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Editorial   Great is truth

GEOGRAPHICAL remoteness, small populations and vast sea distances between nations are all factors which go to ensuring that the islands of the Pacific remain relatively unfamiliar territory to many in the international community. That a region so wealthy in languages, cultures and social traditions could also be a place of coups and tensions and where media freedoms are often trampled upon, is also little known to many casual observers.

An opportunity for independent Pacific media voices to be heard and for press freedom activists to express concerns on the international stage came to the fore when the UNESCO Director-General agreed to the University of Queensland's bid to host, for the first time in the Pacific, the annual UNESCO World Press Freedom Day conference (2-3 May 2010). While global in nature, the conference addressed Pacific issues as a priority.

As the more than 300 delegates from more than 40 countries arrived in Brisbane for the event, they would have noticed the wording 'Great is Truth, and Mighty Above All Things' etched into the sandstone façade over the main portal at the university. The message could not have been more appropriate for a conference with the theme *Freedom of Information: The Right to Know.*

Although the conference included sessions specifically devoted to Pacific press freedom issues, it more importantly provided a platform for journalists and media professionals from the region to gather in special pre and post-conference workshops to discuss concerns and fears about repressive regimes, restrictive Government legal practices and the need for improved skills-based training, especially in FOI fields. Women journalists came together for a WAVE meeting, while the Pacific Freedom Forum (PFF) also gained strength through networking among interested parties. Sadly, due to internal divisions and disagreements, the region's once pre-eminent media organisation, the Pacific Islands News Association (PINA), played no part in the proceedings.

This 'UNESCO WPFD: Media Freedom in Oceania' themed edition of *Pacific Journalism Review* brings into focus some of the outcomes of the global World Press Freedom Day conference.

Lisa Williams-Lahari launches into the subject with a strong commentary which gives us, as she puts it, a 'funky taste of Pacific media freedom soup'. Ensuring that we feel more embedded in the region, she goes on to place the

role of media in a cultural context through an interesting consideration of the traditional *toki,* or adze.

The 'fiercely independent' *Cook Islands News* is profiled by its editor, **John Woods**, who also recalls the way in which the country pioneered Freedom of Information legislation in the region. However, he goes on to lament the fact that subverting application of the whole FOI process seems to have become a national sport for politicians.

At the time of the Brisbane conference, **Sophie Foster** was assistant editor of *The Fiji Times*. Since then, the newspaper has fallen victim to a draconian media law introduced by the military regime to curb foreign ownership of the press. Rupert Murdoch's News Ltd has been forced to divest itself of its flagship newspaper, the once proud *Fiji Times*, to a locally-based buyer—the Motibhai Group. Fortunately, we have Sophie's recollections of life under censorship at the *Fiji Times* to remind us of how journalists were denied the opportunity to go about their work.

A Papua New Guinea perspective to threats to media freedom is provided in a commentary by Port Moresby based **Susuve Laumea**, interim Chair of the Pacific Freedom Forum. PFF is an online forum of journalists, media professionals, academics and other parties concerned about the erosion of the rights espoused by Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. He takes the opportunity to revisit what he rightly calls 'the sacred values of freedom of information and freedom to express, analyse and disseminate information'.

In an illuminating piece on the trials and tribulations of establishing and owning a newspaper in the Pacific, *The Samoa Observer's* **Savea Sano Malifa**, starts with its historical roots in a 'cookhouse in a village near Apia'. A prominent politician of the time, later to become the country's Head of State, begrudgingly gave support to its establishment but that did not save the paper from later difficulties, such as destruction of its offices and printing press by fire. As this edition was going to press Savea was honoured by the International Press Institute as one of 60 global 'media freedom heroes'.

Vanuatu governments are not used to being held accountable. **Marie-Noelle Ferrieux Patterson** makes this assertion in her erudite and illuminating commentary on the Vanuatu experienceof Freedom of Information. As president of Transparency Vanuatu, Marie-Noelle's experiences as the country's first Ombudsman also give an insight into how 'big men' in a Pacific society often feel threatened by FOI and believe they are not accountable.

From a professional background which includes a senior broadcast management role in Fiji, Vanuatu-based **Frances Herman** tackles the vexed question of the digital divide and the way in which remote Pacific communities can engage with new technologies. Clearly, there is a long way to go.

In most countries of the world, the role of Chief Ombudsman would probably involve the incumbent in a seemingly endless round of investigations into minor bureaucratic bungles and government department administrative errors. Not so in Papua New Guinea, where **Chronox Manek** is Chief Ombudsman. He is not only a Pacific hero, but a global warrior on the frontlines in the fight against corruption and poor governance. His work has been so effective that he was savagely attacked and badly wounded in Port Moresby while going about the performance of his duties. Chronox Manek came to the WPFD 2010 conference from medical treatment in Melbourne. His chapter on *Freedom of Information—Challenges and the Way Forward* is a must read.

Introducing the research articles, an erudite, academic overview of media development in Tonga takes us from the 1800s to the present day. Doctoral

candidate and former Tonga radio/TV news editor, **Sione Fatanitavake Vikilani,** shows us that, as early as 1882, the media had their first confrontation with the authorities. Has anything changed in the past 100 years? Let the chapter on Media Freedom and State Control in Tonga be your guide.

How close is Fiji to adopting the 'guided journalism' style common in Singapore and Malaysia? **Reggie R. Dutt** studies the *Media Industry Development Decree* in Fiji and compares it with a similar Act promulgated in Singapore in 2003. Harsh fines, jail terms, wide powers to search, seize and censor. But does one size fit all? Will it work in Fiji? The author evaluates the situation in 'Fiji media decree: A push towards collaborative journalism'.

David Robie of AUT University's Pacific Media Centre in New Zealand takes a broader brush to the subject of freedom of the press by providing perspectives on campus-based media models in the Pacific. This was the subject of his invited UQ School of Journalism and Communication World Press Freedom Day Lecture presented as a pre-conference event. The theme of this *PJR* edition is rounded off by **Mosmi Bhim** and **Shailendra Singh** with chapters on the effects of press censorship in Fiji.

Two additional non-themed articles bring perspectives to differing subjects. **Trevor Cullen** and **Ruth Callaghan** look at how the press has reported HIV incidences in Papua New Guinea, while **Babak Bahador** and **Serene Tng** takes the Mumbai terrorist attacks of 2008 as the base for an analysis of the way in which citizens caught up in conflict can play a role in framing the reporting of the events.

My sincere thanks go to all who have contributed to this edition. Special thanks to my co-editors, Marsali Mackinnon, of the University of Queensland and Associate Professor David Robie of AUT University in Auckland. We are also grateful to the UNESCO Office for the Pacific States in Apia for financial support for the publication of this edition.

Associate Professor Martin Hadlow
Convenor, WPFD 2010
The University of Queensland
St Lucia, Brisbane, Australia
www.wpfd2010.org

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1. Reclaim the right to know *toki* and locate it online

COMMENTARY

A Cook Islands proverb goes like this: *Taraia to toki, ei toki tarai enua* – 'Sharpen your adze, the adze to carve nations.' Applying the proverb in this context, the *toki*/adze can be seen as the media. The right to know is the tool which keeps the adze strong and effective. When the toki is well prepared for its work, the impact on public debate and protection of media freedoms is strongest. The diversity of news outlets and 'talking heads' in the public domain helps foster a sense of public participation; and ownership of the governance process. When the adze is blunted by lack of Freedom of Information legislation, or by the failure of media workers to pressure for the public interest and the right to know, we see the deadening impacts that many of us can attest to in our countries.

LISA WILLIAMS-LAHARI
Pacific WAVE Media Network, Rarotonga

KIA ORANA tatou katoatoa it e aroa maata o to tatou Atua, Talofa lava—I bid you warm Pacific greetings. This week in 2009, the inaugural meeting of a regional media freedom watchdog group, the Pacific Freedom Forum, was happening in Samoa. Twelve months later—to the exact week—we are witnessing the inaugural meeting of a regional network of women in Pacific media, called the Pacific WAVE Media Network. We have delegates from both groups here at this World Press Freedom Day conference, one (the PFF) is a regional media freedom monitoring and advocacy body—and the other (WAVE) is a newly-confirmed network of women working in news and media across the Pacific region. Together, both groups form a constituency of almost 400 online members spread across Oceania's 22 countries and nine million people, not forgetting its many millions of square kilometres of saltwater.

I am starting this commentary on the overall theme of this session, 'Threats to Media Freedom and Freedom of Information in the South Pacific', by extending an invitation to have some 'media freedom soup' with me.

I've spent the better part of the last year and a half as a founding member of the Pacific Island Journalists' Online network, which gave birth to the Pacific Freedom Forum, which in turn gave birth to WAVE. Along with our founding coordinator Ulamila Wragg, I've done this work—and most of my journalism—from a computer linked up to the internet in my kitchen. Many of my WAVE media sisters share this Pacific reality, as women juggling many hats, balancing their unpaid work at home with paid careers in the media. I spice up my time with vast amounts of postgraduate study, stir fried with the roles of activist, wife, mum, and freelancer. So welcome to my kitchen, and let's get cooking.

The key ingredient I'll begin with is the way we in the Pacific media have approached our coverage of HIV/AIDS. Yes, HIV/AIDS. What I have seen as a journalist, trainer and commentator is that HIV/AIDS, more than any other global trend in this part of the world, has created an interesting model which we can use to examine and better understand the main threats and solutions to media freedom in the Pacific.

The first key challenge which HIV/AIDS poses for media freedom *a la* Pacific is that when it comes to reporting big issues, we have the freedom to get it wrong as well as right. From the late 1980s into the 1990s, Pacific reportage of HIV/AIDS was geared towards a sense that this issue was someone else's problem. Pacific media had reported it, but most coverage fed widespread prejudice and misconceptions that HIV/AIDS was a death sentence delivered by God to gay men, adulterers and prostitutes. Of course, this situation was not exclusive to the media.

HIV/AIDS also highlighted the lack of media-friendly Pacific medical and development professionals able to educate people about a new and emerging epidemic for the region; and the lack of quality statistics and surveillance data to draw upon. It raised all kinds of new questions about the credibility of talking heads who were misinforming rather than informing the news agenda, and about what reporting the truth in the public interest really means.

It began to raise curly questions about objectivity, the credibility of traditional talking heads like church leaders and how we in our reportage were contributing (or not) to a balanced debate on such highly emotional issues.

It underlined the lack of privacy and confidentiality in small islands communities, and the stigma, discrimination and fear which abound when people simply do not have access to all the information they need.

And it was all gaining momentum when the key regional meeting of Pacific media workers, the annual Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) conference, was hosted by French Polynesia in late 1998.

Pacific cultural, sexual taboos

It was at this PINA conference, in front of a regional audience of Pacific journalists, that a young University of the South Pacific journalism student called Maire Bopp Dupont stood up in a plenary session and declared she was HIV-positive. In asking her media colleagues to reject fear-mongering and get back to being professional journalists, Maire took a gamble and sparked new debate, thinking and reflection by her Pacific colleagues. Her stance also opened up public discussions about 'no-go zones' such as the taboos around sexuality, culture and tradition, and the personal attitudes and behaviours which inform our internal news-filters.

Importantly, she highlighted an issue which continues to define challenges around news practice to this day: given all the internal filters we face in gleaning what is news and how it is reported, how do we define our commitments to ethics, accountability, truth and the public interest? Who monitors the notion of just how free, truthful and 'independent' journalists are? What about the language and words we use? And the gendered stereotypes and labelling we are dealing with?

All these questions began to emerge on media as partners in development, the gender dimensions of media work, human rights and social justice issues. In 1999, in recognition of her 'breaking the silence' on HIV/AIDS, Maire was awarded the PINA Media Freedom Award.

This takes me to my next key challenge: the need to respond to gaps and failures in order to address the challenges around media freedom work, FOI and the right to know. Shortly after Maire won the award, her role as a Pacific advocate and voice on HIV/AIDS was cemented and she identified an urgent regional need that required a regional solution. At the time, there was no effective network of Pacific organisations to support people with HIV/AIDS. That all changed when the Pacific Islands AIDS Foundation (PIAF), was formed and began to address the problem. It has since become

the secretariat for a regional coalition of partnering organisations called the Pacific NGO Alliance on AIDS. This story provides lessons at a critical time for us, of being responsive, current, owned by the Pacific region we claim to represent, and transparent to our members. Media freedom, free speech, the right to information and freedom of information are a dynamic and changing set of issues, always evolving, just as the PIAF organisation has done as it addresses our region's HIV/AIDS crisis. I am not alone in knowing that Pacific media is now at the same crossroads as the region faced with the HIV/AIDS crisis, where HIV/AIDS forced a regional, industry-led response that had to be strong, effective and transparent. Just as those most affected got together and formed their own networks and chain of accountability, we as journalists and Pacific news and media organisations must do the same to ensure we remain true to our values and mission, which are now no longer being met. It's at this point that our media freedom soup now comes to the boil. For a range of reasons, we have seen our regional media body PINA lapse into relative silence and fall victim to internal conflict.

I say this is a regional challenge of crisis proportions because any regional body which falls apart doesn't do so silently, and we need to be honest and open about learning from failure. If there is anything the recent global economic crash can teach us, it is that. I challenge us all, in truth and respect for the right to disagree, to urgently seek a space for mediation and most of all for transparency to resolve this situation. At this point in time, a fractured and poorly managed Pacific media regionalism is itself providing the biggest threat to media freedom and FOI. We will always have our dictators and tyrants to deal with; but we need to set our own media house in order. Some will have to decide if they even want a 'regional house' to support our networking. Without well-resourced and effective monitoring, advocacy and coordination effort that is owned and endorsed by all of us, from every part of our region, we will continue to remain in crisis mode. We will not be able to dream of excellence and standards outside of the ad-hoc pockets that do exist. We will not be able to hope to grow media literacy among our youth, leaders and communities so that the right to know is an accepted flip side to the right to ask the taboo questions.

A dash of Indigenous hope
As a last spoonful, I want to celebrate all the stirring with a dash of Indigenous hope. I note the inclusion of another key forum at this WPFD

event, that of Indigenous Voices Forum, which also highlighted the need to close the gaps in ownership, participation, content creation, and diversity. Paying homage to the wisdom provided by our ocean-navigating ancestors, here is a Cook Islands proverb often quoted by a former Cook Islands Prime Minister. His belief in the right of a free and independent media to exist meant he was accessible and accountable in ways that would put many current Pacific leaders to shame. It was the doors opened by Sir Geoffrey Henry in the early 1990s which helped pave the way for the Cook Islands to create history on FOI legislation more than 15 years later. The proverb goes like this: *Taraia to toki, ei toki tarai enua. Taraia to toki, ei toki tarai enua.* 'Sharpen your adze, the adze to carve nations.' In transforming that into the context of this session the *toki*, the adze, can be seen as the media. The right to know is the tool which keeps the adze strong and effective. When the toki is well prepared for its work, the impact on public debate and protection of media freedoms is strongest. The diversity of news outlets and talking heads in the public domain helps foster a sense of public participation; and ownership of the governance process. When the adze is blunted by lack of FOI legislation or media workers themselves pressuring for the public interest and the right to know, we have the deadening impacts many of us can attest to in our countries.

So, from the ancestors to us here today—*Taraia to toki, ei toki tarai enua*: how sharp is your media freedom adze, and who is holding it? Is the adze sleeping in a corner somewhere, growing dull with lack of use? Has it left newsrooms and taken up residence in Ombudsman's, offices public auditing processes, or is it no longer to be found? I challenge us to reclaim the toki and locate it online—in digital spaces accessible for more of us, a toolkit for the future generations of Pacific journalists. I hope you have enjoyed this funky taste of Pacific media freedom soup.

Lisa Williams-Lahari is founding member and projects leader of Pacific WAVE (Women Advancing a Vision of Empowerment) Media Network. This address was made at the UNESCO World Press Freedom Day Conference at the University of Queensland, Brisbane, 1-3 May 2010 as part of a 'Media Freedom and Freedom of Information in the South Pacific Plenary Session panel.
lisa.lahari@gmail.com

2. Cook Islands: The *Cook Islands News* and the genesis of FOI

COMMENTARY

The *Cook Islands News* is challenging the Prime Minister and his Cabinet for maintaining secrecy and nondisclosure around all of Cabinet's business in spite of the country's *Official Information Act*. And the newspaper is fighting several defamation actions which in legal fees are chewing up the equivalent of a whole annual salary for a senior journalist. This is a waste of limited resources, but the cost of being a 'free press'.

