employment, the economy etc. The coalition was acting on the basis that Indians were Fijians but the indigenous community insisted on the "man-made racial divisions to [keep] the people divided" (Lodhia, S. K 2003: 169) as indicated in the coups. After the Rabuka coups "Indians tend to see themselves as victims and accordingly have been motivated by the need to establish a political system that ensures they are never again second class citizens." (Davies J. E. 2005:65)

Indo-Fijians attempted to push the social boundaries established by their indigenous counterparts towards socio-economic issues which are shared by both communities. This assumes a socio-political partnership between the groups as opposed a racial political one currently illustrated by the paramountcy of one group at the expense of another. An example of this is the Indian support of Mahendra Chaudhry during the 1999 elections. Chaudhry promised to fix the political system so that Indians can receive access to the same resources as Fijians. They ignored the NFP leader at the time, Jai Ram Reddy, who they regarded as selling them out in cooperating with Fijians. In 2006, Indo-Fijians supported the Bainimarama coup because of the initial reasons behind the coup namely to clean up corruption in the government.

The Indo-Fijian view of Fijian identity clashes with the view of the indigenous community. According to Barth's model of ethnic identity the last premise: competition for resources contributes to the ethnic divide between the two groups.

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22 Cited in Ghosh, Develeena (see bibliography)
Ethnic identity is freely constructed, reconstructed, and its social boundaries are set and reset to help propel political and economic interest. The power of ethnicity is seen through the competition for resources whether they be political, social or economic. (Drakuvula 2004) For example the colonial administration fearing the growing economic and social power of Indian Migrants imposed legislation which confined their activities to farming and related industries. The Rabuka administration introduced affirmative action policies to keep land farmed by Indo-Fijians in the hand of Fijians. These also aided in perpetuating the man-made ethnic differences first established by the British colonialists. The Speight interim administration limited the definition of Fijians to not only exclude Indians but also a large proportion of Fijians in order to keep economic gains in the hands of a select social group. The Bainimarama military administration widened the exclusive identity of Fijian to a more democratic and multi-cultural definition.

As stated earlier it still too early to see what the real outcome of the Bainimarama coup will be. Of interest is whether the commodore will keep to his publically stated reasons for staging the coup.

Nevertheless the application of Barth’s model of ethnic identity to Fiji show clear and deliberate moves to keep the country’s two main ethnic groups apart rather than introduce policies to bring them together. If the two groups were given space to converge or work towards coming together then the political opportunities for Fijians would be greatly diminished while those for Indo-Fijians would be augmented.

6.3.2 SECOND THEORETICAL APPLICATION

POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES (POS)

How did Sitiveni Rabuka, George Speight and Frank Bainimarama get away with overthrowing democratically elected governments? Was there anything the Indo-Fijians could have done? In order to answer these questions, discussion about the opportunities available to Fijians to retain their political dominance and the opportunities available to Indo-Fijians for political equality will be examined.

Political opportunities are dependent on 1) whether the institutionalised political system is open or closed, 2) the stability or instability of political alignments, 3) the presence of influential allies,
and 4) the conflict and division among the elite (Tarrow S, 1996:54-56). These elements will be dealt with separately in the following sections.

6.3.2.1 – The Political System in POS

Political representation is a main area of tension between Indo-Fijians and Fijians since the 1874 Deed of Cession; the cornerstone of political struggle and competition between the Fijians and Indo-Fijians. “Ethnic identity originated in the colonial order and influenced the claims to niches of power.” (Premdas R 1993: 12) In order to understand the political battle for supremacy on one hand and the push for political equality on the other it is necessary to take a historical look back at the 1874 Deed of Cession which obligated Britain to protect “the Fijian way of life” (1993:10).

The first Governor General, Andrew Gordon, introduced three policy pillars which politically polarised Fijians and the Indian community and created a parliamentary system which fomented opportunities for political coups by the Fijians if the need arose.

The first policy pillar was land ownership. Land not claimed by Europeans was to remain under Fijian ownership. This comprised of nearly 90 percent of the country. “This policy curtailed economic development of the islands because growth depended on the availability of Fijian land for commercial exploitation.” (Premdas R, 1993:252) The second policy pillar was the importation of indentured labour from India. This was to free Fijians from working on farms and plantations owned by Europeans as a means of protecting the Fijian customs. The third policy pillar was the creation of a separate Fijian administration through which the colonial administration could govern Fijians indirectly (Premdas R 1993). These policy pillars not only affected the constitutional and democratic development of Fiji, they were also contentious issues during the time of implementation in the late 1800s and they continue to be points of contention today.

A cursory analysis of the first policy pillar shows that the economic interests of Fijians were maintained while the economic interests of Indians were limited thereby narrowing their political participation. The issue of land is a Pandora’s Box because of the symbiotic relationship between Fijians and Indians. Indians are dependent on Fijians to lease them land while Fijians are dependent on the labour of Indians who dominate in the country’s largest export industry.

Land is part of the Fijian heritage and an important element in their cultural practices. They fear losing their land but due to the agricultural base of the country's economy they reluctantly
agreed to 99 year leases to Indo-Fijians. Notwithstanding, in 1940, the Fijians changed their minds. Legislation was introduced to establish the Native Land Trust Board (NLTB) to administer the land leases and more importantly to terminate leases "to create 'reserves' for future Fijians use" (Premdas R 1993:16). The Indian community reacted against the NLTB because 1) land was essential for their survival, and 2) many became landless, jobless, and were forced to drift to urban centres.

The 1970 constitution further entrenched Fijian land rights. From 1976 onwards, the leases were to be issued for an initial twenty years followed by a twenty year extension under legislation called the Agricultural Landlord and Tenant Act (ALTA)\(^\text{23}\) thereby nullifying the original 99 year lease policy. Indo-Fijians see the implementation of such policies as being based on the fear that their economic power, coupled with the sizeable population number, can be translated into political power (Premdas, R. 1993). Therefore crippling the economic abilities of Indo-Fijians will mean fewer opportunities to politically circumvent indigenous paramountcy.

The second political policy of indentured labour confirmed the primary position of Fijians and established Indo-Fijians as second class citizens. The 1874 Deed of Cession provided a precedent for Fiji's later constitutions (bar the 1997 multi-racial constitution) which upheld Fijian paramountcy. The ‘us’ versus ‘them’ mentality prevalent in the Fijian-Indian relationship was established through the 1874 document.

The early Indian migrants were culturally diverse, were either Muslim or Hindi, and spoke Hindi, Gujarati or Punjabi. (Premdas, R 2004) The diversity within the Indian community threatened the homogeneity of the Fijian culture. Nevertheless the advantage of the indentured labour policy is that it produced a sense of national belonging among the Indian migrants. They felt they had suffered for the right to live in, and call Fiji their home as “they lived and worked in miserable, slave-like conditions” (Spikard P, 2001) in building Fiji. Therefore they demanded equal participation but this would be hard to achieve given the political prioritisation of Fijian affairs.

The abolishment of the indentured labour policy in 1920s, and their population majority during the 1940s, gave Indian migrants opportunities to change their social status and the voting system to improve access to the political machinery. Unable to make changes within the national decision-making bodies, Indian migrants struck at where they thought would be the most effective: the economy. They launched strikes and rebelled against the colonial government thereby affecting the country's main industry: sugar production.

Because of the growing number of Indian migrants and their significant contribution to the economy, the colonial government, fearing political takeover, imposed restrictions to quell rising dissent from the Indian migrants (Premdas R 2004). For example, Indian migrants were not allowed to live anywhere within the country as strict regulations were in place to limit their settlement. Consequently their economic activity was restricted to their settlement areas. (Sriskandarajah, D.2003)

The third policy pillar, “indirect rule was based on a tripartite chain of the patron-client relations linking the colonial administration to the population via chiefs” (Lange M.K, 2004:907). This is opposed to direct rule in which the top levels of governance and bureaucracy are occupied with colonial officials while members of the local population [ran] the lowest levels within the administration. (Lange, M.K 2004: 906)²⁴

In defining indirect rule, Lugard (1922) wrote that traditional chiefs were constituted as an important part of the administration’s bureaucracy. The British and traditional chiefly rulers were to work either separately or cooperatively. The colonial government was a single unit in which the roles of traditional leaders were defined. This ensured that the roles of the traditional chiefs did not clash or overlap with the roles of the colonial rulers. In essence traditional chiefs were to remember their place within the colonial government understanding that their status and power is only possible through proper services to the State. For instance Governor General Andrew Gordon created the GCC comprising of traditional leaders who supported the coup. This institution of paramount chiefs would directly rule over their people. The chiefs would translate colonial policies by placing them within an indigenous context for implementation (Lugard 1922:202).

Despite the ideology behind indirect rule, what eventuated was the creation of a “bifurcated state” in which two separate and incompatible forms of rule existed – one dominated by the colonial administration, the other by numerous chiefs.”(Lange M.K 2004:906)²⁵ The colonial governing practices institutionalised the communal nature of Fijian society thereby clashing with the one-vote-per-person or common roll electoral system advocated by the Indian migrants.

In a sharp contrast to Fijians, the opportunities for the Indian community throughout Fiji’s modern political history were at times non-existent, while at other periods best described as ‘one step forward, two steps back’. While Fijian political participation had been constitutionalised since cession, the main negotiation tactic available to the Indian community was to compromise in the present to create opportunities in the future.

In the early 1900s limited popular representation was introduced for elections for representatives to the country’s colonial legislative council. This council comprised of six elected Europeans, two Fijians who were nominated and ten European official members. The population of Indian migrants at the time was 22,000 yet this substantial group of the population was not represented on the administrative council. In 1916 a second legislative council was formed in which one nominated Indian representative was included (Premdas R 2004). Inspired by nationalists movements in India, Indian migrants in Fiji began demanding the right for a common voting system as opposed to the communal voting system widely supported by Fijians. This was strengthened by their growing population numbers (ibid).