JOHN WOODS
Editor, Cook Islands News, Rarotonga

FOR THE Cook Islands, which I represent as the publisher and editor of the national daily newspaper, this is a special opportunity to talk proudly of our independence, of our relative freedom to enjoy and practise the right of free speech and freedom of expression, and of our leading position as the only Pacific Islands nation with Freedom of Information (FOI) legislation. The Cook Islands *Official Information Act* was cloned from New Zealand's Act, and was implemented in February 2009.

To put this in perspective, we really are tiny with a resident population of some 15,000 people across our 15 beautiful islands. We are an independent state self-governed in free association with New Zealand. The main media institutions were government-owned until 20 years ago, and today my newspaper co-exists alongside Pitt Media Group's Cook Islands Television and Cook Islands National Radio, and two weekly newspapers. There are also seven other private radio stations.

Cook Islands News is fiercely independent. We like to think of our journalism as robust and aggressive. This is thanks to a team of 20 staff including six journalists. We publish six days a week, as a morning newspaper with a paid circulation of about 2500 copies. We achieve saturation coverage with as many as four to ten readers a copy. We use modern technologies, including Computer-to-plate process but we don't have a bindery as we employ up to a

dozen people each night to hand fold and collate every sheet of the 16 to 20 pages of our newspaper.

For World Press Freedom Day in the Cooks, we devoted three pages to the topic of press freedom. This included our leading article which proclaimed that while we enjoy greater freedom than many of our Pacific neighbours, it is still a fragile freedom.

False allegations of 'trespass'
In April 2010, our senior reporter Helen Greig was harassed and victimised for daring to publish the truth about a government agency CEO which took a backhander from a Chinese construction company in the form of a motor vehicle. His false allegations of 'trespassing' against Helen led to her arrest, interrogation for three hours and the laying of vaccuous charges.

We have fought this to the point of proving there is no case to answer, the charges have been dropped, and we have received police apology and retraction of false comments (on Radio New Zealand International) by the Deputy Commissioner that Helen had been unlawfully found inside the complainant's home.

We are challenging our Prime Minister and his cabinet for maintaining secrecy and nondisclosure around all of cabinet's business in spite of our *Official Information Act.* And we are fighting several defamation actions which in legal fees are chewing up the equivalent of a whole annual salary for a senior journalist. This is a sheer waste of our limited resources, but it is the cost of being a 'free press'.

Our OIA itself is handicapped by lack of follow through. Our politicians gloated about being the first in the Pacific to adopt FoI legislation but since then no resources have been applied to education, and our Ombudsman struggles with her role in overseeing the Act. In a way the Act was stillborn, but it will survive.

UNESCO has confirmed to me that our application for funding to promote our OIA has been approved. This will enable us to provide the Ombudsman with some resources (like bilingual brochures, seminars for training government officials, and NIE or newspapers-in-education modules for secondary students) and funding to inform and empower the little people to use the act in our pursuit of the public's right to know.

In our tiny, disparate country, this means we can go ahead with plans to recruit and train six outer islands correspondents. The idea is that we will

Excerpt from the Cook Islands News media freedom section on 3 May 2010

equip them with laptops and cameras, and provide them with space in our newspaper, and with web pages where their news can be opened up to a wider audience. We want expatriate Cook Islanders to be able to comment by way of a bulletin board on what is happening in their home islands. It is about empowering citizens to take control of their destiny.

This brings me to the bigger question of shared regional media issue— and of the big challenges now facing independent press development in the Pacific. If freedom of expression is indeed the cornerstone of democracy, as we have heard many times then it is crucial that we continue to collaborate regionally in our quest for unity and agreement on the fundamentals of our people's right to know.

It's still a fragile freedom

Cook Islands News editorial:

FREEDOM of expression is a civil liberty we mostly take for granted in this country.

We see and hear that freedom working itself out in everyday life—letters to the editor, talk-back radio, the ongoing Sunday flight protests in Aitutaki—and we consider it normal.

But by comparison with our Pacific neighbours, some of whom struggle against censorship and oppression, we are privileged people.

We should all celebrate this today, as we mark World Press Freedom Day. Certainly *Cook Islands News* does.

Of course freedom of expression is a constitutional right of citizenship in the Cook Islands, and we rightly pride ourselves on it—as part of being an enlightened democratic state.

But today as we focus on press or media freedom, we also take stock of a few of the challenges and threats to that 'freedom'.

Indeed, when we look at Helen Greig's account of wrongful arrest and police intimidation as a result of doing her job, there also is a disturbing side to reporting of the truth in this peaceful nation.

Helen was arrested, interrogated (for three hours) and charged with trespassing after she took pictures to prove that a vehicle paid for by a Chinese construction company had fallen into the hands of a government agency employee.

The charges against her have since been dropped for the want of a prosecution case, and we have been promised a public apology by police (though the apology and retraction still have not arrived).

Something sinister went on behind the scenes, as men of influence commanded her harassment, following through on their prior threats to 'get her'. That in itself is disquieting.

Our open reporting of opinions on contentious issues draws scorn on an almost daily basis, and legal threats on a weekly basis. It's routine stuff. Mostly we shun them on the basis of the public's right to know. We are fighting several defamation cases in the courts, as part of what it takes to do our job.

On the positive side, we take heart from the fact that we have the only freedom of information law in a Pacific islands country. Our politicians revelled in it when they passed the law, even though it is still handicapped by lack of resources for education, and is still not really effective.

Despite our *Official Information Act*, the Cook Islands is being denied its right to know at the highest level. The most powerful entity of government, cabinet, is still a stronghold of secrecy and nondisclosure.

We believe, and argue, that the public has every right to know what cabinet decides, what deals it does and what funds it spends.

For the past five years we have pleaded for weekly cabinet media

briefings, and for release of cabinet minutes and documents, but we are continually denied information. Nowadays we rely on leaks (when it suits an individual) and on papers falling off the back of a truck.

We gladly use this information, but it gets us offside with the power-brokers and is not good for healthy relationships. We have produced examples of weekly public statements from the cabinets of New Zealand and Samoa, recommending that our cabinet follows suit.

Our Prime Minister and Cabinet Services use the lame excuse of a rule that four days must pass to allow cabinet decisions to be notified to affected parties Hopefully they will realise the error of this way, especially if they take seriously last week's potent comment by Jacqui Evans, a former journalist whose Masters thesis deals with the 'Sheraton' hotel debacle.

Evans believes the $81 million Sheraton scandal was much worse than the current Toagate financial blunder, and concluded: 'Personally, I think that if we fostered a culture of transparency so that free and immediate online access to cabinet minutes was normal practice, the opportunity would be given for public input and healthy debate so that we don't find ourselves in this fix again.'

It is true that both the Sheraton and Toagate deals were done in the secrecy of Cabinet meetings, with deliberate intent to deny the public of the right to know—and this is wrong morally and democratically.

Yes we may enjoy freedom of expression and we may have a largely free press, but it is a fragile freedom that needs protection and promotion.

John Woods
Managing Editor
Cook Islands News
3 May 2010

But what we're looking at in this 21st century is a new paradigm—a new situation where virtual networks are the conduit for our own expressions of opinion. We now have the Pacific Freedom Forum providing commentary and leadership on the subjects that dominate our thoughts and actions as news practitioners.

PINA conspicuous by its absence

We see a new alliance emerging despite the structures of old that used to bind and represent our far-flung members. Now I put on my hat as Vice-President of the Pacific Islands News Association (PINA). I feel obliged to address the controversies surrounding PINA since we are gathered here in the name of

One sided, UNESCO

Fiji Sun editorial:

TODAY is World Press Freedom Day. In Brisbane at UNESCO's main global event marking the day there will be lots of huff, puff and one-sided noise about Fiji.

It will be one sided because the Australian organisers have loaded the programme with people who are anti.

They have featured critics of our government, but not any of the many people who have a very different point of view.

What a difference this is to the Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) conference in Port Vila last year. A panel discussion during PINA featured various viewpoints, including from our own Ministry of Information on behalf of the government.

While *The Fiji Times* representatives staged a walkout when the Ministry of Information representative spoke, the rest of the participants in PINA stayed put and listened.

They understood that the Australian way is not the only way.

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) supposedly promotes pluralism of viewpoints. It's a pity UNESCO then did not insist their Australian organisers showed similar balance to what PINA's organisers did.

The failure to do this undermines the credibility of the events in Brisbane.

Leone Cabenatabua
Editor
Fiji Sun
3 May 2010

World Press Freedom Day.

PINA is sadly conspicuous by its absence at this year's gathering, whereas at past UNESCO events like this PINA has always had a strong presence and representation. It behoves me as Vice-President to speak up and to explain why this proud tradition has been broken and why PINA did not take part in this forum. Essentially it boils down to problems within our organisation, and much of this is related to the situation in Fiji where PINA is based and where our administration and news service (PACNEWS) exist under media restrictions and now a radical new media decree.

I read that the *Fiji Sun* newspaper came out with an editorial (One-sided UNESCO, 3 May 2010) slagging the Brisbane forum for what it prophesied

would be negative discussion of Fiji's political condition, accusing us of 'Fiji bashing'. This is rich and raggedy stuff. Let me say to the *Fiji Sun*, which has become the parish pump of the pin-striped puppets who espouse Commodore Bainimarama's cause—pandering as a commercial opportunist to the regime with the effect that it is harvesting government advertising—that nothing could be further from the truth. I've not heard anyone here bagging Fiji, or running anyone from there down except the censors and their bosses. Not till now that is. That is the task that has befallen me: to denounce the regime for its interference in press freedom.

As veteran Pacific reporter Sean Dorney commented recently, PINA once had a well deserved and solid reputation for defending media freedom in the island countries. But that has been lost. And as Lisa Williams-Lahari says, Pacific news media needs a new clean bill of health.

What's wrong with PINA, in my view, is that PINA has lost its mojo. It is a toothless shell of its former self, and the proud history of past members and boards has been relegated to the memory of what once was, but is no longer.

Constitution compromised

PINA's constitutional purpose in defending freedom of expression has been compromised to the point where most members have lost confidence in its ability to provide leadership and direction.

So, this is the situation with PINA, based on my experience and observations as a board member since July last year when I was elected at the Pacific Media Summit in Vanuatu on a ticket of reform:

1. Our Secretariat is dysfunctional and out of control. The general manager is operating without an employment contract, as he and our president failed to notify the board when we met in December that the GM's contract had expired in November 2009. The office follows no procedures, there is no protocol for administration and reporting, and indeed I cannot even obtain working financial information to show our financial situation. This is alarming and disconcerting, and is a viewpoint held by our most important funding partners.

2. Our Board met in December and passed resolutions (among others) to suspend the membership of Fiji's Ministry of Information (or MINFO which is responsible for censoring Fiji media), but this

was not communicated or implemented. In fact, MINFO is one of just a dozen current financial members of PINA, having paid their subscription in recent weeks. Our Secretariat cowers under the military regime.

3. We on the Board were never advised that our PACNEWS journalist was detained and questioned over a story he wrote and distributed that did not please the regime. We, the Board, were never advised of facts surrounding the mid-January break-in to our offices and the theft of computers and broadcasting equipment meant for Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) projects in the Solomon Islands, Tonga and Samoa. We have now been informed that MINFO is suspected as being responsible for the break in.

4. More recently there have been attacks on our website, compromising its privacy and ability to disseminate information and stories that are critical or negative of the regime and its media imposition.

5. Training has always been a primary activity of PINA, but there is now no concerted programme of events, and funding providers are unhappy. Not to mention our rank and file members who pine for a concerted programme of training that up-skills our employees not just in editorial areas but across the board in management, advertising, technology and new media.

6. Moreover, PINA has a strategic plan that is growing old from inaction. There is no Business Plan, no work plan and no plan to change membership criteria that would make the outfit more inclusive and more democratic.

Apart from anything else, PINA's presence in Fiji and its feeble attempts to continue there are driven by the private agendas of our president and our general manager, whose backers cannot accept that Fiji's media restrictions are the very antithesis of press freedom and what we are supposed to represent.

Fiji's Media Decree, as it stands, is abhorrent and barbaric, and has forced our colleagues here to suffer in silence (and submission) for fear of retribution. The justification given by Fiji's Attorney-General is based around the crazy notion of 'nation building' which is nothing more than claptrap akin to jingoism and all the other ingredients of what it takes to maintain military rule and dictatorship.

PINA, in this environment, and having lost its edge as an efficient and businesslike organisation, is ineffectual and innocuous. Members have fallen away, and many are reserving their decisions whether to re-subscribe and support the organisation. We now have no members in places like Samoa, French Polynesia, and New Caledonia, and there is a new collective of companies and organisations which have lost patience and will soon form a new structure with which to go into the future.

For my part, I am making a stand here today to issue an ultimatum to our Board: face this pressure, consult past and present members, and bite the bullet to relocate and restructure.

If this cannot be done forthwith, I will add my small weight to the new vanguard that demands change. I shall do the right thing after today, by tendering my resignation unless the Board is prepared to act immediately and urgently. Apart from anything else, I am not prepared to bumble along without financial accountability and transparency due to a complete lack of financial information.

PINA today is at a crossroads, and it is up to my colleagues on the Board to face this reality, and change its direction.

Conclusion

I once worked for a newspaper with the lofty motto 'Truth without fear', and I wished we in the Pacific could all live by that creed in our work as journalists. Sadly, the rule of the gun, and at times the antiquated customs of autocracies and monarchies, prevent that. At *Cook Islands News*, in our own small but passionate way, we have adopted the adage that goes like this:

> For the cause that needs assistance
> For the wrong that needs resistance
> And the good that we can do.

John Woods is managing editor of the Cook Islands News. This address was given as one of a series of University of Queensland World Press Freedom Lectures marking the UNESCO WPFD 2010 conference in Brisbane, 4 May 2010. He subsequently resigned as vice-president of PINA and has helped form the Pasifika Media Association (PasiMA).
www.cookislandsnews.com

3. Fiji: Voiceless in the newsstand

COMMENTARY

Journalists in Fiji continue to try as best they can, working under trying censorship conditions, to ensure that their readers, listeners, viewers and other audience—the people of Fiji—receive as much information as possible that is relevant to their lives and essential for them to make informed decisions.

SOPHIE FOSTER
Assistant Editor, Fiji Times, Suva

> '*YOU are not the same as you were before,' said the Mad Hatter to Alice.*
> '*You were much more muchier. You've lost your muchness.'*
> '*My muchness?' Alice asks.*
> '*In there,' the Mad Hatter says, pointing to Alice's heart, 'something's missing'.*
>
> Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland,* 1865

W E DON'T need a Mad Hatter to tell us that over the past year in Fiji much ground has been lost in the fight for the universal cause of freedom of expression. And with it is going freedom of the press. For those of us for whom it is a daily reality to come face to face with just how much we have lost—how viewless or voiceless our society has become—it would be easiest to simply succumb and say that the heart has gone out of the journalism profession in Fiji. And yet we find that journalists in Fiji continue to try as best they can, working under very tough conditions, to ensure that their readers, listeners, viewers—the people of Fiji—receive as much information as possible that is relevant to their lives and essential for them to make informed decisions.

Delivering the news

In considering the various ways to approach this panel discussion, it was clearly very important that the views of journalists in Fiji are represented. So in April, I conducted a survey of mainstream journalists in Fiji to gather first-hand information on the impact of the past

year of State censorship and control over press freedom. The survey respondents represented around 13.6 percent of the total number of journalists in the country, and just over half of them were women. Every journalist who responded said that they did not feel free to report the news as they found it. What exactly not feeling free to do their job means is journalists in Fiji are being systematically forced into being selective with the types of stories they explore, a direct result of Government censorship since Easter 2009.

Subeditors and news editors—the guardians, if you like, of principled accurate journalism—have seen an obvious trend towards reporters' hands being tied—figuratively. One respondent said: '... gone are the days when a reporter writes a news article and we as subeditors know that it's a balanced report and feel comfortable with it ...' Another respondent lamented that censorship of stories by state officials has made it hard for journalists to produce stories about what is really happening, or to allow for the free expression of the feelings and comments of the people of Fiji over their own situation. I quote: 'These kinds of stories are not allowed ... they want everything to be good and a very positive picture painted all the time. The truth is somewhat hidden by the censorship.' The situation you will find is that journalists in Fiji are being steadily pushed into a position where they have to water down stories to suit censors, which in most cases, results in real stories never being told. It is an extremely frustrating situation—especially for those who know what it is like to work under free media.