From 1879 to 1916 Indian migrants in Fiji comprised over 38%, or over 60,000, of the country’s population while the Fijian population was over 84,000 (around 53 %) (de Vries, R. 2002). After their five year indentured period, some returned home but the majority stayed because “Fiji offered better living conditions and a society which was relatively free of the restrictions imposed by the Indian class system.” (de Vries, R. 2002:313). Population statistics show that in 1936, Fijians made up 49 percent of the population while Indian migrants stood at 43 percent. During the mid to late 1940s Indian migrants outnumbered the Fijian population as many Fijians went to fight for the British Empire abroad. In 1966 Fijians comprised of 42 percent and the Indian migrants 51 percent. In 1996 the Fijian population was 51 percent while the proportion of Indian migrants was 40.5 percent (Spikard P 2001).

In 1963 universal suffrage was introduced thereby allowing Fijians to directly elect their representatives (Premdas, R. 1993). Previously Fijian representatives were nominated by the chiefs. This also created space for political representation for Indian migrants: a significant change given the size of the community’s population at the time. What eventuated was the start of party politics. The Alliance Party (AP), supported mainly by Fijians, Chinese and Europeans, and its opposition, the Indian-dominated National Federation Party (NFP), were created. Despite the small progress made, the opportunities for Indian migrants were limited by the continuation of the communal voting system. The result of the 1966 elections was an overwhelming victory for AP (Premdas R 1993).

After the 1966 elections to 1970, negotiations for independence among the British Crown, NFP leader, A.D Patel (later S.M. Koya, following Patel’s death) and AP leader, Ratu Sir Kamisese were held. Indian leaders, particularly S.M. Koya, adopted a moderate tone compared to the more confrontational nationalistic fervour seen in the early 1920s and mid 1940s. (Premdas, R. 1993) In 1960 a special branch report said that “certain Indian leaders are well aware of the need to
improve relationships with the Fijians, and some are making a conscious effort to do so.”

The report also stated that Fijians were more likely to threaten the security and stability of Fiji. The aim of the Indian migrants was to appear as moderates and working towards cooperation with the Fijians in order not to antagonise them. This meant acknowledging the special privileges of Fijians. (Norton, R. 2002).

Officials also observed that the Indian community were willing to make sacrifices in a bid to created political opportunities for themselves in the future within an independent Fiji.

> As time passes, the Indian position, numerically, professionally, and economically, will become so secure and dominant that they will eventually demand control of the country. (Norton, R. 2002:146)

During talks for an independence constitution, the Indian migrants continued with this moderate political stance as a means of ensuring the fruition of goals set long ago by this often neglected community. A.D Patel, a former trade unionist, and his replacement after his death, S.M. Koya, a lawyer, conceded large concessions to the Fijians. (Norton, R. 2002:146, Premdas, R. 2004)

These concessions included reserving the positions of President and Prime Minister to indigenous Fijians and approving a parliamentary organisation which gave Fijians majority in the lower and upper houses, as well as the continuation of the communal electoral system.

To summarise the political system developed from cession to the first coup of 1987 established the paramountcy of Fijians over other ethnic groups. The establishment of Fijian administrative bodies such as the GCC created a parallel system which was incompatible to the Western colonial system. Fijians, in turn, used the indirect rule policy of the British to codify their traditional system within the formal governing body of Fiji. By the time of independence, the GCC had nearly dominated the main legislative bodies. Their indigenous paramountcy was more than guaranteed until the 1987 elections which saw Indo-Fijians enter politics on a substantive level.

It is little wonder that Rabuka was able to stage a military coup as it was a way of protecting a Fiji only for Fijians. In 1987 loyalty to indigenous paramountcy was more important than loyalty to the very constitution which made Fiji independent. The second coup in 1987 was a further setback for Indo-Fijians, despite talks between AP and the FLP-NFP coalition to form a unity government of reconciliation. The abrogation of the 1970 constitution and the implementation of the racially-weighted 1990 constitution almost shut out Indo-Fijians from the political-decision making and administrative processes as the GCC had veto powers in parliament over any amendments to policies ensuring indigenous paramountcy.

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This unbalanced system of political power did not change until the introduction of a multi-racial constitution in 1997. Finally Indo-Fijians would receive the common roll or one-vote-per-person voting system and key political positions reserved for Fijians were now opened. Consequently Indo-Fijians block voted in the 1999 elections and Mahendra Chaudhry became the first Indo-Fijian to become Fiji's prime minister. Yet as mentioned earlier, Indo-Fijian political progress is best described as 'one step forward, two steps back' as one year later an ultranationalistic and business-minded sector of the Fijian community staged another coup.

6.3.2.2 Political Alignments in POS

The Indian community's ability to win government elections in 1987 and 1999 stems from the beginning of party politics in the 1966 elections. During these elections Fiji saw the formation of the Fijian-dominated and chiefly-backed AP party, and the Indian-backed NFP party.

As stated earlier, in the 1980s AP drew support from the Fijian population basing its political platform on the prioritisation of indigenous rights. Comprised of the upper to middle-class strata of Fijian society, it was assumed that commoner Fijians would follow suit out of customary obligation or loyalty. However because of the elite composition of AP, the party was also supported by the European, Asian and those of other Pacific nationalities in the country. Basing itself on too many cultural assumptions, AP alienated a large proportion of the working class or commoner Fijians tired of the elitist principles prevalent in the party.

The political system was weighted towards the eastern and north-east regions of Fiji (Kubuna and Tovata Confederacies). The Burebasaga Confederacy covers the south-eastern part of the main island of Viti Levu, around the south coast to the west of Viti Levu. It also includes the Yasara Group in the far west and Kadavu Island in the south. The heart of this confederacy is Rewa province, close to the capital city of Suva, (See map 3 in section 5) and it has the largest population of Fiji.

Yet despite the size of the Burebasaga Confederacy, its large western region missed out on many of the strategic political and administrative posts and accompanying benefits. (Ewins Rod 2000) These led to an East-West divide which was evident in 1987, and later, in 2000 first through the Taukei Movement, and later from the Western chiefs who threatened to breakaway and form their own nation.
Western Fiji is an economically profitable region as it is a large agricultural area attracting a sizeable portion of Indo-Fijians to the region. The West would be developed as, and is today, a major tourism region. Since independence in 1970, Fijians in the Western regions have voiced concern over the way in which Fiji’s income is distributed among the three confederacies (Ewins Rod 2000). This is despite the fact that the Western regions were for Fiji a major income earner. In October 1986, the FLP-NFP coalition leader, Dr Timoci Bavadra said

> the bulk of the population has been disappointed. There is greater migration... Unemployment is high, crime is increasing, mismanagement of government money is seen in every department. There is a strong feeling of disillusionment and disenchantment with the present government (Pacific Islands Monthly November 1986, p.22).

This provided the momentum towards the formation of the Fijian Labour Party (FLP). The FLP was launched in 1985 through the Fiji Trade Union Congress (FTUC) to "fight the Alliance Party's growing insensitivity towards the plight of the workers and the poor." The FLP party had several disadvantages leading into the 1987 elections. First it was new; it did not have the experience or the same calibre of personalities as AP. Secondly as a new party the numbers were small, regardless of the large number of Fijians dissatisfied with AP dominance. Thirdly there was no guarantee that Fijians would vote against their paramount chiefs in AP come election day.

One of the advantages of FLP is actually one of the mentioned disadvantages. The fact that the party was new implied that party was not tainted, staid or simply willing to follow the status quo. The other advantage is that FLP covered a wider population base because of its core support group which comprised of academics, trade unionists, chiefs and politicians who did not support AP policies. AP on the other hand was seen as very elitist.

In its campaign during the 1987 elections FLP thought it strategically wise to form a coalition with the Indo-dominated NFP "so as not to split the Indian vote" in order to break the dominance of AP. The perspective of this paper is that the element that united these two parties was their claim to represent the lower socio-economic classes. Indo-Fijians, because of their political and social history in the country, regarded themselves as victims (Fraenkel J 2007). Commoner Fijians who supported the party could also be regarded as victims of their own upper class as the benefits of the colonialist policies and the 1970 independence constitution remained with the selected few. Of significant is that the FLP-NFP coalition redirected Fijian politics away from ethnicity to class.

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28 ibid
Meanwhile there was little evidence to prove that the AP tried to reach out and form a working coalition with the lower social strata. What this paper assumes is because of the principle of indigenous paramountcy and basic customary practices, the ruling Fijian elite took it for granted that their people would support them. AP’s complacency allowed the FLP-NFP Coalition to split the Fijian vote and consolidate the Indo-Fijian vote. In the end "the Coalition won the [1987] general elections toppling the Alliance perch on power for 17 years" 29

The strength of the FLP-NFP coalition and the downfall of AP threatened the country’s political and economical status quo during the 1987 election (Sriskandarajah, D.2003). Consequently the possibility of changing the nature of Fiji politics became a reality for Indo-Fijians. However this victory would also set the Indo-Fijians back in their political progress. Rabuka, with the blessing of the paramount chiefs in the Great Council of Chiefs, staged the first 1987 coup and later that year his ‘self coup’.

Having resigned from the military, Rabuka went on to formed the Soqosoqo ni Vakevulewa ni Taukei (SVT) party to contest the 1992 elections held under the 1990 racially-weighted constitution. The SVT won the election but in-house fighting between Rabuka and another prominent party members for the position of prime minister forced a vote of no confidence on the government's budget. (Ramesh S 2007)

The disunity among the Fijian political elite forced elections in 1994 and led to the creation of yet another indigenous party, the Fijian Association Party (FAP) (Ramesh S 2007). Further divisions within Rabuka’s SVT led to the establishment of even more indigenous parties, particularly after the implementation of the multi-racial constitution in 1997. Some of these parties include:

the "Veitokani ni Lewenivanua Vakarisito (VLV) party in 1998. In the western part of Fiji, [a] veteran politician, [and ethno-nationalist,] Apisai Tora, spearheaded the establishment of a regional based Party of National Unity (PANU) and the F.A.P. successfully negotiated an agreement with the F.A.P., the VLV and PANU. (Ramesh S. 2007)

While Fijian politicians were jockeying for positions, and (re)aligning themselves with parties they thought had the best chances of success, Indo-Fijian politicians also suffered a number of set backs. The first was in 1989 when Dr Bavadra died leaving a power vacuum which fractured the FLP-NFP coalition. His wife, Adi Kuini Speed became leader of the FLP until she was deposed by Mahendra Chaudhry in 1991. (Ramesh, S. 2007)

29 Ibid
The second setback came in 1990 with the implementation of the racially-weighted constitution leading to the implementation of affirmative action policies for Fijians. Opportunities for Indo-Fijians to influence the administration, the distribution of public finances, as well as the ongoing issue of land leases were diminished. As the new leader of the FLP, Chaudhry's only hope of creating political space for Indo-Fijians was through negotiating political alliances with FAP, VLV and PANU.