Growth of self-censorship

This brings me to my next point—the growth of self-censorship within the Fiji media industry. With journalists now coming face to face with the fact that the whole truth or freedom of expression is not being fully exercised, some are now having to consider self-censoring stories they work on—because they know that unless they do their stories won't meet the censors' approval. The fact that journalists are beginning to consider this course of action—considering going against their professional ethics and beliefs—is a telling factor and a worrying one for the future of freedom of expression in Fiji. But the fact of the matter is that self-censorship is already occurring in mainstream media in Fiji. In the words of one journalist: 'We are restricted in what we can report, especially if it is 'negative' news with regard to the economy, crime,

public service. We also cannot run news items on unions or on human rights advocates unless we tailor the story a certain way that would pass censor's eyes.' Most troublesome for the future of the media industry in Fiji is the fact that the months of hardline tactics against professional journalism seems to be wearing down practitioners. One respondent summed up this new worry, suggesting that to avoid the media being 'told off',

> they should just try and just report on what the authority of the day wants them to report on. Let's see how or what they (the Government) are trying to achieve. Because we have tried our media way and we're being told it's wrong. So let's try their way and see. Just try.

The censorship process

Of all the journalists who responded to the survey last month, 100 percent of them have had stories, pictures, layouts or footage that they or their colleagues worked on censored from publication. One respondent said they had lost count of the number of stories that have been censored: 'It's very frustrating especially when I know that a reporter has done a good job getting balanced news and the fact that it's of public interest. Stressful—the word is not even enough to describe the situation.'

Another respondent said they had a collection of censored articles, with their latest calculations putting the number of censored articles at more than 2000. An example of what journalists have to face, is the treatment provided to an article about an area in the interior of Viti Levu—Fiji's biggest island. In that area—called Yalavou—the people produce a small amount of cash crops as the only source of income. These crops were unable to reach the market because of deteriorating road conditions and a broken bridge. Even public transportation providers stopped operations in the area. So farmers resorted to using bullocks to drag makeshift sleds to cart their crops to the main road. The article began: '... Life drags by an inch at a time in Yalavou ...' Because of that sentence, the respondent said, the article was censored. Another respondent highlighted the fact that censorship seemed to depend on the whims of individual censors, with some stories being allowed in some media and not in others, some passing censorship after being rewritten or even after being presented to other censors. 'There is no guideline on censorship ... it seems to be on a day-to-day basis or on the whim of the censor in charge.'

Issues targeted by censorship

Journalists were asked which issues they felt confident could pass censorship. One hundred per cent felt confident that coverage of community issues would be allowed, which would mean stories about school fundraising events, bazaars and clean up campaigns. In the next highest category, 93.3 percent were confident that sporting stories would pass censorship, followed by business, and industries. Stories about women and infrastructure returned a 73.3 percent confidence rating, while health and legislation changes saw 66.7 percent confident of passing censorship, and 53.3 percent confident on social welfare issues. Respondents were least confident that stories on political parties would pass censorship, as well as the military, police and union issues. Only one in three were confident that stories on the economy, employment issues and rape would pass censorship, while only 40 percent were confident that articles concerning crime, the cost of goods and services, and state and Public Service issues would reach readers, viewers and listeners. Just over half of these respondents said that because there was no criteria for censorship, every issue highlighted above could also be dropped from publication if it painted a negative picture. 'It is difficult to pinpoint which ones can pass censorship because most of the issues which I clicked on can also be dropped by the censors... the bottom line is they approve 'positive' stories, the ones that don't tarnish or provide a negative image of the regime.' The journalist goes on to say that a human interest feature can be dropped if it highlighted the high cost of living or poverty.

How journalists respond to censorship

The survey also attempted to gauge what steps were taken, if any, to ensure that stories, pictures or footage passed censorship. Somewhat surprisingly, given the past year of censorship, 73.3 percent of journalists who responded said they continued to write as normal regardless of whether it would be censored. Not a single respondent said that their stories always passed censorship, while 60 percent said they always ensured there was a Government comment or involvement in the piece. One in five respondents said they did not cover issues that may be banned while 13.3 percent said they did not quote or take pictures of people who may be banned.

Causes for concern

Putting aside the ethics of the situation journalists in Fiji are in, in the words of one respondent it is 'frustrating writing "positive" notes about issues that have negative implications on the public'. But what is 'even more frustrating' according to the same respondent is 'when the everyday citizen is led to believe that publishing a person's view or an issue against the higher authorities' is inciting civil unrest. Many of the journalists who do the work they do in Fiji, do so because they believe that they are in the midst of delivering a public service and a public good—one that involves them being the watchdog for the average citizen, keeping an eye on injustices, insufficiency, inaction, and highlighting these things for the purpose of making a better Fiji. The survey found that 100 percent of respondents did not believe that the work they did as journalists was a threat to national security. That work is now hampered.

Where to next?

The vast majority of journalists said they needed censorship measures lifted in order to do their job better. One respondent said: 'Censorship needs to be lifted so we can get on with our jobs, which is to keep the people of Fiji as informed as possible about decisions and stories which affect their lives.' The survey showed 73.3 percent felt that more journalism and other training was necessary and so were better working conditions. Comments in this area centred on concerns over bills, mortgages and mouths to feed, as well as finding work/life balances and handling stress better. Two-thirds felt that access to counselling for stress and other impacts would help, as well as access to more sources of information. In the words of another respondent: 'I can't work freely now. I always have to consider the media censorship that takes place in the country now... I once saw a *60 Minutes* programme about a dog barking controller device that is attached to the dog's neck. It sprays a sharp spurt of water to the dog's throat whenever he barks. Just days later, the dog is quiet... I feel like that dog now. I can't even express how I felt for the past months.' When the so-called 'watchdog' is silenced, where to then for freedom of expression, where to for the right to know? Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to freedom of expression, through any media, regardless. In Fiji, we live in hope that one day soon we will achieve this.

Sophie Foster is assistant editor of the Fiji Times *in Suva, Fiji. This address was made at the UNESCO World Press Freedom Day Conference at the University of Queensland, Brisbane, 1-3 May 2010 as part of a 'Media freedom in the Pacific' panel.*
sfoster@fijitimes.com.fj

4. PNG: Threats to media freedom and FOI

COMMENTARY

In PNG, the threats to media freedom and freedom of information include political and economic threats against the media and patronage of journalists. Journalists become silenced or 'tamed' when they accept payment from powerful individuals, corporations, political parties and corrupt institutions to see nothing, hear nothing and say or write nothing about the illegal and corrupt excesses of powerful political and economic players.

SUSUVE LAUMAEA
Interim co-chair, Pacific Freedom Forum, Port Moresby

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION and the right to know are universal rights of every man, woman and child on Planet Earth. That freedom and right are aptly pronounced in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and I quote:

> Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

The UNESCO World Press Freedom Day theme is noble but for freedom of information and the right to know to be embraced universally—especially in evolving and emerging nations such as those of the Pacific region—the campaign must come with funding and technical resources give strength and capacity to outreach programmes, advocacies, skills training and capacity building initiatives. Merely paying lip-service to these ideals, while expecting media practitioners, media freedom advocates, academics and trainers of freedom of information, right to know, freedom of expression and freedom of the press to work with nothing to achieve something is an exercise in futility. UNESCO outreach programmes with respect to the theme of this year's World Press Freedom Day and Article 19 must be well funded, proactive and

objective-driven. Those nations that receive UNESCO assistance to implement the WPFD theme must then report on the progress of their endeavours at next year's WPFD global summit.

The topic we have been given to discuss and share is really an opportunity to revisit the sacred values of freedom of information and freedom to express, analyse, interpret and disseminate information that can inform, educate and shape society for the betterment of all humankind. I view freedom of information, the right to know vital information and data on public and national affairs and the freedom to express such information simply and effectively for understanding and use by the community at large as central to the role of journalists and news media they work for.

So, what are the threats to media freedom and freedom of information in the Pacific? Responses to this question may vary from nation to nation subject to the prevailing economic, social and political and cultural situations in respective Pacific states. In order to identify and understand what may be perceived as threats to media freedom and freedom of information in the context of the Pacific region outside of Australia and New Zealand it is equally important to identify and understand the underlying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats confronting media and media practitioners in the small island states of Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia.

In the context of Papua New Guinea especially, and the Pacific Freedom Forum (PFF) in general, let me say there are strengths we can draw on, weaknesses we can convert to positives, opportunities we can harness and share and threats we can neutralise.

Media content—whether written for newspaper, radio or television—is a mirror-reflection of events and developments in our nation states. Those wielding powerful political and economic influence often do not like written, spoken or viewed journalism about their actions and their public utterances and regularly deny that they actually *did* or *said* what was published by a newspaper, announced on the radio or viewed on the television. When powerful economic and political forces turn against the media over what is written, said or viewed, they forget that they create the news and the media merely reports on the economic and political players.

Specific threats

In my view, the major threats to freedom of the media and freedom of information are:

1. *Political and economic threats against and patronage of journalists:* Journalists become silenced or 'tamed' when they are paid by powerful individuals, corporations, political parties and corrupt institutions to see nothing, hear nothing and say or write nothing about the illegal and corrupt excesses of powerful political and economic players. Wealthy advertisers may threaten to withdraw their advertising accounts thereby effectively forcing editors to 'spike' public interest stories that are seen to damage the corporate image of the advertiser. Further threats in this category include lawsuits, threats to deport journalists if they are foreigners and threats to expropriate media ownership if they are foreign-owned.

2. *Management Prerogative:* Management Prerogative is a situation where the management of newspapers, radio and television decide what the news content should be. It is a form of in-house censorship where editors, publishers and the top management team of respective media organisations choose what story is published or broadcast, and what is not. They declare a 'no-go-zone' for certain news stories affecting powerful individuals, advertisers and corporations. It may be done subtly but over time it builds up to become a permanent culture of bias and manipulation of the truth, so that news is written in the 'management way' in order to appease advertisers and sources of revenue streams of newspapers, radio and television stations. Only when government officials and other political influences desist from applying censorship pressures on news outlets will the chances of wealthy individuals and business corporations taking out lawsuits against media organisations be minimised or neutralised.

3. *Military dictatorships:* Freedom of information, freedom of expression and freedom of the press become manipulated to serve the interest of the military dictatorship. Rules are changed, and freedom of information and the ability to express, publish or broadcast viewpoints freely are curtailed or totally removed. One Pacific Island nation, Fiji, is under a military dictatorship at present and press freedom, freedom of information and freedom of expression have become very rare luxuries for the people of that island nation.

Generally, much of the perceived threats against press freedom, freedom of information and the right to know as well as freedom of expression come as the

result of the pursuit of the truth by journalists. Dictatorships tend to suppress the media when it tries to monitor, scrutinise, interpret and assess political and economic power, analyse whether or not power becomes self-serving for the wielder and to investigate whenever power is used corruptly to the detriment of the people's livelihood and their right to happiness, good health and prosperity.

The strength of Papua New Guinea media comes from Section 46 of our National Constitution which provides for freedom of expression as a qualified right of every citizen. That right has been there since the PNG National Constitution came into force on 16 September 1975—the date when Papua New Guinea became an independent nation-state.

Armed with this constitutionally-guaranteed freedom, the impression one would get would be that the PNG media is relatively free and open, up-beat and lively, robust and vibrant to the extent that we have lively sparring sessions with the governing executive, legislature and judiciary.

Media Council of PNG

We are also blessed with a stable, vibrant and forward-looking PNG Media Council that is committed to instilling best practice media conduct in our media organisations and media practitioners, and adhering to the universal best practice ethics of the journalism profession. A subcommittee of the Media Council of PNG, the Media Standards Committee acts as a form of media ombudsman. Its task is to ensure fair and factual reporting by PNG media and that media organisations and media practitioners adhere to highest ethical standards. The PNG Media Council is a recipient of generous funding support from AusAID to assist its media capacity building training programmes in Papua New Guinea.

In speaking to the topic, let me say that journalists in PNG, the wider Pacific—and the world over, for that matter—are free to write news stories and commentaries as long as what is written for newspapers, radio and television is in keeping with the recognised ethical standards of journalism. Where there is freedom, there are also bound to be attempts to usurp that freedom. Often those wielding economic and political power concoct schemes to harass, intimidate and threaten media organisations and media workers for allegedly meddling with their so-called 'holier than thou' corporate, political and public image.

The PNG experience is that once or twice in the last 35 years, resident

foreign correspondents have been threatened with deportation by the government for so-called 'negative journalism' on PNG affairs. A well-known Australian journalist and Pacific correspondent of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (who is married to a PNG woman) was actually deported—but not because he had misreported offensively on PNG affairs. His crime was that ABC Television went to air with an alleged military coup story which—in the assessment of the movers and shakers in the PNG government—reflected negatively on the reputation of PNG political leaders of the time.

From time to time, lawsuits are threatened or taken out against media organisations, journalists and editors; but in most cases these fizzle out and become non-issues. In terms of weaknesses confronting PNG media and media workers, the absence of quality training for journalists, poor pay and conditions of work drive away promising and upcoming journalists from mainstream media into public relations and other spin jobs in the government and private sector where pay, conditions of employment and superannuation are more attractive and secure. A further weakness is the absence of a professional organisation such as a society of journalists which could act as a vehicle to promote the professional concerns of journalists in a media ownership environment that is dominated by foreigners.

Media education

Our opportunity to thrive as a free, vibrant and robust media industry in PNG hangs on our two university-level journalism schools producing quality future journalists. The Divine Word University (DWU) has surpassed the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG) journalism school to become the larger school. UPNG has suffered and deteriorated to a stage where it needs immediate financial and teaching resources such as teaching materials and quality lecturers and tutors. DWU is a recipient of generous UNESCO financial assistance and has improved with such assistance. The same assistance would help the UPNG school and I appeal to UNESCO to give such assistance.

I am not here to rattle off statistics and data on media freedom and the lack of such freedom, nor am I telling harrowing experiences of populations in conflict situations who do not experience freedom of information, are denied their right to access knowledge, have no freedom to express their views and do not have the luxury of a free and democratic media. We in the Pacific are very lucky and privileged people. We live in a peaceful part of the world and

we must always be grateful for what we have despite the limitations and challenges of not having access to all the modern life-support conditions enjoyed by more affluent and economically well-developed nations. Our ancestors have lived in Pasifika since time immemorial and we, and generations after us, shall do likewise if rising sea levels and climate change do not render us extinct.

Ethnically diverse society

Let me say without any malice that my own nation, Papua New Guinea, is not perfect by any standard but we are proud of who we are, how many we are and what we have in terms of our natural wealth, cultural, political and social diversity. We are an ethnically diverse society as well with more than 1000 tribal groupings who speak more than 800 language dialects.

Papua New Guinea is an integral member of the Pacific community of small island states. We are lumped in with sub-regions known as Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia in the vast Pacific Ocean. Some of these island nations—including Papua New Guinea—have been independent for less than 50 years. This year, Papua New Guinea is in its 35th year as an independent nation.

As emerging and evolving nations, we have leap-frogged into the modern Internet age without having faced the trials and tribulations of the various cultural and industrial revolutions experienced by today's mature democracies in the so-called developed world.

The perception that we are 'cut-and-paste or copy-cat democracies' could not be further from the truth. Such dismissive perceptions should not negatively influence the assistance and resources that the peoples of the Pacific need to build their educational, political, social and cultural depth and capacity and to preserve the richness of their ancient cultural, political and social norms.

In our own way, today's Pacific people are proud standard bearers of colourful ancient cultures and civilisations that practised a variety of social democracy based on what modern anthropologists, political and social scientists like to call rule by consensus. We in the Pacific had, and still have, in some island states powerful chiefly structures and systems that oversaw communal and social peace, harmony, good order and basic survival.

Freedom of information and the right to know have been priceless values that have underpinned the existence of the community of Pacific island states since time immemorial. UNESCO would do Pacific peoples proud by involving our media people more prominently in its media training and

awareness programmes and supporting Pacific media generously in our quest to develop skills, capacity and media institutional knowledge.

Susuve Laumaea is interim co-chair of the Pacific Freedom Forum, an award-winning Papua New Guinean public affairs journalist and a columnist on the Sunday Chronicle. *He lives in Port Moresby.This address was made at the UNESCO World Press Freedom Day Conference at the University of Queensland, Brisbane, 1-3 May 2010 as part of a 'Media freedom in the Pacific' panel.*
suslaumaea@gmail.com

5. Samoa: The *Observer* and threats to media freedom

COMMENTARY

Media freedom is not absolute, which is why we also accept that laws must be instituted, to prevent and discourage media owners, editors and journalists from abusing this freedom. The problem, however, is that, whereas these laws are made by politicians to protect themselves and members of the public from a critical media, there are no laws to protect media owners, editors and journalists from angry politicians.

SAVEA SANO MALIFA
Publisher, Samoa Observer, Apia

THE *SAMOA OBSERVER* was founded in a cookhouse in a village near Apia in August 1978. Almost right away it struck problems. The government of Prime Minister Tupuola Efi did not like the idea of this new newspaper publicly revealing all these things that had never been revealed before. But Tupuola was an understanding man and very tolerant too. It was his cabinet ministers who were doing things they shouldn't be—and Tupuola got the blame. He is now Samoa's Head of State, and his name has changed to Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi.

When the paper completed its first year of operation, and we were planning its first birthday party, we invited Tupuola to deliver the keynote address. At first he was reluctant, but he later accepted.

This is what he said:

> I suppose I can get away by saying: 'Happy birthday and I wish you well.' I would like to say a little more.
>
> *The Observer* was launched one year ago by way of indulging the (whims) of a somewhat querulous reporter who believed that he could do it better on his own.
>
> It was a brave effort because striking out on newspaper business in Apia has not by and large brought good fortune, let alone spiritual and mental fulfillment. There was a tendency, therefore, for people to

> say when the first issue appeared on the streets of Apia: 'Very good for a start but can the effort be sustained? One year later I will have to acknowledge, even if a little grudgingly, that the *Observer* has become an established feature of the Apia scenery.

Tupuola goes on:

> It is, one year later, better patronised by business and even by patrons, who ironically, the *Observer* spends most of its time rubbishing. The last reason why I say it is heading happily towards the status of a survivor is that the editor seems, again on the face of it, well able to indulge his idiosyncrasies, even to the point where he feels he can thumb his nose at politicians, bureaucrats, their values and their cocktail parties, and still manage to retain his contacts, 'deep throat' and all.

And he ends:

> Nevertheless, I look forward to another year of being, on turns, lifted, prodded, annoyed, misrepresented—which reminds me that the headings 'PM wants CJ out' and 'Appealing to PM is time wasting' do not represent fair reporting.
> With all that, I hasten to say, I wish the *Observer* many happy birthdays.

Long confrontation

That was in August 1979. Two years later, public servants went on strike seeking better wages, but Tupuola did not grant the request. He believed the opposition Human Rights Protection Party (HRPP) was behind the strike so he refused to listen. As a result, the confrontation dragged on for 13 weeks, which was when the HRPP launched a vote of no confidence against Tupuola in Parliament. The vote was carried and Tupuola was no longer PM.

The HRPP became the new government, and some years later the *Observer* struck worse problems. They included threats to kill from a cabinet minister, physical assault by the minister's brothers, a 'suspicious fire' that completely destroyed the paper's printing plant, web presses and newsprint supplies, editorial and adverting offices.

Soon afterwards the lawsuits from the PM and his cabinet ministers began, all because of our love of press freedom and freedom of information in the Pacific. But then these are the things that all of us who work as journalists in this part of the world, know very much about.

They've been around us for a long time, and I don't think they are going to go away any time soon. I say this because as long as our politicians refuse to totally accept, and respect, modern-day democracy, these threats are going to remain with us for some time yet.

We know and accept that like any other freedom, media freedom is not absolute, which is why we also accept that laws must be instituted, to prevent and discourage media owners, editors and journalists from abusing this freedom.

Quick to sue

The problem however is that while these laws are made by politicians to protect themselves, and members of the public from a critical media, there are no laws to protect media owners, editors and journalists from angry politicians. Besides, whereas politicians are quick to sue editors—saying they've been defamed by them—all that editors can ever do in response is try to defend themselves.

To get an idea as to why these threats from politicians are continuing to be a tenacious enemy of media freedom and the free flow of information, we have to go way back to those pre-independence days when modern democracy was unheard of in our part of the world.

In those days, all island nations had their own forms of democracy, driven by their respective cultures and inherent customs. In Samoa for instance, pre-independence democracy was dictated by the *fa'a samoa* or the Samoan way of life, which was where the *matai*, or chief of the family, made all the decisions.

The reasoning though is sound enough. Since the matai is chosen unanimously by the extended family, based on his ability to adequately provide for that family, and for his kindness and his wisdom, his decisions are also the rules by which the family is governed in peace and unity. In other words, the matai is respected and his decisions are obeyed without question.

Then, on 1 January 1962 along came political independence accompanied by modern democracy, and everything changed. We are now driven by foreign-influenced constitutions that emphasise alien concepts such as human rights, freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom of religion, and so on. While these are inalienable human values, they also diminish the matai's culturally-inherited authority, since under this new form of governance, the non-matai is now just as human and important as the matai himself. Modern democracy becomes a threat to the old system, and it is now looked upon with scepticism and even contempt.

In Samoan politics, what is important is that most of the Members of Parliament are matai. Of its 49 MPs, 47 are matai, and the other two are elected from the 'individual voters'group or those with mixed ancestry. This means the laws Parliament makes are predominantly made by matai, since they make up the majority in the House.

And since matai are so used to being obeyed without question by their families, they think of their roles in Parliament as extensions of their family and village roles. Likewise as politicians, they also do not want their decisions questioned, especially by the media which to them is a foreign institution that is both irrelevant and potentially dangerous.

Common good

And that is where problems start. What they have to accept though is that as their countries' political leaders, they are now occupying much more responsible positions where the whole country—not just their immediate families—is dependent on them. Which means that this time, they have no option but to give up their personal ambitions and devote more of their energies into working together for the common good, not just for that of their own families.

They also have to realise that despite their differing views, both the government and the opposition must sit down in a compromising way and work together to solve tough problems, in order to arrive at meaningful solutions that benefit everyone.

They have to agree that although compromise may sound bad, it is essentially good because through compromise great achievements are possible. And yet so far, that is not working in some parliaments of the Pacific. There is still senseless bickering between the government and the opposition, so that basic public services such education, health, electricity, roads, living conditions in the villages, are in general very much substandard.

In Samoa, where the Constitution can be changed by a two-thirds majority of Parliament, the government has been holding defiantly onto that majority over the last 20 years by using public resources under its control to achieve that purpose, so that compromise has been impossible and even negligible.

Which means that while the government has been enjoying that majority, it has also felt quite free to change the Constitution to maintain its supremacy, while at the same time making new laws, one of which amounts to a deliberate threat to media freedom and freedom of information.

Called the *Printers and Publishers Act 1992*, this law directs publishers and editors to reveal their sources of information to government leaders such as Prime Minister, cabinet ministers, MPs, and heads of government departments, who claim they have been defamed by the media, mainly newspapers.

Previously, however, only the court had the authority to do this. Although other democratic countries have laws similar to this one, we believe they do not have this particular requirement in them. So that when the *Publishers and Printers Act* was passed, Samoa ceased to be democratic in the modern sense of the word.

1992 Printers and Publishers Act frightens sources

Since it seems clear this law was designed to frighten sources from revealing information about political corruption to the media, it effectively undermines media freedom and freedom of information. What's interesting though is that only newspapers are singled out as targets of this law, not TV and radio. Why? We don't know.

When the *Publishers and Printers Act* was passed, however, a lawsuit by Prime Minister Tofilau Eti Alesana against the *Samoa Observer*, claiming he had been defamed by it, was already with the court. It was a private claim. And yet in Parliament, an amount of $783,000 was proposed and approved to pay for the Prime Minister's legal fees. Later, another amount of $400,000 was also approved for the same purpose since the first one was not enough.

And, as if to justify using public funds to pay for the Prime Minister's legal fees, the government announced inside Parliament that all the legal fees to be incurred by public figures who pursue defamation claims against newspapers, would also be paid for by public funds. Meantime, the newspaper has had to pay its own legal fees amounting to hundreds of thousands of Samoaan tala.

Now the question arises: Is that a threat to press freedom and freedom of information?

Anyway that was in May 1998. And only one man stood up in Parliament when those funds were approved and said yes, that it was not only a threat to press freedom, but a breach of press freedom and freedom of information as well.

That man was the Leader of the Opposition, Tuiatua Tupua Tamasese. He told Parliament: 'This decision breaches freedom of speech guaranteed in the Constitution. The Prime Minister does not worry about money because the

government is paying. However, the *Observer* is bound to be hurt financially whether it wins or not, since it is paying for its own legal fees. And if this is what will be happening to newspapers, their freedom to express themselves as required by the Constitution cannot be protected.'

Many lawsuits

Tuiatua added: 'The Prime Minister and other government officials will keep on suing them for defamation knowing well they do not have to part with a cent of their own.'

Tuiatua was right. Soon afterwards, the Prime Minister sued the paper again, and so did two of his cabinet ministers, all at about the same time. This time they sought between $200,000 and $250,000 in damages.

However almost two years later, the Prime Minister and one of the ministers withdrew their lawsuits without explanation. In other words, their intentions were to intimidate, frighten, and discourage alleged government corruption from being exposed. And the third plaintiff, his own claim still in court, was jailed in 1999 for plotting the murder of another cabinet minister. He is still in jail today.

But then, as if that was not enough, the Prime Minister later used the British law of criminal libel which carries the penalty of six months in jail against the *Observer*. And yet it was an ancient law meant to quell rebellion and treason in Britain's colonies around the world. We believe that New Zealand, Canada or Australia do not have this law in their law books. However, it was being used in Samoa in an attempt to put the editor behind bars.

And so, as we can now see, governments in the Pacific are quite capable of using any old law to stifle press freedom and freedom of information in their countries. In Samoa, not only is the government constitutionally able to make any new law it wants, it is also financially able to use foreign lawyers and judges to carry out its desires legally.

In the case of the late Prime Minister suing the newspaper for defamation a few times, his legal fees were paid for by public taxes, as were the expenses of lawyers from aboard he had hired to represent him, as well as for the expenses of the judges who presided in those cases.

Troubling admission

At the start of the Prime Minister's defamation action against the *Observer*

in 1998, he declined to give evidence. In response, Mr Justice Bisson, a New Zealander, admitted this was the first time in his knowledge that a plaintiff suing for defamation had refused to appear in court to explain how he had been defamed. It was a troubling admission but then he allowed the trial to go ahead anyway.

Later, when Mr Justice Bisson delivered his judgment on 16 September 1998, he said he did not take into account that the Prime Minister's case was being funded by the Samoan government. He then denied the Prime Minister's full claim of $600,000 for his legal costs and awarded just $75,000 instead.

And on the Prime Minister's claim of damages for $400,000, Bisson said he took into account that the plaintiff was only 12.5 percent successful, and awarded him $50,000. What about the other 87.5 percent? Isn't defamation either 100 percent successful or there is no defamation at all? Anyway, by then the government—with Parliament's endorsement—had $1.18 million allocated for the Prime Minister's legal costs and legal fees.

And then on 3 October 1998, a notice seeking payment of a total of $125,000 in judgment and costs awarded to the Prime Minister was filed in the Supreme Court. It said the full amount must be paid within three weeks or the plaintiff 'will petition the Supreme Court for an order to wind up the Samoa Observer Company Limited'.

Two days later, another notice was received saying an 'interest of 8 percent per annum' had been added. It also said failure to comply could lead to 'bankruptcy proceedings taken against you'.

By this time, the manner in which these legal proceedings had been handled clearly showed it was an attempt to bankrupt the newspaper. First, the Prime Minister sued for defamation, then he arranged for an overseas Queen's Counsel to defend him, later the government hired an overseas judge to hear the case, and then armed with its two thirds majority in Parliament, the government got that substantial sum of money approved for the PM's legal fees Later when the hearing began, the Prime Minister refused to give evidence, and yet he was supposed to explain how he had been defamed, which was also when he would have to be cross-examined. The judge appeared shocked but he allowed the trial to go ahead anyway. Afterwards when he delivered his ruling, he said: 'Had the Prime Minister elected to open and give evidence in the usual way in support of his case, there would have been a substantial saving in time and expense'.

Criminal libel

At the time however, the Prime Minister's claim of criminal libel was still pending. And then he passed away and everything changed. The court matters—including the criminal libel charge— were discontinued, the threat to institute bankruptcy proceedings was not heard of again. Life returned to near normal. But did the Prime Minister have to die for justice to be finally made? And did the threats to media freedom and freedom of information in the Pacific stop then?

No, they did not. A few years ago in Honiara, Solomon Islands, editor the Rev John Lamani was in his *Solomon Star* newspaper office when armed soldiers—or were they police officers?—walked inside, and at gunpoint, demanded that he hand over a large sum of money; they then revealed their orders were from a cabinet minister. Later the money was handed over.

Just over a year ago in Suva, *Fiji Sun* editor Russell Hunter was woken up in the middle of the night by soldiers. They said he was wanted at Suva's Queen Victoria Military Barracks for questioning, and he was taken away by force. Back in his house, his frightened wife and their young daughters remained in confusion, not knowing what was happening. But then instead of taking him to the Suva barracks, Hunter was driven across the country to Nadi where he was led inside a passenger aircraft and deported to Australia. Hunter is now working for the *Samoa Observer* as its development editor.

And then you ask: What kind of people would do this sort of thing as if it was quite normal? Don't they have families of their own, wives, children? Sad to say, we're living in what has been lovingly described as a free and peaceful Pacific, and yet where is that freedom and that peace?

Samoa is not free. Despite glowing reports that it is free, deep inside it is not. It is a country sobbing day and night under the weight of suppressed freedom. Even the Church, which is supposed to be the pinnacle of freedom, is not free. Perhaps those church leaders who are so involved in politics should become politicians themselves, and let the rest go free.

Fiji, similarly, is far from free. Voreqe Bainimarama talks freedom but acts suffering. He wants corruption cleaned up, but then he also wants the media shackled, so that they are unable to do the cleaning up. Solomon Islands is not free, nor is Papua New Guinea, despite what their government supporters are saying. The only freedom in the Pacific is poverty. How then can the media be free in a place where there is no freedom?

Dictator accusation

Today, it is interesting to see that Samoa's current Prime Minister, Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, is having a go at Fiji's strongman Bainimarama, accusing him of being a dictator. He is troubled that Bainimarama has recently announced the introduction of a decree to control the Fijian media, and another one to legally protect him and his soldiers—in case they are accused of wrongdoing.

Now Tuilaepa, who has been looking for ways over recent weeks to attack Bainimarama for reasons we are not sure about, simply could not hold back.

'If anything,' he said, 'the decrees are an admission of guilt. They cannot face the consequences of what they've done to their country, so they cloak themselves in immunity decrees.' He advised that 'democratic governments that want to tackle institutional corruption need a free, strong and robust media'.

Now that sounds good to the ear.

And he went on: 'You know, Bainimarama's regime came to power to address presumed corruption in government. So if anything, they should strengthen the media, and give them the freedom to do their work. Not try to strangle them to death.'

Words into action

Wonderful! And so, perhaps Tuilaepa should now turn those words of his into action, and remove all the restrictive policies threatening to stifle media freedom and freedom of information in his own country, Samoa. He can start by repealing the *Publishers and Printers Act 1992*, declare defunct the policy allowing public funds to be used for the legal fees incurred by government leaders suing newspapers for defamation, and throw out the ancient British law of criminal libel from Samoa's law books. That would be a big improvement.

And then, to really convince us he intends to make Samoa's media 'free, strong and robust' so that they can help him and his government 'tackle institutional corruption', all he has to do is introduce an *Official Information Act* in his country. That will surely endear him to the leaders of the free world who are just tired of having to deal with small time dictators, and only then can he successfully achieve what he is striving so hard for.

And when all that is done, he can sit down then and tell himself that unlike Voreqe Bainimarama, he has noble ideals driving him

forward. That way, media freedom and freedom of information in the Pacific is finally assured, and he is the man who has made that happen. But today, celebrating World Press Freedom Day one more time reassures us that we all need media freedom. In a world where political wars are continuing to gobble up the world's resources, many developing countries are impoverished, so that people dying there from starvation and malnutrition is commonplace. And as brutal dictatorships are causing many to suffer in silence, so that they are deprived of their pride and dignity, media freedom should remain the sustaining lifeblood of democracy.

Therefore as journalists, we should never neglect our role as watchdogs of our governments, since the moment we do, the little freedom we're enjoying today is likely to be taken away from us.