The FLP successfully consolidated Indo-Fijian votes, and fragmented indigenous Fijian ones, through pre-election preference deals with its coalition partners and as a result won 36 seats (Ramesh 2007).

Elections held under the 1997 multi-racial constitution saw a divided Fijian political elite as individuals joined which ever party was popular among the people. The complex alternative voting system which contained elements of communal rolls, open seats, and preferential voting had many chiefs and veteran Fijian politicians perplexed on how to deal with this concept, particularly after having been privileged with the communal voting system. For Indo-Fijians life under the communal voting system was difficult and as such their political development has seen mixed results. But the 1997 multi-racial constitution and the FLP's new look and style of leadership were more than positive signs of hope and change.

Despite divisions in the SVT party, many of the lower-level politicians and chiefs from the Western regions were forming alternative indigenous parties to weaken SVT's rule. The main party was PANU which joined forces with FAP. Observers say the parties mentioned above formed a political vanua (confederacy) in a bid to block vote against SVT. Chaudhry joined this coalition and by doing so split the Fijian vote by forming preferential deals with individual parties within this pan-Fijian block while at the same time consolidating the Indo-Fijian vote. (Ramesh S 2007) Chaudhry's eventual appointment as Prime Minister had split the alliance. The leader of the PANU party resigned while FAP split into two factions. The 1999 elections also saw the resurrection of the ethno-nationalist Taukei Movement which used Chaudhry as a scapegoat for the disarray in Fijian politics. Chaudhry's prime ministership only lasted a year after which the Speight overthrew his government.

Since the 2000 putsch Indo-Fijians have been in retreat (Premdas, R. 2004). It is of little wonder that in 2006, Indo-Fijians welcomed the coup of Bainimarama. As “key coup victims of 1987 and 2000 [Indo-Fijians] emerged as defenders, enthusiasts and beneficiaries of the military takeover, while overnight, the coup backers of 2000 became democrats and supporters of the rule of law.” (Fraenkel J. 2007: 422) Indo-Fijians saw the tables turn and they fully supported the
“clean up” coup. Fraenkel (2007) writes they had such a strong sense of their “victimhood” through their indentured labour, the 1987 and 2000 coups.

An initial observation of Bainimarama’s actions reveals a straight path towards multi-culturalism and creating equal voting and economic equality for Indo-Fijians, even if it means his ignoring pressure from regional allies and alienation from the Fijian community. It is still unclear as to where Fiji’s latest coup will take the country and what the real opportunities are for Indo-Fijians, and how Fijians will react.

6.3.2.3 Presence of Influential Allies in POS

The first biggest and strongest ally the Fijians had was the British colonial administration which worked to preserve the Fijian culture and tradition. After the Deed of Cession in 1874, the interests and rights of Fijians, as decided by their chiefs, were basically assured. In 1970 Fijians gained the majority in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. Special administration bodies such as the Native Lands Boards Trust were established to protect customary land ownership thereby making Fijians the lessees and the Indo-Fijians the rent payers.

Fijians took it for granted that their rights would always be protected. This is not to say that all of the commoner Fijians were satisfied with the way in which the benefits from indigenous paramountcy were distributed; but tradition demanded that traditional leaders had 'mana' or honour therefore they had to be obeyed and followed.

While the main focus of this paper is the role of the chiefs in the four coups, mentioned should also be made of the role of the military which for the most part was another influential ally for Fijians.

In 1987 "the Royal Fiji Military Forces had taken control of the Fiji Government to prevent any further disturbance and bloodshed in the country," (Lal B 2008) Before taking over parliament, Rabuka sought the blessing of the president, Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau, his paramount chief of the Tovata Confederacy, to execute the coup in order to protect indigenous rights. Under the guidance of the then Lt Colonel, Sitiveni Rabuka, the military had, for the first time in Fiji’s history, became an active participator in national politics. This was first step where the military forces regarded itself as "an equal partner in the management of the affairs of the state." (Lal B 2008)
While the 1987 the military takeover seemed surprising, the seeds for the possibility of such an event taking place was sowed at the time of cession where a burgeoning military force called The Royal Army was given the mandate to act in the role of the local constabulary. The military was to control the central and western regions in order to strengthen the interests of the eastern regions. The eastern region and its paramount chief, Seru Epenisa Cakobau, supported British colonisation; the western and central regions opposed cession. (Lawson, S. 2004: 141)

As a result most of the military recruitment came from the powerful eastern (Tovata) confederacy to maintain social and class order. However during both the World Wars, the army had become a fully fledged military sector. In 1942, "the title of the Force changed from 'Fiji Defence Force' to '[Royal] Fiji Military Forces, [RFMF] indicating that the role of the force was now changed from one of internal defence to overseas operational services." (RFMF 2008) Yet it is interesting to note that on the RFMF's official website, the forces role is described as maintaining the stability of the national against internal threat.

"Two world wars...saw troops from Fiji serve monarch and empire in defence, presumably, or 'democracy.'" (Lawson 2004: 142) However, little can be said of the Indo-Fijians who did not overall volunteer to serve in the military. Reasons included their unequal political treatment compared to Europeans with whom they claimed economic and political equality. The lack of military participation by Indo-Fijians added to the growing divide with Fijians. (Lawson, S. 2004)

By 1987, Fijians made up almost 100 percent of the RFMF. "They were led by... a high chief from the east [who was] also son-in-law of Prime Minister Mara." (Lawson, S. 2004: 142) Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara held the chiefly title of Tui Lau for Lau Islands within the Tovata Confederacy. Rabuka was from the same confederacy as well as a large number of commoner Fijians recruited as soldiers. Apart from the obvious one-sided representation of the Tovata Confederacy in government and in the military forces, what is evident here is the establishment of a traditional-aristocratic pattern of civil-military relations. (Lawson, S. 2004)

In contrast to the Fijians, forming alliances for Indo-Fijians was limited. This is not to say that Indo-Fijians were unable to form any alliances as opportunities came from organisations within the very industries in which they dominated in: namely the trade unions. The founder of the original National Federation Party (NFP), A.D. Patel and current Fijian Labour Party leader, Mahendra Chaudhry, were trade unionists. The Fiji Labour Party (FLP)
which contested the 1987 elections in coalition with the NFP was formed through the Fiji Trade Union Council (FTUC); an umbrella organisation of around 15 unions. (Ramesh S. 2007) The National Farmers Union represents the rights of the mainly Indian sugarcane farmers (Ramesh S. 2007) while the business and manufacturing associations provided support for Indo-Fijians living in urban centres.

However the strength and unity of the various trade unions in Fiji varied as they became more politicised. Until their direct involvement in politics, “trade unions have generally been multiracial and had functioned well since independence” (Bhim M 2007:1). For example Fiji’s biggest union is the FTUC which was created in 1955. “There are twenty-nine (29) affiliates of the Fiji Trades Union Congress with a membership of approximately 33,000 thousand. Out of 33,000 members, 25% youth, 33% women and 67% men” (FTUC Country Paper). In 1987 many Fijian-dominated unions such as the teachers and nursing associations left the FTUC to form union groups sympathetic to the Rabuka while sugar farmers and mill labourers refused to work thereby economically damaging the country.

In the mid-1990s, the Labour and FTUC leaders appealed to Britain, Australia, and New Zealand to help redraft the racially-weighted 1990 constitution drawn up by a constitution committee hand-picked by Rabuka. In the 2000 coup many sugar farmers and labourers boycotted the crucial sugar cane harvest while many in the public services refused to work as long as Speight held the Fiji cabinet hostage. (Head M. 2000)

Allies for Indo-Fijians were actually located outside of Fiji. After the World Wars, independence sentiments were growing across the British colonies. The independence movement in India was strong. Indian nationalist were protesting against the exploitation of their fellow countrymen who were working as indentured labourers overseas. Various nationalist movements sent representatives to Fiji to help Indian migrants organise lobby groups for better working conditions and wages, and political and social equality. Inspired by events in their mother country and by the rhetoric of nationalist representatives, the Indian migrants staged a number of strikes since the abolition of indentured labour in 1920. These nationalist emissaries also helped the Indian migrants organise themselves into political parties and to be politically active. Even today, India has provided support to Indo-Fijians during the coups either in the form of diplomatic pressure, condemnation, or by providing direct support through advice or sponsorship.
Disturbed by potential security problems in the region, Australia, New Zealand, and the South Pacific Forum have condemned the military regimes of Rabuka, the Speight putsch and the Bainimarama coup.

New Zealand “has the closest affinity with the South Pacific of any outside country” (Hoadley, S 2001). New Zealand tried to convince Great Britain to hand over island colonies, including Fiji. New Zealand failed in persuading Britain transfer Fiji to New Zealand jurisdiction but Wellington did secure Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau and eventually Western Samoa (Hoadley, S. 2001). In the late 1980s the New Zealand Labour Government reviewed its relationship with the Pacific region and as a result launched recommendations covering diplomacy, economic relations, aid, cultural relations, the environment, defence and security issues. The goal was “to promote harmony with, and within, the region.” (2001:2)

Australia, like New Zealand, has developed a close relationship with the Pacific. According to Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade “Australia is the leading donor of aid to the independent countries of the Pacific... [provides] assistance...by program of defence cooperation with many of the Pacific Island states...enhancing regional security.”(Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade) Both New Zealand and Australia have extensive commercial interests in the region.

The Pacific Islands Forum (formerly known as the South Pacific Forum) was established in 1971 and comprises of 16 independent and self-governing states in the Pacific. “The Forum is the region’s premier political and economic policy organisation. Forum Leaders meet annually to develop collective responses to regional issues” (Pacific Islands Forum). The Commonwealth Secretariat was established in 1965 as an intergovernmental agency of the Commonwealth. The aim is to help develop consultation and cooperative networks among member governments and countries. The Commonwealth comprises of 53 independent states (former British Colonies) making up 30 percent of the world’s population or two billion people. (Commonwealth Secretariat 2008)

International reaction to the coups ranged from expressing “deep concern and anguish” (Pacific Islands Forum 1987), policies of non-recognition of the regime, threats of sanctions, implementation of smart sanctions as well as suspension from the Commonwealth. While these countries and organisations reacted against breaches of the principles of democracy, for the Indo-Fijians such reactions put the spotlight on Fiji and gave them a platform to highlight their concerns.