Savea Sano Malifa is publisher and editor-in-chief of the Samoa Observer. *He gave an earlier version of this address at the UNESCO World Press Freedom Day Conference at the University of Queensland, Brisbane, 1-3 May 2010 as part of a 'Media freedom in the Pacific' panel.*
sanomalifa@yahoo.com

6. Vanuatu: Accountability from the Subsistence Age to the Internet Age

COMMENTARY

Vanuatu governments are not used to being held accountable. They act like they do not owe any explanation to the public about what they are doing. Rather than taking the initiative, successive Vanuatu governments seem to address significant issues only if they are forced by sustained public pressure in the private media to do so.

MARIE-NOELLE FERRIEUX PATTERSON
President, Transparency Vanuatu, Port Vila

PEOPLE living in westernised, First World countries have lived with a free media as part of the fabric of society for so long that it probably does not occur to them to ask themselves what it would be like not to have it. However, if you live in a country that does not have media freedom, or where media freedom is a very recent phenomenon, you perhaps understandably take it much less for granted. Even when a country's constitution guarantees such things as freedom of expression, as Vanuatu's does, that does not necessarily mean that free expression and FOI occurs automatically and nor does it mean it is accepted—even by those who signed the Constitution.

Vanuatu is not the only country that has had to move from the Subsistence Age to the Internet Age in a generation or two. Extreme change happening extremely rapidly is not easy for anyone to cope with so it can hardly be surprising that there are 'growing pains'. Moving from being a traditional closed 'chiefly' society where tribal 'big men' rule almost unquestioned to an open democracy with all the freedoms that implies, is bound to create friction.

Most people do not know what their own constitution says and do not understand well how their democratic system works, or is meant to work. Having said that, in some ways Vanuatu faces just as many practical problems as we

do ideological issues. The simple broadcasting and receiving of information presents huge problems. For years, until it was fixed recently, people living in the outer islands (who represent more than half of the population of 240,000 people) had no way to receive radio broadcasts. Vanuatu has more than 80 islands, most of which are inhabited.

And even when it is possible, because there is no mains electricity available beyond the outskirts of the main towns of Port Vila, on Efate Island, and Luganville, on Santo Island, people must buy batteries for their radios. This means they need cash, something that is perpetually in short supply in the rural areas and smallest islands. Because there is no electricity outside of the towns, there is also no television reception and no Internet access.

There is also a very limited and unreliable distribution network to the outer islands that inhibits the delivery of newspapers. Air freight is expensive and shipping services are very erratic. The only development that has considerably increased communication and information has been the recent introduction of the mobile phone, with small solar chargers, allowing some form of communication in many islands, reportedly covering about 80 percent of the country

The government controls much of the flow of information within the country. The only local television channel is government-owned, so there is no analysis of government policy or actions, and certainly no criticism. There are no regular press conferences or media releases, or meaningful interviews with politicians where they are asked any difficult questions that might make them feel uncomfortable.

Vanuatu governments are not used to being held accountable. They act like they do not owe any explanation to the public about what they are doing. Rather than taking the initiative, successive Vanuatu governments seem to address significant issues only if they are forced by sustained public pressure in the private media to do so. And even then their responses are often wishy washy, avoiding the central issues.

A recent Coroner's report on the death of a re-captured prisoner in custody highlighted serious functional problems in the Police Force. In Vanuatu, both the police and the Mobile Force come under the control of one umbrella organisation.

This Coroner's report and the reactions (or lack of reaction) to it represent perhaps the most serious potential threat to the freedom of information and democracy. The members of the Vanuatu Mobile Force resisted in an extra-

ordinary way when questioned by the New Zealand Supreme Court judge who was sitting as the Coroner. Witnesses were reportedly threatened and Coroner was temporarily evacuated from the country.

The Coroner's report also stated that the force did not appear to have any loyalty to the rule of law and to the country but only to themselves and this represented a threat to the country. This was a rather chilling reminder of what has happened in neighbouring countries like Fiji.

The politicians and media are all very cautious, and only one somewhat meek and mild response from the government eventually came out after the Coroner's report. So the potential threat to democracy is also a threat to freedom of information.

We had an attempted coup staged by the police in Vanuatu in 1997, allegedly to fight perceived widespread political or official corruption.

At the same time, there is no shortage of criticism of official misconduct in articles, editorials and 'letters to the editor', although letter writers often do not provide their names, and editors allow letters to be published anonymously. Radio talkback shows are more informed and more critical, expressing people's dissatisfaction with how their leaders are behaving. Transparency Vanuatu also publishes a half page every week in the national daily newspaper that has allowed many important issues to be raised. But despite all this, overall the public's tolerance of official misconduct often seems unlimited.

It would be fair to say that Vanuatu also needs a much higher standard of journalism, especially investigative journalism, whereby serious issues are properly looked into and followed up, and government officials are held to a much higher standard of accountability.

In some ways, journalistic reticence is understandable. In the past, journalists have been threatened and even deported. The Australian woman who owned Vanuatu's first private newspaper was deported in the 1980s by Father Walter Lini's government. The current publisher of the *Daily Post* newspaper has over the years been threatened and beaten up, and he was deported by former Prime Minister Barak Tame Sope, before returning to the country and eventually becoming a Vanuatu citizen.

The publisher, Marc Neil-Jones, was assaulted recently because of criticisms he wrote about the Vanuatu Mobile Force and the Correctional Services Department. Not long ago, a young pregnant Vanuatu journalist lost her baby after being assaulted by someone who was not happy with her reporting.

There were no consequences for any of the people involved in these incidents. No investigations, no charges, no prosecutions.

At election times almost no coverage appears in the media about the individual candidates or their policies, or the backgrounds of those who have already been discredited in the Ombudsman's public reports.

On the other hand, as has been repeatedly mentioned, in the Pacific people tend to be passive in general and accept authority without too much question. Furthermore, they hesitate to challenge each other in their small communities. The 'wantok' system has been acknowledged for the limitations it creates in matters such as prosecution of alleged wrongdoers.

We are even handicapped by the fear among most people that they can somehow be harmed by 'black magic' or *nakaimas* and other superstitions. Transparency Vanuatu from its onset has recognised this situation and has put its priorities on the awareness of citizens, going out in all the islands to do workshops on legal literacy and introducing civic education in the curriculum. We also work regularly on media projects with journalists and the people.

In summary, nothing will change unless there is a fundamental change of heart within official circles—and I am tempted to ask when or where has that ever happened? And this needs to be accompanied by more rigorous investigative journalism, and perhaps most importantly of all, an increasing appetite from the general public for a higher standard of government at all levels.

This, of course, all takes time, and in Vanuatu, it is likely to take decades. Even modernised, westernised countries that were industrialised more than two hundred years ago are still evolving and maturing and we are still unearthing one corruption scandal after another, whether that be political, commercial, sporting or personal.

But change has happened elsewhere, so I am optimistic that it can also occur in a small, recently born country like Vanuatu. If I wasn't, I would not be here.

Marie-Noelle Ferrieux Patterson is president of Transparency International in Port Vila. She gave an earlier version of this address at the UNESCO World Press Freedom Day Conference at the University of Queensland, Brisbane, 1-3 May 2010 as part of a 'Media freedom in the Pacific' panel.
transparency@vanuatu.com.vu

7. The Pacific right to know in the Digital Age

COMMENTARY

The explosion of mobile telephony in some islands of the South Pacific has literally connected our peoples to the rest of the world and opened up access to a wide variety of information. While there are some who view this expansion as a huge threat to the traditional media, the ongoing development and expansion of this technology presents the traditional media with enormous opportunities to reach a wider audience at basically little cost. But of course there is also a financial cost to the consumer, which in the case of the South Pacific can be a significant issue.

FRANCIS HERMAN
Team Leader, Vois Blong Yumi *project, Vanuatu*

Vanuatu—a case study

VANUATU boasts a total population of 234,000 (VNSO, 2009), just under 22 percent of whom live in its two largest urban municipalities, Port Vila and Luganville. The remaining 78 percent live in rural and remote areas. The average Vanuatu household consists of at least five people. Women account for close to half the population while people under the age of 25 make up almost 40 percent of the total population.

For a country with a small but fast-growing population (which is rising at 2.8 percent a year overall, and at 4.1 percent annually in urban areas), Vanuatu has a fair share of media outlets which are showing some signs of maturity and growth.

The government-owned Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation (VBTC) runs the only free-to-air television channel whose coverage is limited to the capital Port Vila, and three radio stations, including Radio Vanuatu (which has national coverage). There is also a private commercial radio station and three other small FM community-based stations. Vanuatu also has a daily and two weekly newspapers, along with a monthly magazine. Three pay-TV operators cover the country, and applications are pending for a new

privately owned free-to-air commercial television station and several more community radio stations.

Daily newspaper circulation is under 3000, with an estimated 10 television sets and 254 radio sets per 1000 (VNSO, 2009).

However, real explosion in growth has been in the telecommunications sector. Telecom Vanuatu Limited (TVL) currently has an estimated 7400 land-line users. It has close to 2500 internet subscribers and predicts this can grow to between 6000 to 10,000 subscribers. This growth forecast is based on planned reductions in internet charges, the development of electricity supply grids, and greater user knowledge of computers. The other operator—Digicel Vanuatu—introduced its internet mobile phones in mid-2009, but has not released figures on its subscription base. Estimates of total mobile phone subscribers put the figure at about 20,000 shared between TVL and Digicel Vanuatu.

Only 16.7 percent of the total population is connected to land lines. And while mobile coverage reaches a little over 80 percent of the country, only 8.6 percent of all people have active mobile connections. Under 2 percent of the population is estimated to have access to the internet via fixed lines, but this jumps to 10.6 percent if you include the internet access provided by new mobile phone operator Digicel Vanuatu.

To illustrate the impact of mobile phones, VBTC introduced talkback radio in June 2009 when Radio Vanuatu could only be heard in Port Vila. In July of the same year, VBTC switched on new shortwave transmitters providing 100 percent coverage of the islands. Two months later, the number of callers jumped 347 percent. This monster increase can be attributed to the expansion of radio coverage, and the increased availability of mobile phone connection in rural Vanuatu.

A quick glance at International Communications Union (ITU) statistics on internet penetration in 34 countries under the Oceania umbrella (excluding Australia and New Zealand), has the figure at 26 percent of the total regional population. For instance, internet penetration in the following countries is: The Cook Islands (42.1 percent); Fiji (10.9 percent); Kiribati (1.8 percent); Papua New Guinea (2 percent); Samoa (4 percent); Solomon Islands (1.7 percent); and Tonga (6.9 percent). I note that these are 2009 figures which do not take into account mobile phone internet connectivity.

With increased internet penetration and the growth of mobile telephony, more and more Pacific Islanders have access to information via the internet. Some are even able to listen to their favourite local radio stations or view their

television stations on their mobile phones. And earlier this year the Blackberry was introduced into Vanuatu.

So where does this leave the traditional media outlets?

Traditional media

Despite the introduction of television in the Pacific in the 1990s, and the advent of new, computer-based media, radio remains the staple medium for accessing information in our small and highly vulnerable island states. Newsprint is expensive, heavy to transport and susceptible to heat and humidity. All these factors tend to mean that the Pacific print media is an urban medium. Television on the other hand, while a relatively new phenomenon in our region, is fast expanding and gaining in popularity. But it still remains expensive.

There is little evidence that the introduction of television has been at the expense of radio. Instead TV has increased the range of media options for those people who can afford to buy television sets. Television viewers, like newspaper readers, are more likely to be town and city dwellers rather than rural villagers or remote islanders—unless of course they have access to pay television.

As well as access to the media, people generally have a wider value choice of content and programming. Here too, the situation has changed over the past two decades. Until the 1980s, almost all radio in the Pacific was government-owned, and operated on public service principles—and largely pushed the state's agenda. Subsequently two changes occurred: one was the introduction of private commercial radio; and the second change was the commercialisation (if not full privatisation/corporatisation) of the public broadcasters.

Multilingual Pacific nations have always had access to several radio stations to cater for their various language communities. By itself, however, this does not constitute programming choice. The advent of commercial radio introduced more choices (albeit limited) and has thus increased competition between broadcasters.

The introduction of a broad range of radio formats has forced the radio sector to embrace the introduction of strategies that have seen radio formats become more refined than those offered by television. This targeting in recent years has most likely played a part in the stability of radio's overall audience. This stability might also be attributed to the fact that radio is a medium built on habit.

There is no evidence to suggest that technology in our region has influenced or changed listening or viewing habits. This 'absence of influence' is more than likely to intrigue some media consultants because it contradicts earlier theories that internet radio and television streaming would radically transform the consumption habits of our audience.

However, with the availability of mobile phones with radio capabilities, one suspects this could see an upward movement in the choice of locations where people can now listen to radio. These assumptions obviously need to be studied further.

The fragile and vulnerable economies of Small Island States make it unrealistic to assume that there will be a rapid shift away from traditional ways of listening to radio or watching television. The exorbitant cost of internet and mobile services in our region put them out of reach of the average person.

Development priorities for island governments put mobile phones and internet, low down on the list of basic needs for most of the Pacific people's who predominatly live in rural and remote areas. Infrastructure and basic services such as roads, bridges, water supply systems, health centres, agriculture and education are a higher priority for regional governments. And in the event governments do develop an e-governance network, most are definitely not influenced by the peoples' right to know that we in the media are struggling to protect. It has more to do with expanding government services to the people.

The right to information

Digital technology has literally begun to open up communications in our island countries it has given people more opportunities to access a wide range of information faster and without detection. Groups such as the media, civil society, the private sector and governments are taking advantage of this technology, both to push their own agendas and to inform the community.

Sadly, despite all the available technology, we have heard distressing stories over recent days about the struggles that many of our colleagues in the region are forced to endure because of pressure from their respective governments. We have heard stories about repressive measures adopted by some governments to control the flow of information. We heard about efforts by some regimes to control access to the internet and curtail peoples' right to receive and impart information.

And despite the exertion of these controls in pursuit of the new 'journalism of hope' model promoted by some, thankfully the internet remains relatively

free from the clutches of the official decrees and regulations that have successfully silenced the media and controlled the free flow of information.

But, apart from these impediments the right to information, the right to free expression and press freedom, there remains the challenge facing so many people in our region who are deprived of these rights—not because a regime introduces a decree, but because they do not have access to the technology or because they simply cannot afford it.

Accessibility to broadcast medium (largely radio) will remain integral to where and how we get information. The challenge (given the relatively low income levels of the majority of Pacific islanders) remains—can we ensure that those of our people who cannot afford the new technology will NOT be deprived of the same level of content available to the owners of these 'new media' gadgets?

For a moment, let us mentally swap places with people living in isolation 700 kilometres from the nearest urban centre who are unemployed or whose yearly earnings are less than the price of a 42-inch flat screen television. They definitely cannot afford such luxuries as 'radio on demand', pay television, broadband, HD radio and television, daily newspapers, and podcasting. Is the media morally obligated to provide them the same (or close to the same) level of 'service' and 'content'?

Yes, I agree we cannot ignore the commercial reality of the world we live in. But I believe we do have a responsibility to provide our peoples with an exceptionally high level of content and a balanced diet of information, even if they are not in the privileged position of being able to afford the new digital phenomena.

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Francis Herman is a former chief executive of the Fiji Broadcasting Corporation and is now team leader of the Vois Blong Yumi project in Vanuatu which is managed by Australian Broadcasting Corporation's International Project's Division. An earlier version of this address was made at the UNESCO World Press Freedom Day Conference at the University of Queensland, Brisbane, 1-3 May 2010.
fherman voisblongyumi@vanuatu.com.vu

8. Freedom of information – Challenges and the way forward

COMMENTARY

While the media has demonstrated that it can cover global and governance issues, it neglects the potential to be a responsible partner, especially in developing countries such as Papua New Guinea and to an extent the Pacific. However, this partnership can be strengthened with the media industry and government departments and agencies working to improve their ability to work with each to achieve social, economical and political mileage. Freedom of information and a free media is about upholding the freedom we currently enjoy in a democratic society, as it is about our freedom to express ourselves and be informed appropriately and responsibly.

CHRONOX MANEK
Chief Ombudsman, Papua New Guinea

BRINGING together professionals from various places and institutions to share knowledge is a step in the right direction, especially in the area of developing information sharing strategies that will lead to improved leadership and management systems and practices and the promotion of good governance and accountability. Papua New Guinea has encountered numerous challenges to the media and fledgling democracy since independence in 1975. It is fortunate that media freedom is enshrined in PNG's Constitution, and that all threats to this freedom have been vigorously and successfully opposed. Many of our politicians, and other prominent leaders, and influential citizens all declare they are firm believers in the principle of a free media and will strive to embrace it. There are instances however, where many comment negatively when the media spotlight is turned on them, their institutions or their cohorts.

Against the backdrop of critical challenges facing the media and the Constitutional right to freedom of information, the media continues to fight its battles. Global trends are such that Papua New Guinea is not exceptional in linking up with the rest of the world's electronic and print media information dissemination and delivery systems.

Global trends are ever present in the PNG-cultured media which embraces social norms such as the principles of governance and respect. But the way in which the PNG media embraces the international media in my view has become all-persuasive in eroding national cultures and traditional values, with so many overseas programmes aired locally, from BBC and ABC programmes on our free to air radio networks to pay TV broadcasts of CNN, and a number of channels broadcasting imported Bahasa, French and Korean-language content.

Foreign influence in the form of material covered and presented in the Papua New Guinea media is so huge. There is a great need for greater focus on PNG-oriented programmes, events and issues. The recently launched Government television network, Kundu Two, shows PNG is beginning to embrace this notion of broadcasting homegrown material, but much more needs to be done to improve the service to its audience as there is still scarcity of local content.

Freedom of information

There are three main components that underpin the right to information in many Pacific states, including Papua New Guinea. Firstly, the right to request information from public authorities and from private bodies where information is needed for the exercise or protection of a right. An applicant for such a request does not have to justify why he or she needs this information from public bodies. In the case of PNG, which has yet to enact an *Information Act* to regulate the provision or non-provision of requests for information, the National Court in 1998 made an interesting decision when a defendant (to an originating summons), who was a member of the National Parliament for Tambul-Nebilyer Open Electorate, refused to release to the plaintiff information relating to funds granted to him for use in the electorate.

The plaintiff sought to enforce his right under Section 51 of the Constitution to ensure accountability of the defendant Member of Parliament.

Section 51 of the Constitution states:
1. Every citizen has the right to reasonable access to official documents, subject only to the need for such secrecy as is reasonable in a democratic society in respect of …
2. Provision shall be made by law to establish procedures by which citizens may obtain ready access to official information.

The National Court held the following:
1. A citizen has the right to access information relating to monies

     allocated to his or her Member of Parliament where the monies are allocated to the member for use in the electorate.

2.   The freedom of the citizens to access the courts to enforce his or her constitutional right cannot be precluded by the normal operations of constitutional offices and state organisations.

The Court went on to say that 'the National Court is not necessarily restricted to the causes of action that are usually found in common law system. The National Court has an unlimited jurisdiction and this jurisdiction includes many matters which originate in rights and responsibilities referred to in the Constitution.'

This is a clear indication that the courts in PNG will not hesitate to use the available provisions in the Constitution relating to rights and freedoms to promote access by interested applicants to information from governmental bodies.

The second component underpinning the right to information is the actual availability of information and the maintenance of records. The right to gain access to information is one thing, but the actual availability of records is even more important. In many government departments, record-keeping and maintenance continues to be given very low priority. It is legitimate to ask why proper record keeping, data collection and the training of personnel for such purposes have never been on the agenda of an average public body. It is only recently, through various initiatives with our development partners, that we in Papua New Guinea have begun to realise the importance of record-keeping and information management, and of developing various systems to accommodate our needs in this regard.

It is important therefore that governments within the Pacific region have systems in place to process requests for information, including effective records management systems to enable the systematic, structured and well-managed release of information.

Properly trained records and information management staff are necessary, with an independent leader within their operational 'set up' who should be tasked to supervise them and ensure that requests are properly screened and processed.

The final component of the right to information is the duty of government to provide certain baseline information proactively on a routine basis before

requests for information are made, in order to encourage and promote trust between the government and its people. This would enable the FOI process that many democratic governments preach and claim to stand for.

In Papua New Guinea, the government now uses its government-owned National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) to disseminate government policies and initiatives on both radio and television through its 'government talk-back show programme'.

The public are also invited to phone in and make comments and observations. This is a good start and should be encouraged with wider publicity on the issues to be covered with reasonable time allowed for debate or information dissemination. Having said that, this freedom must be also kept in check by the exercise of great responsibility.

The PNG Ombudsman Commission often oversees the demarcation of these constitutionally-guaranteed freedoms and stresses how important it is for leaders who oversee the information industry to uphold their integrity.

Likewise, those operating and managing information and its dissemination have the same obligation to behave with integrity and honesty in all their dealings. So the questions I want to pose are:

- Are we honest in how we conduct ourselves?
- Are we honest in our dealings with colleagues, stakeholders and the wider community?
- Are we biased, opinionated, or being bribed to do what we do?

The Media Code of Conduct/Ethics should act as a reminder to guide us in our day to day roles and responsibilities, by putting the public good, and that of our organisation, ahead of our own interests. In the PNG context, former Chief Ombudsman (the late Sir Charles Maino—1995) raised concerns about the power of the media and its need to be responsible. He said that the freedom of the press was not a privilege but a responsibility that required the mass media to be independent, impartial, honest and fair in all mediums and methods of reporting.

Another former Chief Ombudsman, Simon Pentanu, encouraged more investigative reporting to complement the role of the Commission in fighting corruption as a way to encourage accountable and transparent governance.

The recently proposed Moses Maladina Bill/Amendment leaves a lot to be desired. In fact, the proposed Amendment has now created a wave of public

debate calling on Parliament halt the Amendment affecting the powers of the Ombudsman Commission.

One of the amendments to the Constitutions (S.27(4)) removes the power of the Ombudsman Commission to issue directions that will prevent the abuse or misappropriation of public funds by a leader. This provision (power) is used to protect the integrity of the leader and the integrity of the Government in Papua New Guinea and has been used on previous occasions to protect millions dollars of public funds from misuse by leaders.

The availability of information or reasonable access to such information can be difficult to obtain without the existence of expressed provisions of the law, but due to the energy and drive of the media in PNG, they are able to provide a platform to voice people's frustrations and concerns in relation to issues affecting PNG's use of the broad provisions of the Freedom of Information (S.51) and the Freedom of Expression (S.46) sections of the Constitution.

Conclusion

It is important to note that the role the media plays in society is not for them alone, but for all professionals and laity and civil society, in facilitating transparency and greater awareness of important issues. The media has an important role to play as a watchdog in exposing corruption and it also has a role in safeguarding development and investment. The PNG media and their counterparts in other Pacific Island countries have the same roles, but the conditions under which they exercise their profession may vary due to economical and social factors.

The media has no obligation to publicise any specific issue; and addresses each issue as it arises. Media agencies or companies are in the business of generating revenue, often at the expense of good governance, although they also offer free publicity and coverage to a range of 'good causes' advocated by charities, human rights NGOs and the like. However, to prevent (such outcomes,) the further erosion of good governance and promote greater corporate social responsibility by the media, those in the front line of journalism should impart factual information, report in a fair and balanced manner.This can help to open up doors to development and investment in an ethical way.

While the media has demonstrated that it can cover global and governance issues, it neglects its potential role as a responsible partner, especially

in developing countries such as Papua New Guinea and in the Pacific more broadly. However, this partnership can be strengthened if the media industry and government departments and agencies can work with each other to achieve social, economic and political progress within their regions and abroad.

Finally, freedom of information and a free media is as much about upholding the freedom we currently enjoy in a democratic society, as it is about our freedom to express ourselves and be informed appropriately and responsibly. I conclude with this question— is there a limit to freedom of information? And when should information be controlled and tailored to meet demands and needs?

In my view, this should only be done when requests for freedom of information are seen to question or overstep the boundaries of national sovereignty and the national interest as provided for under section 51 of the PNG Constitution.

Chronox Manek is the Chief Ombudsman of Papua New Guinea. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the UNESCO World Press Freedom Day 2010 Conference at the University of Queensland, Brisbane, 1-3 May 2010.

9. Media freedom and state control in Tonga

ABSTRACT

The Tongan Constitution guarantees free speech and media freedom but this guarantee has often been misunderstood and misinterpreted by the media industry, the government and politicians alike. Freedom of speech was integrated into the Constitution from the beginning in 1875. However, as history has shown, this freedom has often been altered to silence opposition and critics' voices. As early as 1882, the Tongan media had their first confrontation with the government and in 2003 saw a parallel incident unfolding. This article examines the influence of state control on the media in Tonga through an analysis of two case studies from different eras in Tongan history: the *Niuvakai* newspaper in 1882 and the *Taimi ʻo Tonga* newspaper in 2003.

Keywords: constitution, freedom of speech, media freedom, *Taimi ʻo Tonga, Niuvakai*,

SIONE FATANITAVAKE VIKILANI
Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, Japan

THE NEWS media in Tonga has come a long way since its introduction in the mid-1980s. However, little has changed since then, especially when it comes to government interference. More than a century later, the media faces similar problems as confronted it in its early days. This article examines two different case studies more than a century apart but demonstrating similar problems regarding media freedom in Tonga. It also examines the parallels between these two cases which can substantiate the argument that government interference hinders media freedom in Tonga. The case studies of the *Taimi ʻo Tonga* newspaper and the *Niu Vakai* emphasise what Siebert et al. (1956, p. 7) argued, that the press and other media in any country always take on the 'form and environment of the social and political structures within which they operate'. They argue that in order to understand

how the media works, one should have knowledge of the socio-political system of that country.

Siebert et al. (1956) examined what they call the four basic theories of the press which also apply to other media. The first of these theories is the *authoritarian* theory which suggests that truth is regarded as the prerogative of the powerful elite. It is the press or the media's duty to support the government in power and the elite. According to Siebert, the authoritarian state system requires direct government control of the mass media. This type of situation is especially easy to recognise in pre-democratic societies where the government consists of a limited and small ruling class. The media in an authoritarian system are not allowed to print or broadcast anything offensive to the government because the government will punish anyone who questions the state's ideology.

Although the form of government in Tonga is a Constitutional Monarchy, the powers given to the King by the Constitution make his rule rather more authoritarian, close to an absolute monarchy. It may seem extreme to apply the word 'authoritarian' in Tonga's case, but it is appropriate taking into account the form of government. This was true in the two periods analysed here, though recently government has improved its relationship with the media. In Tonga, the government does not have direct control over the mass media apart from its own media. As will be discussed below, the government in these two different periods went as far as amending the Constitution to punish those that questioned its authority and its ideologies.

The second of Siebert's theories is the *libertarian* theory. Here the media is free, the government encourages criticism of itself, and everyone is free to voice their own opinions.

The third theory is the *Soviet* theory, where private ownership of the media is not really encouraged by the state, and where the media have a responsibility to the state and the people. This is based on the postulates of Marx and Engels.

The fourth theory is *social responsibility*, where the journalist is responsible both to the society and the government.

Tonga's current situation could be said to fall somewhere between social responsibility and authoritarian, based on the current form of government. In the Constitution, the freedom of the press is guaranteed but in practice the government can largely do whatever it wants, shifting Tonga towards the authoritarian paradigm. The timing of amendments made to the Freedom of

the Press Clause in 2002 of the Constitution supports the argument proposed here. The first and the last amendments were made when the *Niu Vakai* and the *Taimi 'o Tonga* were beginning to gain popularity, and also when both were highly critical of the government.

It is also important to note that in almost all countries in the Pacific, like Tonga, the Constitution guarantees the freedom of the media. However, interpretations of this freedom often cause tensions and conflicts between the media and the government. Clause 7 of the Tongan Constitution guarantees freedom of the media.

When the Constitution was enacted in 1875 it read:

> It shall be lawful for all people to speak write and print their opinions and no law shall ever be enacted to restrict this liberty. There shall be freedom of speech and of the press for ever but nothing in this clause shall be held to outweigh the law of slander or the laws for the protection of the King and the Royal Tonga Family. (Clause 7, Tongan Constitution)

In 1882, Shirley Baker, a former Wesleyan missionary who became premier of Tonga, amended Clause 7 by passing two acts through Parliament with the consent of the King. The first was *An Act Relative to Newspapers* and the second was *An Act Relative to Sedition* (Barney, 1974, p. 355). As will be discussed in the case study, the acts were aimed at the *Niu Vakai* newspaper and its editor who was an expatriate.

The freedom of the press clause of the Constitution remained for another century before it was amended again in 1990. The amendment in 1990 was just to replace the word 'slander' with 'defamation' and 'official secrets'. This did not cause any commotion because the amendment did not change anything but instead added official secrets and defamation. Interestingly, the inclusion of defamation was not needed because there is a separate defamation law.

After the 1990 Amendment:

> 7. It shall be lawful for all people to speak write and print their opinions and no law shall ever be enacted to restrict this liberty. There shall be freedom of speech and of the press for ever but nothing in this clause shall be held to outweigh the law of *defamation, official secrets* or the laws for the protection of the King and the Royal Family.

After the 2003 Amendment, the act now reads:

> 7. (1) It shall be lawful for all people to speak write and print their opinions and no law shall ever be enacted to restrict this liberty. There shall be freedom of speech and of the press for ever but nothing in this clause shall be held to outweigh the law of slander or the laws for the protection of the King and the Royal Family.
> (2) It shall be lawful, in addition to the exceptions set out in sub-clause (1), to enact such laws as are considered necessary or expedient in the public interest, national security, public order, morality, cultural traditions of the Kingdom, and privileges of the Legislative Assembly and to provide for contempt of Court and the commission of any offence.
> (3) It shall be lawful to enact laws to regulate the operation of any media.

The addition of sub-section (3) in Clause 7 made way for the *Media Operators' Act* and also the *Newspaper Act*. Lopeti Senituli, former director of the Tonga Human Rights and Democracy Movement and now press secretary and political adviser to the Prime Minister, argued that there was no need for the amendment because the government had at its disposal legislation to protect itself, the royal family, and the public in general from media abuse (Senituli, 2003, Planet Tonga Online). The amendment to the Constitution followed a previous attempt by government through the Privy Council in an Order of Ordinance to ban the *Taimi 'o Tonga*, according to Senituli.

> The Bill emerged in the wake of Chief Justice Gordon Ward's judgment on 26 May 2003 that the Ordinance passed by the King and the Privy Council on 4 April 2003 placing a further [fourth] ban on the *Taimi 'o Tonga* was void. Later the same day the Chief Justice added a ruling, delivered in Chambers, placing a temporary injunction on another Ordinance passed by the King and the Privy Council on 16 May that purported to invalidate *Taimi 'o Tonga's* license [sic] to trade [fifth ban]. He further restrained the government, its 'servants or agents or otherwise howsoever' from revoking *Taimi 'o Tonga's* license until 'further Order of this Court'. (Senituli, 2003: Planet-Tonga online)

Though the amendment made in 2003 was judged to be unconstitutional, both amendments have yet to be repealed which can only be done through the Legislative Assembly.

Case studies: The *Niu Vakai* and *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspapers

Tonga may be a constitutional monarchy but in reality the power to rule was mostly in the hands of the King, as indicated earlier. Terje Steinulfsson Skjerdal (1993) argued that,

> The media in an authoritarian system are not allowed to print or broadcast anything which could undermine the established authority, and any offence to the existing political values is avoided. The authoritarian government may go to the step of punishing anyone who questions the state's ideology. (Skjerdal, 1993: 3)

This was the case with both *Niu Vakai* and the *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper. The argument here is that, although Tonga may not be an authoritarian state, the environment and form of government and the country's socio-political structure does in some aspects reflect the authoritarian model.

The case studies of the *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper and the *Niu Vakai* emphasises what Siebert, Peterson and Scramm (1956, p. 2) argued that the press (or other media) in any country always takes on the 'form and colouration of the social and political structures within which it operates': 'Especially, it reflects the system of social control whereby the relations understanding of these aspects is basic to any systematic understanding of the press.'

The *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper was Tonga's most persecuted newspaper in modern history while *Niu Vakai* was the government's main opposition in the 19th century. Tonga's form of government certainly affects or has some sort of influence on the media as these case studies will show.