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6.3.2.4 Conflict and Division among the Elite in POS

Indirect rule affected Fiji in two ways. First it established the Tovata and Kubuna Confederacies as the "hub of the colonial Fijian aristocracy" (Ewins, R. 1998: section 4). It was the paramount chief, Seru Epenisa Cakobau of the Kubuna Confederacy who petitioned Great Britain to colonise Fiji as part of a desperate attempt to avoid a power takeover from the Tovata Confederacy and chiefs from north-west Fiji. The Tovata Confederacy was forced to acquiesce to the cession and the western regions, which were absorbed mainly into the Burebasaga and part in the Kubuna regions, were seen as being less important. Secondly, the new governor general, Arthur Gordon, restructured the traditional chief system by forming a Great Council of Chiefs through which he could rule Fiji indirectly. (Ewins, R 1998)

The general Fijian population followed suit, either willingly or because of obligation, despite the fact that a large number of Fijians were tired of the corruption and cronyism prevalent in the upper echelons of their social structure. This is witness to “a critical problem with enduring “traditional” forms of governance in the Pacific...they no longer operate in “traditional” ways” (Finin, G.A & Wesley-Smith, T.A. 2000:10). Commoners or untiiled Fijians have knowledge of their chiefs ‘selfishly taking advantage of traditional authority to further their own economic and political interests’ (Finin, G.A & Wesley-Smith T.A. 2000:10) at the expense of their main duty which is to serve their people.

Traditional measures to choose chiefs were replaced with patrimonialism under British colonial rule. “Chiefs were selected to rule according to their lineage and – most importantly – their willingness to collaborate with colonial officials.” (Lange M 2004:907). The formation of the GCC had “created Fiji’s own ‘aristocracy’ – a group of families thrust into high positions and leapt there by virtue of lineage” (Ewins, C. 1998: section 4). This provided the means through which chiefs earned most of their livelihood through the control of land and direct extraction from their subjects. The chiefs were given executive legislative and judicial power to regulate social relation in their chiefdoms, vast authority which was supposed to be grounded in pre-existing tradition or custom, not bureaucratic rules. (Lange M.K 2004:907)

As illustrated, Fiji’s aristocracy favoured the Kubuna and Tovata Confederacies; the country’s third confederacy, Burebasaga, was not so fortunate. Financial resources and aid were targeted for Kubuna and Tovata. Strategic parliamentary and administrative posts were reserved for those within “Fiji’s aristocracy” passing over the Burebasaga Confederacy.
The Burebasaga Confederacy has produced influential political leaders such as Sakeasi Butadroka and Tomasi Vakatora. (Saumaki, B. 2007:219) Butadroka was a member of Ratu Mara’s Alliance Party (AP) until a falling out with Mara over the lack of resources for Fijian development particularly in Rewa Province. Butadroka, noted for his ethnic nationalism, was expelled from AP in 1973 and he went on to form the Fijian Nationalist Party to contest the 1977 elections. His fallout and nationalist party split the Fijian vote for AP particularly in Rewa Province. (Saumaki, B. 2007 219 -222)

Butadroka was one of the founders of the nationalist Taukei Movement, "a collection of Fijians variously linked to the defeated Alliance Party" (Alley R, 2001:291). This nationalist group gave Rabuka an excuse in 1987 to stage a coup to prevent a bloody situation caused by riotous Fijians angry at the Bavadra election win. (Alley R 2001) This masked the intrigue behind his military takeover. This is despite the fact that Butadroka supported the Bavadra Coalition government as it was the choice of the people. (Ewins, R. 1998: Section 2)

Other major leaders to come out of the Burebasaga Confederacy include Tomasi Vakatora. He entered politics on the AP ticket and was Fiji’s speaker of parliament from 1982 – 1987. His biggest contribution to Fijian political development was as a member of the Reeves Commission which wrote the 1997 multi-racial constitution. (Saumaki, B. 2007:220 -224) It was through this constitution that Mahendra Chaudhry was elected Prime Minister and which eventuated in the Speight Putsch.

The 1987 Rabuka coups had the direct support of the GCC because of the threat posed by an Indo-Fijian dominated coalition. The military coup was possible because soldiers who followed Rabuka were first loyal to their clan and chiefs and secondly to their country.

In 2000, Speight defied the GCC which was led at the time by Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara who was suspected of tacitly supported the 1987 coup. A biography of Sitiveni Rabuka32 claimed that Ratu Mara was informed that the coup was going to take place, which Mara denied. (De Silva, C. & Hulsen, A. 2000)

The patronage system which served the chiefs well was now working against them. Instead of depending on the state to sustain their influence and status for services rendered, the chiefs had to seek their favours from a business/middle class which did not fully appreciate their traditional status. Speight’s putsch heralded a changing of the old guard for the new. The GCC was

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32 The biography is called Rabuka of Fiji and written by Central Queensland University lecturer John Sharpham. The book was released in March 2000
‘hijacked’ by younger and more assertive Chiefs, many with similar ambitions to Speight. This divided the Chiefs, and it eventually alienated them from the Fijian underclass which Speight and his inner circle exploited. (Lal, B. 2000)

In 2006, allegations of corruption within the elected SDL-dominated government, led by Laisenia Qarase, prompted Bainimarama to act. The GCC was again divided and the military commander undermined their prestige and status by revealing their dubious financial dealings, and their manipulation of the polity to remain in power.

At present it appears as if there is limited room for political opportunities for Fijians as Bainimarama’s coup has turned Fijian society on its head. Previously political opportunity was reserved for elite groups within Fijian society, and there is very little evidence to see how the political opportunities for Fijians actually extend to all levels of Fijian society. As mentioned earlier, Fijians were aware of the shortcomings of their traditional leaders but were, at first, obliged to give them their loyalty.

In 1987, the goal was to protect the status quo or put another way indigenous paramountcy. In 2000 the middle class was the level of Fijian society most likely benefit from Speight’s takeover. The lower socio-economic class supported Speight but only to be used as human shields while the upper classes were seen as a hindrance. (Lal, B. 2000) In 2006, the longer Bainimarama remains in power the more the Fijians will support the ousted government of Qarase despite allegations of corruption.

Like the Fijians, Indo-Fijian leadership appeared to be flailing. But in comparison to the Fijians, Indo-Fijians were given opportunities to strengthen their leaders and consolidate Indian support. The coalition between the FLP and National Federation Party (NFP) appeared to be holding steady until the death of FLP leader Dr Timoci Bavadra in 1989 (Ramesh S 2007). This created a large power vacuum which fractured the coalition. Eventually Mahendra Chaudhry became the party leader. Because of his abrasive and aggressive leadership style the party lost the support of its ethnic Fijian members.

The elections in 1994 saw the FLP gain 7 seats. In 1997 the multi-racial constitution came into force. For Fijians this was a testing period because of uncertainty regarding indigenous paramountcy under such a constitution. The government of Sitiveni Rabuka was plagued by accusations of corruption and Fijian political parties were turning on each other.
In the last 20 years, the Fijian elite have experienced both an augmentation and decrease in power, status, and respect but what of the elite among the Indo-Fijian community? How does its political or social leadership of this social sector compare to that of the Fijians?

Unlike the Fijians, the Indian community was ruled directly by the state which regarded them as a problem or threat. Inspired by nationalist movements in India, Indian migrants pushed the government for the common roll but they more they lobbied, the harder the government worked at strengthening its relationship with the indigenous Fijian chiefs. In the meantime leaders of the nationalist movement in India travelled to Fiji, as well as other British colonies, to help Indo-Fijian organise the indentured workers and “agitate for change” (Ramesh S 2004:1). Ramesh (2004) states that the first Indian activist to travel to Fiji was a lawyer called Manilal Mangalal in 1916. He formed the Indian Imperial Association of which the aim was to lobby for better conditions for the Indian migrants. The colonial administration's reaction was to deport Manilal back to India.

After the abolition of indentured labour in 1920, Indo-Fijians rebelled against the state a year after, again in 1949 and in the late 1950s, to change the political status quo. In the 1921 rebellion, Indian migrants were led by Basist Muni, a Sadhu priest in the sugar belt of Western Viti Level. The six month strike was to force the Australian Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR) to increase wages for its labourers. Again the reaction of the colonial administration was to deport Muni back to India.

The beginning of a worker’s rights movement more than worried the colonial government because of the large population of the Indian migrant workers on which the economy depended. In addition, their dominance in the sugar industry could help push the Fijian economy forward or cripple it depending on whether they were willing to work or go on strike. Eventually the colonial government gave token compromises to Indian migrants to keep them satisfied. They included an appointed representative for Indian migrants to the Legislative Council, established in the early 1900s.

The first representative was regarded as a traitor by the Indian migrants and under pressure the colonial government appointed another representative which pushed the issue of “common roll based on representation by population as opposed to the established practices of communal representation” (Premdas R, 2004). However fired by the nationalist movement in India and encouraged by the organisational skills of nationalist emissaries in Fiji, Indian migrants were no longer satisfied with these token gestures as they were tired of being exploited and demanded
equal political and economic rights as the Fijians and the small but powerful European populations.

Fijians have the advantage of cultural, ethnic and religious hegemony and they operated on a united front, despite simmering inter-confederacy rivalries. In spite of their diversity in religious practices, languages, regions of origin, caste etc, Indian migrants were unified on ending the indentured system. The issue which split the Indian community was the immigration of new Indians to Fiji. The division was between Fiji-born Indians and India-born.

During the 1999 elections the Fiji Labour Party (FLP) under Mahendra Chaudhry “successfully consolidated Indo-Fijian votes, and fragmented indigenous Fijian ones, through pre-election preference deals with its coalition partners and as a result won 36 seats.” (Ramesh, S. 2007). For Indo-Fijians, Chaudhry was both a solution and a problem. Chaudhry saw himself rectifying the country’s social disparities. But “criticism of his aloofness, arrogance towards the news media, and impatience with indigenous consensus-formation processes gained credence during a year in office when he failed to heed warnings that his coalition’s Fijian Party members had begun to side with opponents.” (Alley R: 2000: 519). Chaudhry’s hold on as Prime Minister was under threat.

Chaudhry had achieved what Indo-Fijians had been lobbying for since colonialisation. But rather than adopt a moderate tone and one of cooperation, as previous Indian political leaders had done, Chaudhry implemented radical and abrasive methods which was unappealing to Fijians leading to the ignition of ethno-nationalism from hard-line traditionalists thereby opening the doors for Speight.

In 1987, the military justified the coup through the slogan “Fiji for Fijians” (Premdas R 2002), in 2000 Speight and his inner circle explained the reasons behind their putsch using similar rhetoric. Commodore Frank Bainimarama, sacked the Qarase government in a bid to clean up country, in this case it was a Fiji for all but it was a Fijian who would clean up the country. Therefore the concept of a multicultural democracy is framed within a Fijian military context.

The next section will examined the ways in which ethnic identity has been (re)interpreted, (re)framed by various interest groups, politicians etc. For such groups, particularly those behind Fiji’s four coups, ethnic identity has become a political resource (Drakuvula, J. 2004) to use or discard when needed.
6.3.3 THIRD THEORETICAL APPLICATION

COLLECTIVE ACTION FRAMING

As mentioned in section 4, interests groups must have strategies to build and maintain support for their cause. This is dependent on how they (re)interpret issues, or events to illustrate a problem, the behind it, the solutions available, as well as explain why people should join in the cause (Johnston H & Noakes J 2005: 5). To ensure success a social cause must resonate. In other words, a social cause should be placed within the cultural and/or social context of the targeted audience. (Johnston H & Noakes J, 2005:11)

The rest of this section will discuss the ways in which Fijians and Indo-Fijians frame their causes or aims to gain public support as well as to discredit each other. Fijians have a nationalistic perspective which ranges from moderate to extreme. Indo-Fijians points of view may appear to be moderate to those outside Fiji but for Fijians their aims are radical and threatening. Such views are verbalised at the upper levels of their societies but are they reflected at the grassroots levels? Discussion on whether Fijians and Indo-Fijians at the lower level have polarised views will also be given.

This section is divided into four parts 1) Identification of the social causes for the two groups, 2) the type of lobbyists or leaders of the causes/movements, which for the purpose of this paper be referred to as movement entrepreneurs, 3) the targeted audience or Frame Receivers, and 4) the way in which the cause is promoted or framed i.e. The Frame (Noakes & Johnston 2005)

6.3.3.1 – Framing the Social Cause

In a media interview almost one year after he was deposed as Prime Minister by George Speight and his inner circle, Mahendra Chaudhry said

...Let me talk about indigenous rights in Fiji. These rights are very well secured in the Constitution; they were secured in the Independence Constitution of 1970. They were again secured in the racist Constitution of 1990, and once again in the multiracial Constitution of 1997. (Chaudhry, M. 2001)

Behind this statement lies the question “Why are Fijians fighting for something which has been constitutionally safeguarded?” If one examines the political history of Fiji, Fijians have not been fighting for indigenous rights within a colonised country – not in the same sense that the Australian Aborigines have i.e. the right to be recognised as indigenous peoples - but for the right to permanently codify indigenous paramountcy within the constitution and Western governing framework. This is the coup instigators’ justification for overthrowing democratically elected
governments. In his speech to the nation on the day of the coup, Speight said “these actions [are] set forth...to achieve self-determination and control of their future destiny in all matters pertaining to their livelihood and the affairs of the Republic of the Fiji Islands.” (Lal, B. 2000:288) In 1987 military soldiers who supported Sitiveni Rabuka in the overthrow of the Bavadra government simply states “Fiji for Fijians” (Premdas, R. 2002:17)

Since their arrival to Fiji, Indo-Fijians have lobbied and fought for the right to be treated equally with Fijians. This includes political equality, access to the same resources as Fijians, the right to own land etc. They have made a number of compromises constitutionally to get to the point in Fiji’s history where in 1997 a multi-racial constitution was formulated, implemented, and elections using the common roll were conducted within the document’s framework.

Jai Ram Reddy, leader of the opposition National Federation Party (NFP), in an interview in 1996 stated that political inequality was something that “rankles - the mere thought that I am not equal with my fellow citizens of other races...All the constraints and limitations, the denials of basic human rights, are the sources of a great deal of happiness.” (Reddy, J.R. 1996 November)

There is little sign of among the political elite and interest groups to compromise on their social standpoints. Fijians will lobby for the right to protect their enshrined indigenous paramountcy and as long as they continue to so, Indo-Fijians will always lobby for the same rights as their Fijian counterparts.

6.3.3.2 – Movement Entrepreneurs (ME) in Collective Action Framing

The calibre and credibility of a movement’s leadership are essential in creating, promoting, and communicating a perspective which resonates with potential supporters. Leaders who have expert knowledge and/or have authoritative or charismatic qualities are able to draw upon the cultural meanings and symbols of potential supporters to recall and realign historical events within a targeted group’s cultural framework.

Reflecting on his removal as Prime Minister and imprisonment by George Speight, Mahendra Chaudhry said that Indo-Fijians “felt cheated, we play according to the rule, we fight an election ...and then when some elites and some powerful elements in Fijian society lose an election, they use indigenous rights as an excuse.” (Chaudhry, M. 2001, March) The elites and powerful elements Chaudhry speaks of are mainly the chiefs, military, and emerging business class.
On the Indo-Fijian side, the main agenda has, and continues to be, political equality. This will facilitate access to important policy making processes particularly in land and financial resources, as well as greater representation in the bicameral chambers of parliament. The most powerful ME’s for Indo-Fijians are the trade unions. This is evidenced by the fact that a number of their political leaders, e.g. Mahendra Chaudhry, began their careers as trade unionists.

The Fijian chiefs, and to some extent Indo-Fijian leaders, can be placed in three categories. The first is the statesman: “standing for the nation of group as whole” (Larmour P 2000:1.6). The second is the bureaucrat: acting as a go-between “government and rural people, dealing with complaints and settling disputes” (2006:1.6). The third represents “traditional or peripheral interests against a central government (Larmour P 2006:1.6, 1997:10-17).

Fijian chiefs fall in either one or all of the three categories for example Fijian chiefs revered as statesmen include the four Ratus as described in the comparative analysis section. The creation of the SVT party by Rabuka in the 1990s became a vehicle for even more chiefs to become directly involved in politics, so much so that Rabuka’s party became known as “the chief’s party” (Larmour P 2006:1.6). Party politics and membership within the GCC gave traditional leaders the political mandate to act as traditional mouthpieces for the Fijians and, more importantly, their confederacies. Fijian administrative bodies are filled with lesser chiefs and chaired by higher chiefs. Administrative bodies such as the Native Lands Trust Board (NLTB), which governs land leases and ownership, makes commoner Fijians more dependent on their leaders. This is a reversal in relationship as the role of chiefs customarily depended on the consensus of their people.

Since independence in 1970, Fijian chiefs have seen a weakening of traditional bonds. This was clearly the case in the 2000 coup where young upstarts openly defied their paramount chiefs. (Lal B, 2000) But despite their rise and fall, Fijian chiefs – and more particularly the Great Council of Chiefs – continue to hold sway over their people. (Appana, S. 2005) In general Fijians still consider their chiefs to be “the guardians of those values that are essential to the life of a particular group or society”. (Appana, S. 2005) Because of this deference, political parties have, and continue to do so, court chiefs or seek their blessing before conducting a political undertaking. In 1987 Rabuka sought the blessing of his paramount chiefs before carrying out the coup. In 2000, Speight constantly asserted that he had the full support of “the chiefs, [who had] made their views known to [him] directly and personally, both before the coup and especially after the coup”. (Speight, G. 2000, May)
Fijians see their chiefs; particularly those within the GCC; as having the skill and wisdom to solve the problems of their people and their country. They are supposed to embody, authority, “mana” (prestige/honour), wisdom, and experience. In 1987, they deliberated on the consequences of supporting or not supporting Rabuka’s coup while in 2000 the GCC conducted negotiations with Speight to release Chaudhry and his cabinet. However events leading up to and during the 2006 revealed the human weaknesses of the Fijian leaders. Bainimarama has exposed Fijian leaders as putting their own interests before the interest of their people. His coup not only targeted the Qarase government but also the chiefs associated with the government. The tone for this coup was set in 2000 when the chiefs were caught dithering between their traditional, and political duties and their own self-interests.

But overall throughout the history of Fiji’s political development “there is little denying that tradition, which is manifested in the Fijian chiefs and the GCC, has had a stabilizing and healing effect on the general populace of Fiji. This fact was recognised even before the coup phenomenon became a part of the political process in Fiji” (Appana, S. 2005) This aspect is vital in understanding why Speight publically humiliated Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara by forcing the elderly statesman to resign from his post as president of the GCC. After taking over parliament, Speight announced an interim government comprising of chiefs with similar nationalistic perspectives and interests to his. These chiefs were poached from Rabuka’s SVT or “chief’s party”. (Larmour, P. 2006:1.6)

Regarding the third category of traditional leaders, Speight’s supporters were a new generation of chiefs. They were the sons, and grandsons of the pioneers of the independent Fiji. (Lal, B. 2000) Traditional leaders, such as Ratu Mara were obstacles in the self-seeking aspirations of Speight and his supporters. Fijian chiefs of Mara’s calibre had years of political experience and leadership. Such leaders split the public and establishment support for the 2000 putsch. Yet for all their experience, the elderly chiefs were unable to cope with the upfront brash, and at times, disrespectful nature of the new generation of leaders. Adi Kuini Speed, deputy prime minister in 2000 and widow to Dr Timoci Bavadra said “that the Great Council of Chiefs [at that time was] made up of members who are over 70, the bulk of them. I am not trying to underrate them, but it just goes to show that you have a different generation of people here.” (Speed, A.K. 2000, May)

Indo-Fijian social and customary systems were as varied as the people themselves. The Indo-Fijian community was Muslim, Hindi, Gujarati, Punjabi, North Indian, South Indian, indentured labourers or descendants of indentured labours, free settlers or descendants thereof. They were
either farmers, owned small family businesses and so on. Despite their cultural, religious and social differences, the role adopted by Indo-Fijian was as victims because of circumstances created by historical and current politics. The indigenous paramountcy of Fijians meant that Indo-Fijians would always be lobbying from behind. They would be advocating for their rights as victims rather than as equals.