The Niu Vakai

The *Niu Vakai* newspaper was owned and published by a European, Robert Hanslip, who was an influential trader living in Tonga in the 19th century. The newspaper was first produced by hand in October 1881, but was later printed by Rev. James Egan Moulton, former headmaster of the Wesleyan Church-run school Tupou College,[1] using the school's printing press. *Niu Vakai* was associated with a dissident movement of minor chiefs in the eastern district which was labeled by the King and his Prime Minister (Baker) the Mu'a Parliament. The movement was not an actual Parliament itself but was seen as a threat. This was due to the support they got from the nobles, traders and also the expatriate community, especially Hanslip, who, according to Campbell (2001, p. 104) was Baker's long time enemy. Rutherford

(1977) claimed that these minor chiefs were eliminated under the government's new *Land Act* and no longer recognised by law. Hanslip saw the opportunity and advised the members of the Mu'a Parliament, assisting them with their petition to the King. It is thought that the *Niu Vakai* was established out of this movement. Hanslip was writing about the dissatisfaction of the Mu'a Parliament and also voiced concerns about some of the laws that Baker was imposing, **not only on the Tongan people but also on the expatri**ate community who strongly disapproved of some of the laws which saw as Baker's doing. Tungi, one of the high chiefs of Mu'a, was an opponent of the King and supporter of the Mu'a Parliament but he was also in line to the throne. Hanslip saw an even bigger opportunity: should Tungi become King, he (Hanslip) would become his adviser.

The first edition of the *Niu Vakai* covered the grievances of the Mu'a Parliament and their petition to the King. The members of the Mu'a Parliament also gained support from the European community and the *Ha'a Havea* chiefs who were the King's traditional rivals.

Hanslip was also active in collecting 2000 signatures for a petition to Queen Victoria to remove Baker from Tonga, which he forwarded to the British consul (Rutherford, 1977). The Mu'a Parliament members were arrested and charged. This gave Hanslip more to write about and he criticised the government with the support of letters to the editor, not only in the *Niu Vakai* but also in *The Fiji Times*.

In March 1882, the government established a Tongan-language newspaper, the *Tonga Times,* or *Ko a Taimi 'o Tonga,* to counter what was being printed in the *Niu Vakai*. Prince Wellington Ngu was the editor but, according to Rutherford (1977), the *Ko a Taimi 'o Tonga* was only providing Hanslip with more material to criticise.

In June 1882, Baker wrote to the British High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, Sir Arthur Gordon, asking to issue a writ of prohibition against Hanslip that would have allowed for his deportation from Tonga (Barney, 1974, p. 356). This was based on five types of complaints, made by Baker against Hanslip. This including inciting the natives against the King and his government, and this was all related to the articles published by the *Niu Vakai* newspaper. However on a visit to Tonga in July 1882, Sir Arthur signed a judgment that refused to find Hanslip 'to be dangerous to the peace and good order of the Western Pacific' (Ibid).

Sir Arthur's decision was a blow to Baker and the government and it made them more determined to silence *Niu Vakai*. Hanslip was banned from parliamentary sessions which were one of *Niu Vakai's* major sources of information. According to Barney (1974, p. 355) it was during these sessions that the new press restriction laws were passed.

This was the first time that the free press provision of the 1885 Constitution was amended. This was approved by the Legislative Assembly and Privy Council and signed by King George Tupou I on the 23 October, 1882. 'On the same day, King George approved three Acts in apparent contradiction to the free press and free speech spirit of the Constitution (1) a *Sedition Act*; (2) *Act*

Table 1: Press law passage and publication dates in Tonga		
	Passed	Published
Sedition Act	Oct 23, 1882	Nov 22, 1882
Newspaper Printing	Oct 23, 1882	Nov 22, 1882
Constitution	Oct 23, 1882	April 16, 1883
Libel	Oct 23, 1882	March 14, 1888

Source: Barney [1974, p. 355]

to Regulate the Printing of Newspaper; and (3) a libel law' (Ibid).

These Acts were no doubt directed at *Niu Vakai*, which was seen by Baker and the government as a threat. The *Sedition Act* provided for prison terms from two to 24 years for anyone who cursed or libeled the King, or who attempted to incite rebellion against the laws, or 'for any person who shall do anything to produce hatred or contempt to Government or the King'. The law could be violated by speaking, writing or printing (Ibid.).

The *Act to Regulate the Printing of Newspapers* required a permit from the Minister of Police in order to print and distribute a newspaper. To get a permit, the publisher was also required to find two bondsmen with £500 each to act as guarantors.

Hanslip was deprived of his printing facilities. Barney (1974, p. 357) suggested that this was because *Niu Vakai* was assisted by the principal of the Methodist School, Rev. Moulton, who was Baker's most vocal critic. Moulton was prosecuted on various charges related to the use of the printing press, including seditious actions towards the Tongan government and the King, and was later found guilty on some of them.

The Taimi 'o Tonga

When the newspaper was established in 1989 it was to be Tonga's first independent newspaper in contemporary Tonga. It was first published in Tonga before being moved to Auckland, New Zealand, for mostly financial reasons, including access to the Tongan diaspora in New Zealand, Australia and United States. The *Taimi 'o Tonga* was published by the Lali Media Group but it is now owned and published by the Taimi Media Network, owned by Kalafi Moala, a Tongan who is also an American citizen and his wife Suliana.

From the beginning of *Taimi 'o Tonga*, Moala claimed that it was established as an alternative media outlet, to give the people the real news and views not provided by the established government media.

The newspaper covered news and issues that government-owned media would never have covered. These included the sale of Tongan passports, the activities of some of the King's business partners, and the overpayment of members of Parliament, among other issues.

The *Taimi 'o Tonga* was seen as a nuisance to the government and the royal family, including then minister of police Clive Edwards. The newspaper was banned from government press conferences and government departments were told not to give information to the *Taimi 'o Tonga*. According to Kalafi Moala, as more measures were taken against the paper, the more leaked information it received from people inside the government (Moala, 2002, p. 48). The paper has historically presented views antagonistic to many government ministries and was a staunch supporter of the democratic movements in Tonga, although it does not represent or directly endorse any single candidate during elections.

In February 1996, the *Taimi 'o Tonga's* assistant news editor, Filokalafi 'Akauola, was arrested for publishing a letter to the editor criticising the Minister of Police. Ironically, the charge was made under the libel law introduced by Shirley Baker back in 1882 when he amended the Constitution (Barney, 1974, p. 357).

Also in the same year, the *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper had published an article on a motion tabled in Parliament to impeach the then Minister of Justice, the Hon. Tevita Tupou, for leaving for the Atlanta Olympics without permission from Parliament.

On his return, Tupou read about the impeachment in the *Taimi,* and called the Parliament office because he was unaware of the impeachment. He was told that the Legislative Assembly had not received any motion and that the

article was inaccurate. Parliament officials checked who made the leak and 'Akilisi Pohiva voluntarily confessed to leaking the information. It was later found that the motion was still with the Acting Speaker of the House and was yet to be submitted or tabled.

The three defendants were summoned by Parliament where their fates were to be decided. The three defendants Kalafi Moala, Filokalafi 'Akau'ola and 'Akilisi Pohiva were charged under Clause 70 of the Constitution where it states;

> ….if anyone speaks disrespectfully or acts in a dishonourable way in Parliament, the Parliament is authorised to jail this person for 30 days. And while the house is in session, someone writes something, deceiving the House or threatening a member … the person will be allowed to be jailed for 30 days. (Clause 70, Tongan Constitution)

The legislative assembly voted 19 to two in favour of a guilty verdict and sentenced the defendants to 30 days in jail. The jailing made headlines throughout the Pacific and attracted huge media attention, both in Tonga and abroad. International media organisations and human rights groups called for their release, condemning the move as a threat to press freedom (see Moala, 1996; Robie, 1996; and Pohiva, 1996). The three defendants were later released after being in prison for 26 days. In his ruling, Chief Justice Hampton stated:

> The conclusion I have reached therefore, is that the procedures adopted were unfair. They were not in accordance with the Constitution or with the Legislative Assembly's own Rule made under the Constitution…. it follows that I determine that the detention of the applicants in these circumstances is not lawful and I make an order that each of them be released forthwith from detention. (Supreme Court of Tonga *Moala & ors v Minister of Police* (No 2) [1996] Tonga LR 207)

This was hailed as a victory for the *Taimi 'o Tonga* and freedom of the press but in 2003 the newspaper was banned from Tonga under Section 34 of the *Customs and Excise Act.* The Chief Commissioner of Revenue issued a notice prohibiting the import of the newspaper citing three main reasons;

1. *Taimi 'o Tonga* is a foreign paper, owned and published by a foreigner

2. *Taimi 'o Tonga* is a foreign concern with a political agenda
3. *Taimi 'o Tonga's* continuous standard of journalism is unacceptable (cited by Robie, 2003).

The 'foreign ownership' that the ban was referring to was Moala's American citizenship. At this time, the law allowing dual citizenship was not in place. It could be argued that the concern of the government over the Tongan media was partially genuine, meaning that the standard of journalism was very low, and there was no mechanism outside government to regulate and deal with grievances against the media. But the way the government went about doing this was seen as unlawful.

The *Taimi 'o Tonga* at the time, like most of the independent media outlets in Tonga, did not have qualified journalists with formal media training. The majority of the journalists received their training on the job. In an interview on Radio Tonga, Kalafi Moala admitted to the fact that journalists working for the independent media did not have the qualifications that government journalists have, and this made their work more difficult. The way in which issues are covered at times without balance could be attributed to the lack of experience.

After the Supreme Court overturned the ban, declaring it unconstitutional, the government imposed another ban on the *Taimi 'o Tonga* under the *Publication Act*. The Supreme Court again ruled that the ban that was illegal. However, the government introduced the *Media Operators Act*, the *Newspaper Act* and an amendment to the Constitution in an apparent effort to tighten official control over the media. This was another blow for the *Taimi 'o Tonga*, for its survival and also for the freedom of the press. The *Newspaper Act* required that all publications be licensed and the *Media Operator's Act* stated that foreigners could not own more than a 20 percent stake in a media company. The *Media Operator's Act* was seen by many as a direct attempt by the government to have more control of the media and to silence the *Taimi 'o Tonga*. Kalafi Moala, editor-in-chief of the *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspapers, described the amendment as childishness. 'And even though these legislations [sic] were directed at the *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper, it ended up affecting other newspapers or print media that are sometimes critical of government policies and practice' (Moala, 2006b).

The government set a 31 January 2004 deadline for licence registration, and those who dared to violate the Acts were punishable by a fine of approximately US$5,200 or up to one year's imprisonment. After the deadline,

only church-owned publications, government-owned publications and a pro-government newsletter were granted licences. All the independent newspapers, including the *Taimi 'o Tonga*, the quarterly news magazine *Matangi Tonga* and *Kele'a*, a newspaper owned by pro-democracy Member of Parliament Pohiva, were denied licences.

Tongan journalists and overseas media organisation accused the government of denying licenses to publications they feared would report critically on state affairs.

The ban on the *Taimi 'o Tonga* was felt throughout Tonga. People were starved of alternative news and views. During the ban, the *Taimi 'o Tonga* was still in circulation in New Zealand, Australia and the United States. According to Moala (K. Moala, personal communication, 2007), the sales increased in New Zealand because people were sending copies to their families and friends in Tonga. The ban led to calls from media organisations, human rights organisations and politicians from New Zealand and Australia to lift it.

'Alani Taione, a New Zealand resident, confronted the government's ban. He flew to Tonga for his father's funeral and on arrival he openly distributed copies of the banned newspaper at the airport, even giving some to customs officers and some people at the airport. He was quickly arrested by the police and charged with the importation and distribution of the banned newspaper. Thousands of people including religious leaders marched with a petition to the King demanding he lift the ban. The case was referred to the Supreme Court and Taione along with the three other defendants challenged the legality of ban on the newspaper. The case also put into question the Amendment to Clause 7 of the Constitution, the *Media Act* and the *Newspaper Operators Act*.

The Supreme Court case was heard on the 21 June 2004 and concluded on the 15 October 2004. After hearing submissions from both the defendants and the plaintiffs, the Chief Justice, Robin Webster, delivered a lengthy verdict. Prior to this particular court case, there were other court cases between government and the Lali Media Group which published the *Taimi 'o Tonga* at the time. In his verdict, Chief Justice Webster outlined in chronological order the events and how the legislation in question came into force. In his concluding remarks, he said:

> I found that both Acts were inconsistent with Clause 7 … and therefore void in terms of Clause 82 of the Constitution. I very much regret having to make such a finding in relation to legislation, which has had

the approval of the Legislative Assembly, the Cabinet, the Privy Council and His Majesty the King, but it is the clear duty of this Court under the Constitution to do so and thus to uphold the Constitution. (Supreme Court of Tonga, *Taione vs. Kingdom of Tonga*, 2003)

Chief Justice Webster painted a vivid picture of the essence of freedom of expression when he quoted Voltaire: 'I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.' (Ibid.)

This was a blow to the government and a victory not only for the *Taimi 'o Tonga* but for media freedom. It was not long after the trial that Clive Edwards, the Minister of Police, who was accused by both Moala and the media of being the main instigator of the legislation, was forced to resign. In an exchange of words on *Matangi Tonga* Online, the then Crown Prince Tupouto'a (now King Geoge V) accused Edwards of being the one behind the move to introduce the new media law, after Edwards had first accused the crown prince of initiating the move.

> The truth is that Clive Edwards believed himself clever enough to harness the Constitution in his personal vendetta against the *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper and its editor, Kalafi Moala. He failed in this endeavour because of his ignorance of the law. Proof of this unfamiliarity with court procedure is that he was unable to understand that changes to the Constitution should be attended by changes in the judge's rules if they are at all to succeed. This is why his measure failed—something I probably forgot to mention to him at the time. (Tupouto'a, *Matangi Tonga* online, 2005)

Moala agreed with the Crown Prince and said that he knew that Edwards was 'after him' (Moala) personally:

> So we have always known that and I am quite thrilled, in fact, that the Crown Prince or someone from the royal family and high up in the government is able to come up with that. (Radio New Zealand International Online, 26 January 2005)

Both the claims by the Crown Prince and Moala about Edwards' personal vendetta against Moala appear to be supported by an earlier interview with Edwards on Radio Australia about the *Taimi 'o Tonga*.

> If you have a rag that's scurrilous all the time and you have to try and correct it all the time, why should we put up with it? You tell me, why should we put up with a paper that has no standing here? (Bradford, 2003. Radio Australia Online)

Discussion

The cases of the *Niu Vakai* and the *Taimi 'o Tonga* have both suggested that little or nothing has changed in the attitude of the ruling elite towards the opposing media. In traditional Tongan culture, criticising authorities was unprecedented and was never head of until the arrival of the media. It was probably a shock to Baker and his government that the *Niu Vakai* was moving from the tradition of *faka'apa'apa*[2] and voiced the chiefs and people's concern in his newspaper. However this could also be attributed to Hanslip's influence as an European and his personality.

In the *Taimi 'o Tonga*'s case, though Kalafi Moala was born and raised in Tonga, he spent a lot of his time abroad and in different countries. His Western education background and exposure to democratic ideologies influenced his approach and distancing himself from 'lapdog journalism' to the more objective Western journalism. This Western influence was evident in his newspaper's strong line of opposition to the authorities and the push for democracy.

Though a century apart, the form of government ruling Tonga has not changed. One of the important points to note in both cases is that kings, George Tupou I in the *Niu Vakai's* case and Tupou IV in the *Taimi 'o Tonga,* were never at the forefront of the debate. Baker was the most vocal and opponent of the *Niu Vakai* and the amendments made to the Constitution were attributed to him. Barney (1974) argued that it was evident that the amendment was done in Baker's favour.

> .... [T]o extend the protective umbrella to include criticism directed at either holders of high position or members of His Majesty's government. In either case it seems the laws were intended primarily to subdue criticism of the King's European premier [Baker]. Barney (1974, p.357).

In the *Taimi 'o Tonga*'s case, it was former Minister of Police Clive Edwards who was accused of being responsible for introduction of the media laws. This was revealed by the then Crown Prince Tupouto'a, who is now King George V, in a letter to the editor on the *Matangi Tonga* online, where he

accused Clive of being the one behind the amendment. This was a claim that Edwards denied.

> I read in Clive Edwards's interview that he accused me of proposing the *Media Operator's Act.* This is wholly untrue but as Edwards is running for Parliament his wild accusations are, I suppose, understandable. I was opposed to the anti-media laws on the grounds that they were not our style of doing things in this country. (Tupouto'a quoted in *Matangi Tonga* Online, 21 January 2005)

The Crown Prince in another letter accused Clive Edwards of having a personal vendetta against the *Taimi 'o Tonga* owner, Kalafi Moala. The irony here, as Edwards later revealed, was that Tupouto'a was the Regent at time when the Acts were presented to the Privy Council. However Tupouto'a (2005) in reply suggested that the ministers were united in agreeing for the proposed *Media Bill* a day before Parliament voted on it.