Historian and former member of the Reeves Commission, Brij Lal stated that currently “there’s a dearth of leadership” among Indo-Fijians (Hereniko, V. 2000:175). Yet in the early stages of their political development, particularly in the 1920s through to independence in 1970, Indo-Fijians were led by tireless lobbyists who became statesmen for their community. These leaders were charismatic, forceful, authoritative and experienced. One such leader was A.D. Patel, a nationalist from India who migrated to Fiji in the 1920s. Having had experience with the nationalist movement in India, A.D. Patel, “was a leader of unequal intellectual brilliance - a Gandhian at heart, a fierce and fearless critic of colonial rule and an untiring advocate of common roll”. (Lal B, 2006:16). A.D. Patel united the Indo-Fijian community, formed Fiji’s first political party – the National Federation Party in 1963. (Lal, B.2006) He lobbied for Fiji to become independent as well as for the common roll as opposed to the Fijian communal roll. Patel was a strong adversary for another politician-turned-statesman Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara who “feared [his] guile” (Lal, B. 2006:16) Patel’s successor, S.M Koya, a lawyer, adopted a more conciliatory tone preferring to work with Fijians. “Koya accepted the reality on the ground and sought to work pragmatically within its parameters and constraints where as his predecessor had sought to change them, to alter the terms of debate.” (Lal, B. 2006:16)

These two men had set the pattern for Indo-Fijian leadership. The 1970s to 1999 saw the rise of Mahendra Chaudhry, leader of the Fiji Labour Party (FLP), and Jai Ram Reddy, leader of the National Federation Party (NFP). These men had contrasting and, at times, conflicting leadership styles. Mahendra Chaudhry is described as having “a forceful personality, forged in long years spent in the trade union movement. [He] is a highly intelligent and resourceful person, tenacious and uncompromising (confrontational to his opponents), a born fighter who was a painful thorn in the side of the Rabuka government for years.” (Lal 2006:286) Chaudhry’s style of leadership is in sharp contrast to that of his peer, Jai Ram Reddy, who is perceived as a moderate. Unlike Chaudhry, Reddy was willing to compromise and cooperate with Fijians. Instead of being a thorn in Rabuka’s government, Reddy was a cooperative partner, particularly when it came to working on a framework for a constitutional review in the early 1990s. The political approaches of the two Indo-Fijian party leaders eventuated into rivalry rather than
cooperation. Both had their base support among Indian small farmers but “the NFP also depends heavily on Indian business families, some linked with Fijian politicians, whereas the Labour Party has support in some of the urban trade unions” (Norton R 2000:95).

Indo-Fijians were suffering the backlash from the 1987 coups and the implementation of the racially weighted 1990 constitution. “From 1987 to 1992, Fiji was under a military-backed interim government. Discrimination, detention and harassment of Indo-Fijians continued.” (Ramesh S 2007) In 1992 Indo-Fijians were divided between the FLP which refused to contest the upcoming elections held under the auspices of the 1990 constitution, and the NFP which contested the elections. The argument for the NFP’s decision was to stop “further alienation from the political process. Led by Jai Ram Reddy, the NFP made a come back from the political wilderness of the late 1980s in the 1992 general elections.” (Ramesh, S. 2007)

In 1994, the ruling SVT party, the NFP and the Labour Party agreed to work together on the composition of a team for a constitutional review. However, cooperation between the Reddy’s NFP and Rabuka’s SVT was perceived by Indo-Fijians negatively which led to the belief of the NFP as weak. Therefore in the 1999 elections Indo-Fijians threw their support behind Chaudhry while snubbing Reddy. Many Indo-Fijians, although politically opposed to Mahendra Chaudhry, supported him as ‘their only hope against the Fijian nationalists” (Lal, B. 2002: 89).

Indo-Fijians were no different to Fijian in how they judged the performance of their political leaders. On the one hand Fijians looked to their leaders to solve the current political problems and to protect their indigenous rights. The word of the chief-turned-politician was to be adhered to regardless of their performance due to the traditional custom of deference. On the other hand “the Indian community continues to feel and has been led by their leaders to feel, that only Indian leadership can resolve their problems.” (Prasad, B 2007:4) The 1999 election results showed that Mahendra Chaudhry was the one Indo-Fijians felt had the experience and the calibre to represent them.

The calibre of candidates among Indo-Fijians was markedly inferior to the 1999 line-up, featuring a lacklustre list of retired school teachers and public servants and others looking for a second career. This was in marked contrast to the calibre of Fijian candidates, especially in the SDL, which featured accomplished, if politically inexperienced, professionals, most of whom had served in the interim administration. Fijians see a future in politics, Indo-Fijians do not. (Lal, B. 2002: 90)

In contrast to Chaudhry, Rabuka, and Bainimarama, George Speight is a lightweight with limited political experience, and a failed businessman. Rabuka and Bainimarama planned their coups with military precision. Rabuka had the support of the chiefs, while Bainimarama relied on the
loyalty of the military. However the problem with George Speight was the uncertainty as to whether he was the instigator of the coup. There was no indication as to whom or what supported him. Poseci Buni, who was one of those held hostage, told Time Magazine that “there was someone else coming [to take charge], but he didn’t turn up.” (Feizkhah, E. 2000) Speight was a last minute addition to the coup plans.

“Behind him, in the shadows, are individuals and groups, writing his speeches, devising position papers, building up the mass support base, orchestrating the crowds, people who have little to lose but everything to gain from the overthrow of the Chaudhry government.” (Lal B. 2000:284)

By the time of the 2006 coup, the Fiji’s traditional leaders had fallen from grace only to be replaced by a different leader – the military chiefs.

In 1987 the then ranked Lieutenant-Colonel, Sitiveni Rabuka, overthrew the Bavadra coalition government. In 2000, “key leaders reportedly joined the insurgents only shortly before the take-over of parliament; George Speight two days earlier and Major Ilisoni Ligairi only 40 minutes beforehand.” (Fraenkel J 2000:1) Ligairi, was a former British SAS soldier, and he was commanding a small group of Special Forces soldiers from a unit called the Counter-Revolutionary Warfare Squadron (CRW).

As the 2000 putsch progressed, Speight was pushed more into the background and was slowly upstaged by Ligairi who took on a more prominent role as spokesman. During the coup there were reports of “rebel soldiers training their young civilian supporters” (Fraenkel J 2000:10) as well as mutiny led by Ligairi’s grandson at the military barrack on Fiji’s second largest island, while a lesser chief sympathetic to Speight’s putsch led hundreds of civilians to protest outside the military’s central command centre in Suva (Fraenkel, J. 2000:11).

In order to put an end to the 2000 putsch the Military Chief, Commodore Frank Bainimarama “assumed executive leadership and imposed martial law on 29 May...A new military council was appointed to run the country” (Lal B 2000: 291). In 2006, Bainimarama overthrew the elected Qarase government citing ineptness and corruption. However further investigation reveals that Bainimarama was unhappy about Laisenia Qarase’s plans to pare down the military as well as to pardon Speight and the other coup instigators.

Rabuka had established a precedent where the military was no longer an apolitical institution. In 1987 he had surrounded himself with soldiers who would support his efforts. In 2000, Major
Ligiari had the support of an elite strike force, while in the build up to the 2006 coup, Bainimarama had systematically removed or demoted officers who were disloyal. By December 2006, most of the senior RFMF officer positions were filled by junior officers. These officers were promoted quickly and they owed their rapid rise through the military ranks to their commander. (Lawson S 2004)

Military involvement in politics is interpreted as “accept[ance] as a guarantor of Fijian leadership” (Prasad, B.2007:4). Fiji’s military coups and the military involvement in the civilian coup, indicate a de facto part of the Fijian political system. The military has played, and continues to do so, “a cover role in determining political leadership. It can no longer be considered the apolitical institution that democratic theory demands” (Lawson S 2004:146). The ease in which Rabuka, Speight’s military supporter Ligiari, and finally Bainimarama overthrew elected governments exposes “an essential weakness in the political culture that has sustained that chauvinistic assertion of ‘indigenous rights’” (Lawson S 2004:146). The salient issue is maintaining the status quo. For Rabuka and Speight that was indigenous supremacy, in Bainimarama’s case the status quo was to keep the 2000 coup plotters in jail and to avoid cutbacks in the military (Lawson, S. 2000). These intentions were veiled under the terms multiculturalism and political accountability.

The military leaders had advantages which the traditional leaders lacked: 1) “their monopoly...over the means of coercion, and frequently because they are a relatively coherent organisation in a fragmented society.” 2) The strength of the division in society, corporate and factional interests of the military among others play a role in military intervention. 3) “Military regimes are oriented...towards maintaining ‘order’...and to maximising their corporate interests than to promoting the liberal democratic values of competition, participation, civil and political liberties.” 4) Military leaders are more likely to seek a political role. (May R. J, Lawson S, Selochan V 2004:27)

Fiji as a pluralist society is fragmented both between and within the two main ethnic groups. According to Rabuka, the election victory of an Indo-dominated government would lead to violence among in Fijian community particularly between those who came from the Bavadra’s Burebasaga Confederacy and the Tovata Confederacy as well as between Fijian and Indo-Fijians. Therefore military intervention was necessary to quell potential bloodshed and disunity. The coups became a springboard for him to pursue a political career. In 1990 he established the SVT party in which the members were mainly chiefs. Commodore Frank Bainimarama appears to be
following the same path as Rabuka. The former UN peacekeeper has assumed presidency and has replaced his military uniform with a civilian suit. His coup is to clean up corruption caused by patronage and nepotism. Such steps were needed to pave the way for multiculturalism and democracy. However Bainimarama is slowly seen as more of a dictator than a defender of democracy and multiculturalism.

The problem with leadership in Fiji, either among Fijians or Indo-Fijians, is that there are too many of them. The myriad of chiefs in and outside the GCC, Mahendra Chaudhry, Jai Ram Reddy, Sitiveni Rabuka, George Speight and his hidden conspirators, and Commodore Frank Bainimarama have been present simultaneously at different points of the different coups. Their political fates are inextricably linked as their career paths intersect, divide and then reconnect.

This, of course, poses a dilemma for their targeted audience as the calibre of the leading personalities, their political platform or cause, their experience, and status divide and confuse.

6.3.3.3 – Targeted Audience in Collective Action Framing

As described in the previous section, the type of leadership in Fiji is wide-ranging. At the conservative end of the political spectrum you have the ‘George Speights’. In the centre of the spectrum there are the ‘Jai Ram Reddys’, and the ‘tone-downed Rabukas’. The more liberal end of the spectrum sees the ‘Mahendra Chaudhrys’. These are, if you like, the typologies of political leaders in Fiji. But regardless of the political bias, the country’s leaders have campaigned on two basic agendas - nationalist or multiracial. This assumes that there is a strong racial divide between Indo-Fijians and Fijians.

Adi Kuini Speed (2000, May 24) claimed that “there is no such thing as bad race relations in Fiji...because every day, we live together well, we cooperate well... So, I don’t know what is happening.” Mahendra Chaudhry (2001, Mar 14) said “Fijians and Indians get along very well...So one cannot say there is stark racism in Fiji.” Brij Lal, as a member of the Reeves Commission responsible for the 1997 multiracial constitution, notices that “people are not as far apart as was often made out.” Travelling around the country to collect submissions for the new constitution, Lal “heard Fijians and Indians telling us that at the village level we get along very well... The second insight I got was that there is a deep respect for certain Fijian institutions among Indo-Fijians. The Great Council of Chiefs is one.” (Hereniko V 2000:174) These statements show that generally within the overall Fijian population, what is perceived by the
leaders and what their constituents actually feel and believe are worlds apart. For the people Lal interviewed “the problem was that in Suva politicians stand up and, whatever reasons, espouse all kinds of extremist rhetoric and that filters down to the grassroots level.” (Hereniko V 2000:174)

The coup instigators and their supporters whether they be military or traditional chiefs have justified their actions to be for the greater good – “the protection of ‘indigenous rights’ in the case of the 1987 and Speight coups, ‘national security’ in the case of the army’s intervention on 29 May 2000 and, in, December 2006, ‘anti-corruption’. (Frankel, J. 2007: :xxii) The targeted audience in all of the cases are the grassroots communities: the same people Brij Lal interviewed as a constitutional review committee member.

In 1987, Bavadra’s coalition government tried to change the direction of politics from race to class. This was firmly repulsed by the coup, the racially weighted constitution in 1990 and affirmative action policies which favoured Fijians throughout the ‘90s. The Indo-Fijian political platform: the common roll, land ownership rights and access to the same resources as Fijians are attempts to focus on socio-economics as opposed to racial economics favoured by Fijians

Overall, income inequality was more prevalent “within than between Fiji’s major ethnic groups.” (Walsh 2000) On average the income of Indo-Fijians households were higher than Fijians but within the Indian community Indo-Fijians were lower weekly wage earners than indigenous Fijians. (Walsh 2000)

Inequality among Fijians, and within Indo-Fijians as well as between the ethnic groups can be seen geographically in Fiji. The “household average weekly income in six of Fiji’s 14 provinces were about half of Rewa” (Walsh 2000), the heart of the Burebasaga Confederacy. It is regarded as the “richest and most urbanized province.” (Walsh 2000). Many of the disturbances related to the Speight’s coup began as protests within the Kubuna and Tovata confederacies over unfair distribution of state resources. The richest income earners are located in the urban areas, especially Suva. The interesting aspect of this group of income earners is that neither Fijians nor Indo-Fijians, apart from Gujarati who were originally free settlers, dominate in this category. (Sriskandarajah, D. 2003).

In terms of education and employment “Indo-Fijians [those who are in an educational institution] tend to stay in secondary and tertiary education than Fijians, regardless of gender or area of residence” (Sriskandarajah, D. 2003:314). Yet the number of Indo-Fijians without formal education outnumbers Fijians, particularly in the rural areas. During the mid 1990s onwards, Fijians are more likely to be employed in the public services and the defence forces whereas
Indo-Fijians are under-represented in these sectors. But the Indo-Fijian elite, mainly Gurjarati, are likely to dominate in managerial positions in the private sector, however this portion of the entire workforce is small (Sriskandarajah, D. 2003).

The economic realities facing Indo-Fijians and Fijians obviously affect their psyche (Kumar. S & Prasad, B. 2004) Fijians in rural areas feel marginalised. (Sriskandarajah, D. 2003). They feel worse off than those in the urban centres, particularly in Suva or in the provinces of the powerful confederacies which enjoy the advantages of race-based policies of the 1990s. The relative wealth of the Gujarati communities in the rural areas compounds the feeling of marginality among Fijians.

The issue of land ownership is a sensitive issue for both Fijian and Indo-Fijian. “Many rural Indo-Fijians...are anxious about their land of ownership of the land they work on.” (Sriskarandarajah, D. 2003:317) The very institutions which protect indigenous rights, e.g. the Native Land Trust Board, alienate the Indo-Fijians. (Sriskarandarajah, D. 2003) Affirmative action policies (raced-based policies) in the 1990s have deprived Indo-Fijians of a rightful share of social welfare assistance (Kumar S & Prasad B 2004).

Also of note is the alienation Fijians and Indo-Fijians feel within their own communities. Fijians in relatively poor provinces perceive Fijians in the richer provinces for instance Lau Province in the Tovata Confederacy or Rewa Province (where the capital city of Suva is located) in the Burebasaga Confederacy negatively. For instance the 1990 affirmative action policies favouring Fijians were introduced to help bridge the so-called economic, educational and employment gap between Indo-Fijians and Fijians. This was a means of easing racial tensions between the two groups. (Chand S 1997). However the irony of these policies is that they favoured “an identifiable minority...in monetary terms at the expense of its supporters with whom the minority has only racial ties” (Chand S 1997:3)

Indo-Fijians feel disadvantaged when they compare their social and economic situation to the Gujarati community who were originally free, as opposed to indentured settlers to Fiji. The Gujarati are dominant in retail trade in the urban areas. The majority of Indo-Fijians, i.e. indentured labourers or descendants thereof, have based their livelihood on farming. “Only a minority of the non-Gujarati have moved successfully into urban business.” (Chand S 1997:3) Because of the limited ability to own land, and the uncertainty of land leases, many Indo-Fijians have been forced to seek out alternative means of supporting themselves in “occupations where performance is the sole criteria for success.” (Chand S. 1997:3) These may include trade, and
business. Fijians, on the other hand, have not been subject to that kind of insecurity because of their rights to land ownership etc being protected under the constitutions and laws.

These intra-differences are subtle and Fijian political leaders place a heavy emphasis on the inter-ethnic differences rather than socioeconomic differences. This was clearly evident in the motives behind the coups, the subsequent constitution and government policies.

Feelings of alienation, economic and political uncertainty, unfairness as well as false perceptions of each other have been boiling underneath inter-and intra-ethnic relations since colonialisation. At times these feelings boiled over as in the strikes and riots among Indo-Fijians in the 1920s, and 1940s or the riots in Suva and rural areas by Fijians against their Indo-Fijian neighbours in 2000. What is clear is the reluctance of Fiji’s governments to deal with such issues (Sriskaran, D. 2003, Kumar, S. & Prasad, B. 2004, Walsh 2000) but to instead pursue political agendas which drive the two major ethnic groups apart.

The cultural and religious differences between Fijians and Indians were also means of political opportunity limitations. “Fijians are Christian while Indo-Fijians are predominantly Hindu, with a Muslim minority. This...led to limited social interaction outside institutions such as work or school” (Sriskandarajah, D. 2003:309). However these differences were not limited to just between the ethnic groups but also within the Indo-Fijian community itself. These divisions were religious, regional, free or indentured labourers, farmers and business owners. (Premdas R. 2002).

6.3.3.4 – Promoting the Movement’s Cause within a Frame

Jone Drakuvula (2004) from the non-government civil rights organisation, Citizen’s Constitutional Forum (CCF), claims that throughout Fiji’s political history “ethnic identity...is a political resource actively mobilised by politicians, social groups and interest parties competing for political power”. (2004:3) Throughout Fiji’s political history playing the ‘race card’ has been, and continues to be, the most effective means of disguising, and at the same time garnering support for the various agendas behind the coup. This is an obvious strategy to employ Fiji as one of the world’s most ethically polarised countries (Davies, J.E 2005)

Fiji’s leaders, both indigenous and Indo-Fijian, are able to frame either indigenous paramountcy or political equality by shaping their causes to fit the cultural and socio-economic context of their

targeted audiences outlined above. This is achieved by 1) materiality of power asymmetries between ethnic groups, 2) active deployment of cultural discourses on indigenous rights, and 3) how each group perceived the methods and styles of the various political leaders. (Drakuvula 2004) In 1987, as in 2000, the coup instigators stirred Fiji nationalism by promulgating the belief that Indians were plotting to rule Fiji economically and politically. Their evidence was the visibility of Indo-Fijians in white-collar professions and in managerial positions within the private sector while in contrast, Fijians were subsistence living in the rural areas. Indo-Fijians calls for a one-vote-per-person electoral system was perceived as threatening the political status quo which was established by the British colonial system and protected through the constitution. Also emphasised was the perception of imbalances in tertiary education, white-collar professions, commerce and farming. (Drakuvula 2000)

The communal structures of Fijian society, the traditional chiefly system within and outside the official political structures as well as dominance in administrative bodies regulating Fijians Affairs provided avenues in which this perception of the power asymmetry between the two major ethnic groups could be spread. “Colonialism virtually created and nurtured a chiefly elite that was “to become the very embodiment of a conceptually unified Fijian tradition, antipathetic to democratic principles of political participation and inclusion, and arguable the most power force in post-independence Fijian politics” (Bhim M 2005)

The rise of the Taukei Nationalist Movement in the build-up to the 1987 coup and in its resurrection in 2000 used rhetoric to indicate they represented the entire Fijian population when the fact is that in 1987 the Taukei members were associated with Ratu Mara’s AP party which lost the election to Bavadra. In 2000 the Taueki Movement originated from ultranationalists from Speights own region of Tailevu in the Kubuna Confederacy.

In 1987 Rabuka used the Taukei Movement as a partial excuse for his actions namely the coup was necessary to stop the violence in Suva and to prevent the shedding of blood as a result of the Bavadra coalition win. This implied that Fijians were angry about being ruled by an Indo-dominated government. Threat of an Indian conspiracy was now a reality; Fiji was not longer going to be for Fijians.

In 2000, Speight used the Taukei Movement as a clear sign that indigenous Fijians were trying to fight for their country and that they supported his actions. In a letter addressed to the Great Council of Chiefs, Speight explained why he overthrew the Chaudhry government.
It is useful to view the current crises in Fiji in the context of numbers. The indigenous people of Fiji, represent some 51% of the Fiji population of approximately 790,000. There are 300,000 Indo-Fijians who are now citizens of the country...If the indigenous community do not assert their rights now and with urgency, to govern their own country, they will in next to no time become history. (Speight 2000)

Speight’s rhetoric mirrors that of Rabuka. Like Bavadra’s coalition government in 1987, the Chaudhry-led coalition party would be interpreted as signs of an Indian takeover. This was even more acute given that Chaudhry was Fiji’s first Indian prime minister. Chaudhry’s government was progressive in that he would set up commissions of inquiry and introduce policies concerning land ownership, possibly amend or rescind affirmative action policies as well as restructure the sugar industry. Speight’s appeal to the Great Council of Chiefs, pointed out the supposed weakness of the council’s president and the inefficiency of Rabuka’s SVT party and its inability to safeguard the interests of indigenous people. Speight was lobbying for the support of the remaining chiefs within the council. Their approval would justify holding Chaudhry and his cabinet hostage for 56 days.

In 2006, Bainimarama justified his sacking of the Qarase government and the eventual sacking of the council by revealing corruption and nepotism. The aim of his coup was to appeal to Fijians marginalised by the elitism of a minority of Fijians. However rather than seek the support of Fijians, Bainimarama inadvertently received support from the Indo-Fijians while the ousted Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase received increasing support from the indigenous people. Bainimarama had turned the Fijian institution on its head by outing many chiefs and later on dismissing the council and then appointing himself, a commoner, as paramount chief of Fiji.

In comparison to Fijians, Indo-Fijians did not have the advantages of extensive government or public networks as they were shut out from the main decision making processes. Unlike the Fijians, the diversity of the Indo-Fijian population worked against them as they did not have an across-the-board structure similar to the GCC to embody cultural or traditional values. Yet the advantage that Indo-Fijians had over Fijians was the lobbying experience of the trade unions out of which developed the main political parties: National Federation Party (NFP) and the Fiji Labour Party (FLP). The concept of the materiality of power asymmetries was advantageous for Fijians within the political arena, and the ‘race/ethnicity’ card was used as a campaign tool to gain and maintain political majority. Nevertheless the same concept is also advantageous to Indo-Fijians outside the political framework.

Despite the population of Indians equalling or, in some cases, outnumbering the Fijian population, the Indian community can be regarded as a minority group because of the policy of indigenous paramountcy. Outside the political system, leaders within the Indian community
focussed on socio-economic issues like wage increases, better work conditions, and so on as an indirect means to further the cause of political parity and the common vote. Strike action was the common method used because of Indian dominance in the agriculture industry, particularly sugar, as well as in small to medium-sized business e.g. retail. Such an action would cripple the small island economy.

This experience and tactic was transferred to the political framework. The beginnings of political party politics in 1966 gave trade unions an opportunity to actively lobby its cause directly as opposed to indirectly. Political parties such as NFP promoted its cooperation with Fijians and multiethnic ideology by claiming these steps were necessary to stop the marginalisation of Indo-Fijians. To support this concept NFP emphasised “its role in the political and economic development of the country... [e.g.] its role in the successful review of the 1990 constitution.” (Lal 2002:98). NFP’s political rival, the Fiji Labour Party (FLP) framed itself as a progressive party unafraid to tackle the hard issues, e.g. land tenure, and it emphasised its cause by discrediting NFP as being behind the times and comprising of wealthy people who allegedly stood behind Speight’s coup. (Lal 2002)

NFP’s tactic failed to resonate with its targeted audience. The party’s recount of its political glory days “carried little weight with voters reeling from unemployment and poverty, and profoundly ignorant of history...[In addition] the emigration of thousands of Indo-Fijians since the coups of 1987 had robbed the party of supporter who might have been more sympathetic.” (Lal, B. 2002:98) NFP appeared as weak and thus lost many supporters who preferred FLP’s progressive and aggressive ideology.

Unlike NFP Labour had a current track record in government in forcing change, and it was this which resonated with the Indo-Fijians. In addition, Chaudhry drew upon his experience as Speight’s captive to present himself as “strong, fearless, and principled” (ibid:98). His experience drew sympathy thereby compounding the positive resonance of his party’s ideology or cause. Chaudhry’s targeted supporters were the subsistence farmers, “those who were desperately poor and without hope” (ibid:99). Chaudhry was able to relate to this population sector through his experiences as a trade unionist for sugar farmers.
6.3 - SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS FROM THEORETICAL APPLICATION

To summarise the main points of the theoretical applications ethnic identity is fluid. The coups demonstrate how the Fijian identity is used as a resource to fit the aims of the social actors. Fijian identity was based on values and cultural practices which were opposite to those of Indians. This construction of identity was exclusive in order to establish indigenous paramountcy. However the concept of Fijian identity became modified. In the 2000 putsch what was regarded as Fijian in the days of Rabuka was no longer applicable. The values of Fijian society had changed thereby becoming more individualistic and consumer minded. Bainimarama turned the Fijian institutions on its head. Thus Fijian identity was aligned with corruption. Bainimarama’s concept of Fijian was inclusive, democratic and multicultural. Indian identity has been ascribed by Fijians as strange. Their values and cultural practices were worlds apart from the Fijians. However Indians regarded their relationship with Fijian as symbiotic. Both ethnic groups needed each other and this gives Indians the right to call themselves Fijian. Their cultural base is more individualistic and their identity as Fijians is socio-economically based.

Understanding the ways in which Fijians and Indians define themselves add insight into the ways their leaders frame their causes, e.g. indigenous paramountcy or political equality. Fijians framed their cause by emphasising their cultural differences to Indians, and the perceived wealth of Indians. This amounted to a campaign which basically asserted that Indians were going to take over the country. Indians on the other hand framed their aims by asserting their history in helping to build Fiji as a nation. The leaders for both ethnic groups were either conservative or liberal. These extreme leadership types garnered the most support while leaders who adopted a moderate stance were rejected as weak or as selling out their people.

The political and economic structures play a large part in keeping the two groups apart. The codification of the Fijian traditional system within the Western political system provided limited political opportunities for the Indian community. However through outside structures such as the trade unions, and by taking advantage of the fractures within the Fijian elite leadership and political parties, Indians were given space to create political opportunities for themselves thus proving that they are able to overturn Fijian political dominance, albeit briefly, despite the political structures being heavily weighted towards Fijians. This threat forced Fijians to take extreme measures such as staging political coups.
SECTION 7 - CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to find out why coups occur in Fiji. Fiji has had four coups within a period of two decades culminating in three constitutions: 1970, 1990, and 1997. It would be easy to blame the British colonial administration for Fiji’s political problems as its colonial policies have played a large part in Fiji’s political development and over 100 years later the Pacific nation is still suffering from the aftershocks. However Fijians have been reluctant to progress from the political model established by the British colonialists as that would mean compromising on the principle of indigenous paramountcy to include other ethnic groups in the country. Indians on the other hand would like to see Fiji move forward to where the antiquated model would be updated and revived to reflect the times of a new century.

The comparative analysis has shown that Fiji’s traditional chiefs are a plausible causal factor in the coups. What is measured in this paper is not so much the presence of traditional chiefs in each of the coups but their level of influence or lack thereof. The roles of the chiefs have changed dramatically during the 20 year time span of the coups. At one time they were revered; at present they are perceived as dithering, self-seeking and unable to care for their people. Fijian chiefs who became politicians were required to speak for all Fijians but the truth of the matter is they could only represent their tribes, clans or confederacies. By using three theories relevant to the Fiji situation we can see the methods in which Fijians try to maintain the status quo by excluding Indians as well as see how Indians push back against the established social boundaries in their struggle for political equality.

Fiji has provided academic fodder producing a vast amount of literature on different aspects of the four coups. However, the focus on specific themes has given rise to comparing the coups for their own sake. This paper has tried to systematically compare all four coups themselves. The most common approach is to use the coups as an aid in the comparison of special themes or issues e.g. constitutionalism, nationalism, ethnicity etc. However this paper has been very much concerned with an internal comparison and analysis of the actual coups. Specific issues are used as aids for this comparison but the focus has also been the individual coups. This paper took its starting point from a very lucid analysis of the 1987 and 2000 coups by Roderic Alley, associate professor at Victoria University of Wellington’s School of History, Philosophy, Political Science and International Relations in New Zealand. There has also been heavy reliance on the work of Brij Lal, historian, former lecturer at the University of the South Pacific, and former member of the Reeves Commission. Lal is an acute observer of politics in Fiji and his work has aided in understanding the individual characteristics of the coup.
The conclusion of this comparative analysis is difficult to determine given that the Banimarama coup is still unsolved. But based on the information presented, what can be ascertained is that coups will continue to happen if the issue of the role of chiefs is not dealt with. This is not a matter of abolishing the Great Council of Chiefs as that would leave a political vacuum which could be filled with an inept organisation or group thereby making the situation worse. A possible option was the 1997 constitution. It opened the door for the possible detangling of the GCC’s from the official political system. The combination of communal and open seats provided opportunities for Indians and Fijians to work together on long standing controversial issues like land leases. Voting has been traditionally been along confederacy lines but the 1997 constitution was a way to slowly overcome that habit.

There are a number of variables which could cause the coups but this paper has identified and focussed on the influence or demise of traditional chiefs. The various chiefly systems in the Pacific have caused problems and the Fiji dilemma raises the question of democracy in the region namely what kind of democracy, and whether an alternative model could be created to emphasise the Pacific way of doing things.

With regards to Fijian identity, the perspective of this paper is that that Fijian identity is not specific to the indigenous peoples. The question is how long can an ethnic group, in this case Indians, be regarded as visitors. Indians have been in Fiji since indentured labour was introduced in 1897. This is an issue which can only be solved through a document similar to the 1997 Constitution.
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