> However, the Privy Council presented me with a unanimous front in favour of the legislation; I felt it was not the place of the Regent to go against their wishes. Had the dissenting minister stuck to his guns, I might have felt confident in ordering the entire matter dropped and the legislation withdrawn. (Tupouto'a in *Matangi Tonga Online*, 25 January 2005)

The power of the monarchy also poses an interesting question. The monarch in Tonga has often been referred to as a 'dictator' or an 'absolute monarch'. These two cases suggest that the monarchy does not act on its own but on advice from his ministers and advisers. Tupou I was acting on Baker's advice and, as Tupouto'a suggests in his letter, despite his opposition to the media legislation, he had to act upon the minister's advice. Clive Edwards was the most vocal promoter of the Media Bill and was able to win support from the other ministers for the Bill which the Regent did not wish to vote against, even though he later revealed he was opposed to it. Because the monarchy is well protected by the Constitution, it could be argued that in both cases, those who were close to the monarch were also trying to either seek vengeance over their political critics or try to protect themselves as well. Kings George Tupou I and Taufa'ahau Tupou IV never went public and criticised the media in either cases. In fact, when Kinga Taufa'ahau IV was premier

he wrote a letter to the government-owned *Tonga Chronicle,* defending the newspaper against criticism from Parliament.

The *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper and the *Niu Vakai* were both seen as mouthpieces for the opposition or dissident voices. A *Fiji Times* contributor cited in Barney (1974) describes the impact of the *Niu Vakai* newspaper:

> In Parliamentary parlance, it was the mouthpiece of his Majesty's opposition in Tonga and a very remarkably warm opposition it constituted....... From a Tongan standpoint it was, however admirably calculated to attain its objective, and it became a weapon which its writer used to very considerable advantage. (Barney, 1974, p. 355)

The parallel here is that both newspapers were deemed to be mouthpieces of the opposition to the King and his government. The *Taimi 'o Tonga* was accused of fronting for the pro-democracy movement and their support was no secret, and it was the same with the *Niu Vakai*'s support for the discontented chiefs and their supporters, especially the expatriate community in Tonga. Both the *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper and the *Niu Vakai* were taken to the highest court in the country where they were both freed. Sir Arthur Gordon, who was sent from the Colonial Office in Fiji, ruled against deporting Hanslip for allegedly inciting the natives against their King and government, a charge made by Baker. The *Times of Tonga* on the other hand was banned several times and the Supreme Court's decision went in their favour when Justice Webster ruled that the Media Legislation were un-Constitutional.

In the case of the *Taimi 'o Tonga* according to Robie (2004a, p. 112) the new Clause 7 effectively overturned the constitutional guarantee of a free press and the new Clause 56A was a direct attack on the existing constitutional position of the law courts. 'The intended effect of Clause 56A is to nullify the role of the courts in constitutional rulings because there would no longer be anybody with the power and authority under the Constitution to adjudicate. This would effectively "put an end to the rule of law in Tonga"' (cited in Robie, 2004a, p. 113)

Both the *Niu Vakai* and the *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspapers were supporting anti-government movements. The *Niu Vakai* supported the Mu'a Parliament, which was seen at the time as a threat to government. The underlying cause was the fight between Hanslip of the *Niu Vakai* and the premier, Shirley Baker. In the case of the *Taimi 'o Tonga*, the newspaper supported the pro-democracy

movement, which was the greatest threat to the government. The then Minister of Police, Clive Edwards, was viewed by many as the man behind the ban on the *Taimi 'o Tonga* and also the introduction of the *Media Operators Act* and the *Newspaper Act*. However, Clive Edwards denied all these accusations of him having a personal vendetta against Moala and the *Taimi 'o Tonga*. Edwards was accused by both Moala and the then Crown Prince of having a personal vendetta against Moala and the *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper.

One of the charges made against the *Taimi 'o Tonga* was about their standard of journalism, which officials deemed unacceptable. This was clearly an excuse by the government because the *Taimi 'o Tonga* was not alone. One of the greatest challenges to the media in Tonga is the lack of experience among the media staff. When Kalafi Moala was asked in an interview about some of the problems faced by the media, he mentioned their lack of experience. Pesi Fonua, editor of the *Matangi Tonga* Online, and president of the Media Council of Tonga, went even further when he said:

> The biggest threat to media freedom in Tonga at the moment is the media itself, simply because it has not raised the standard of journalism in the country, and worse, engaged in running down each other instead of presenting fair reporting on what is happening [and] instead of campaigning and deliberately confusing the poor people. (P. Fonua, personal communication, 2007)

As Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1963) argue, under the authoritarian model the government will take any steps possible to punish anyone that opposes it. The government tried every possible means to silence the *Taimi 'o Tonga*—by imposing five different bans, one after the other. Also, on the day the Supreme Court declared the ban on the newspaper illegal, the government, through the Privy Council, passed two special Ordinances which were later again declared illegal by the courts.

Apart from what happened in 2003, the media in Tonga have indeed been largely free from any government persecution. As we have seen, in the case against the *Taimi 'o Tonga*, the judicial system has been the main defender of the freedom of the media. The *Taimi 'o Tonga* was not the only media outlet that suffered under the section of the Act dealing with foreign ownership.

Culture is often seen as challenging the freedom of the media. This is not just the case in Tonga but throughout the Pacific. In Tongan society there is the

King, then the nobles, and then the commoners below, including journalists. Journalists are often caught in the middle, wondering whether to report issues which are culturally sensitive. These include issues that involve the royal family or nobles. Such issues are often not covered because of not only fear of repercussions but also because of *faka'apa'apa* (respect). An unpublished dissertation by Paul O'Connell cited in Robie (2004b, 30) suggested that:

> Whether culture is being misused to censor freedom of speech or whether it has tacit effect as self-censorship, it must nonetheless be acknowledged as a factor preventing democratic freedom of expression. (O'Connell, in Robie, 2004b, 30)

As mentioned above, both the *Niu Vakai* and the *Taimi 'o Tonga* were attacked for their influence on local culture. In conflict situations, the authorities often use culture as a pretext when trying to silence anyone who dares to speak against the establishment.

These cases also highlight the impact that the media can have on government policy. This has often been challenged on the basis that the extent of the media's impact on government policy has not been tested fully. However it could be argued that the government's media policy and the amendment to the Constitution was directly a reply or attack on the opposing media critics.

Notes

1. A college established by the Wesleyan Missionaries in 1886
2. Respect. In this context the commoners were expected to do what they are told without questioning, so questioning the authorities and voicing their concerns were unheard of.

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Sione Fatanitavake Vikilani is a doctoral candidate at the Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, Japan, and a former television and Radio Tonga news editor.
sione.vikilani@gmail.com

10. The Fiji media decree: A push towards collaborative journalism

ABSTRACT

This article evaluates Fiji's *Media Industry Development Decree 2010* by drawing a link between it and the Singaporean media laws and the collaborative role the Fijian regime claims journalism should play in the nation's development. A number of sections of the Fiji Media Decree are similar to the *Singapore Media Development Authority Act 2003* and it contains similar harsh fines and jail terms. The Fiji Media Decree makes provisions for a Media Industry Development Authority and a Media Tribunal, both of which are appointed and controlled by the government. The Authority has wide-ranging powers to search, seize and censor, and refer to the Tribunal incidents which it considers are in breach of the decree. The government minister responsible for administering the decree has a direct say in the make-up of the Media Industry Development Authority and may give directions to the Authority in the performance of its duties and the exercise of its powers. This study explores the powers vested in the government via these two proposed bodies and what they will mean for journalism, freedom of speech and media freedom in Fiji. It also shows the merits of a 'collaborative journalism' model for a developing nation but explains how the design is flawed under the conditions it has been imposed in Fiji.

Keywords: censorship, collaborative journalism, development communications, development journalism, freedom of speech, media law

REGGIE R. DUTT
Bond University, Gold Coast

Introduction

FIJI, a small South Pacific island nation, with a multiracial and multicultural population of less than a million, has experienced four *coups d'etat* since it gained independence from Great Britain in 1970. In 1987, military strongman Sitiveni Rabuka executed the first two coups (Lawson, 2004; Scobell, 1994; Robie, 2009a) and failed businessman George Speight,

aided by a group of renegade elite soldiers, attempted the third one in May 2000 (Cass, 2002; Lal, 2000; Robie, 2009a; Tedeschi, 2005). Fiji Military Forces commander Frank Bainimarama deposed Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase's elected government in December 2006 in Fiji's fourth coup in just over two decades (Craddock, 2009; Robie, 2009a). Bainimarama claimed he would not abrogate Fiji's acclaimed 1997 Constitution but President Ratu Josefa Iloilo did so in April 2009 after the Appeals Court overthrew a previous ruling and declared the Bainimarama regime illegal. The regime instituted strict media censorship in Bainimarama's second coming as Prime Minister and promulgated the *Fiji Media Industry Development Authority Decree* (Media Decree) in June 2010 to control the media.

This study explores the Media Decree, the powers vested in the various sections and how it affects media freedom and freedom of speech in Fiji. Parallels with Singapore's Media Development Authority are drawn. The study will consider the development journalism role the government would like the Fiji media to perform and how the law and the situation in Fiji hold up against the other established academic theories of journalism.

Background and overview
Post-December 2006, the local and overseas media were largely free to criticise and report on the activities of the military government and any opponents of Bainimarama as they had done in the past. Two expatriate newspaper publishers were deported in 2008 and one in 2009 and several journalists were detained and questioned for negative stories about the regime but the military did not stop the media from continuing to publish and broadcast criticisms (Mark, 2009; Robie, 2009b). This was a curious fact of Bainimarama's coup—whereas the tendency of most coup leaders would be to completely muzzle the media and control the flow of information, Bainimarama let the media report relatively freely and be critical of his military-backed government. Perhaps Bainimarama's ideology was that the mirage of a free media might give him and his proclamations some degree of legitimacy. Whatever the case, local news media were critical of the military regime (Walsh, 2010a), none more so than Fiji's major daily, News Limited owned *Fiji Times* and the locally owned Fiji Television Limited's news programmes. Following the coup, Qarase filed a case in court, challenging that the overthrow of his government as unconstitutional—the High Court ruled

against him. In April 2009, the Court of Appeal overturned that ruling, declaring the military government illegal and called on the President to appoint an independent interim government to take the country towards democratic elections. Bainimarama (and the then President Ratu Josefa Iloilo) did not accept the court's decision and abrogated the Constitution and sacked the judiciary (Dodd, 2009; McKenna, 2010).

After the constitution was abrogated, the military government placed '*sulu*-censors' in all newsrooms to oversee the news content and ensure that no 'negative' stories about the regime were published or broadcast. President Ratu Iloilo proclaimed himself head of state and appointed Bainimarama as the Prime Minister again (Dodd, 2009). Bainimarama claimed that there would be a new order in Fiji where the media would assist him in his vision of creating a more peaceful, harmonious and progressive Fiji. A public emergency regulations (PER) decree was promulgated to give the military government powers to limit among other rights, the freedom of expression and freedom of speech. Initially, the decree was to run for one month, after which the media would be able to report freely again. However, the regime extended the emergency regulation and announced it would only cease when the government introduced new media laws.

A year later in April 2010, the military regime introduced a draft media decree for consultations and subsequently promulgated it with some changes to the fines, penalties and jail terms. It also changed the make-up of the Media Industry Development Authority and then introduced a provision to appeal against the decision of the Media Tribunal (Sayed-Khaiyum, 2010). The decree incorporated the existing Fiji Media Council Media Code of Ethics and Practice as well as the General Code of Practice for Advertisements, Code of Advertising to Children and a slightly altered Television Programme Classification Code. Part 2 of the decree establishes a Media Industry Development Authority and gives it wide-ranging powers that include censorship of news media content, monitoring compliance with the code of ethics and the powers to require or seize documents from journalists and media organisations. Part 8 establishes the Media Tribunal.

Reaction to the decree

The international media mainly focussed on Part 7, which regulates foreign ownership of the media in Fiji to just 10 percent of shares. Commentators contended that this move was directed at News Limited-owned *Fiji*

Times—Fiji's leading newspaper in terms of circulation and popularity, and a vehement critic of the Bainimarama regime (Cooney, 2010; Dorney, 2010; Robie, 2010a; Walsh, 2010a; McKenna, 2010). The decree was promulgated in late June 2010 giving *Fiji Times* just three months to sell its shares to Fijian citizens or face closure. News Limited newspapers in Australia led the charge against Bainimarama, claiming that restricting foreign ownership of the media was a restriction of media freedom. The Fiji Foreign Affairs Minister, Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, retorted saying that his Australian counterpart, Stephen Smith, was being 'astigmatic and racist' in suggesting that 'that only an Australian-owned company can purvey press freedom' and that it was 'an insult to other media companies operating in Fiji' (Smith misleading, 2010). The Fijian regime said that it could no longer allow foreign interests to set Fiji's national news agenda. Attorney General Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum argued that the Media Decree had ' … to do with a policy direction that media organisations, like many other countries have regulated, need to be owned by locals because of the powerful nature of media organisations' (Hill, 2010). Sayed-Khaiyum stated that restrictions on foreign ownership of news media was a rule rather than exception, citing examples of Australia, Singapore and the United States, where Rupert Murdoch had to take up US citizenship to build his media empire.

> ... we are a developing country, there are other many other developed countries that have media restrictions on ownership—the USA does, Singapore does, and I hope that in these next few days when there are discussions on this, that they take into consideration what other jurisdictions are doing—not simply just singling out Fiji. (Fiji to remain, 2010)

Sayed-Khaiyum also claimed the government had considered the submissions made by the media industry during consultation on the draft decree in April 2010 and made changes to reflect the submissions in the final document. The international media made little mention of the reductions in the possible fines and jail terms or of the wider representation on the MIDA among other changes announced by the Fijian government. The draft decree had drawn widespread condemnation from media commentators and organisations around the world. Amnesty International said the decree would restrain the media from reporting on government abuses and that the 'Fijian government is giving itself a licence to imprison or bankrupt its critics' (Amnesty says, 2010).

Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF) said the lack of the mention of press freedom in the proposed decree showed that it was 'designed to enable the military government to tighten its grip on the media—control of media ownership, control of content and control of the dissemination of news within the country' (Julliard, 2010).

Former Fiji-based journalism educator Dr David Robie called the draft law 'deeply disturbing' and that the harsh penalties would ensure there was no return to an independent Fourth Estate (Robie, 2010). Russell Hunter, who had served as editor-in-chief at both the *Fiji Times* and the *Fiji Sun* before being deported by the military government, raised concern about the provisions that allowed journalists to be jailed for up to five years and media organisations to be fined up to FJ$500,000 (equivalent US$250,000) (Former Fiji, 2010). Political commentator Professor Crosbie Walsh accepted that there was a need for a decree to ensure media responsibility but felt that the military as well any other government could easily abuse the powers provided in the draft decree (Walsh, 2010a). Professor Gary Rodan of the Asia Research Centre at Murdoch University was concerned about the effect of this Singapore-inspired legislation on a free and robust media in Fiji and that, like Singapore, Fiji might also introduce laws that control the reporting of overseas media that are based in the country (Seke, 2010). According to Attorney General Sayed-Khaiyum, most of the issues highlighted were dealt with during consultation and the changes made in the final promulgated version reflected significant concessions the government made regarding the concerns.

Main features of Fiji media decree

Under the Decree, the Fiji Media Industry Development Authority is established as a body quite similar to the Singaporean Media Development Authority. The military government has made no secrets about the fact that it has drawn inspiration from Singapore for this media decree—Attorney-General Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum claimed the decree 'seeks to create professionalism and accountability in the media sector by setting up transparent processes, adopting practices from other jurisdictions' (Media code, 2010). A comparison of the Fiji and Singapore laws showed similarities in the power vested in the minister responsible for the appointment and dismissal of the Authority (Sections 5 & 8 of the Singapore Act compared to Parts 4, 6, 10 & 11 of the Fiji Media decree). Sections 11 and 12 of the Singapore Media

Act and Parts 8 and 9 of the Fiji Media Decree assign almost identical functions and powers to the Media Development Authority. Singapore's Section 29 and Fiji's Part 17 protect the Media Authority from liabilities. Both laws have the same powers to require documents from journalists and news organisations (Sections 52 & 53 of Singapore Act and Parts 26, 27 & 28 of Fiji Media Decree). The courts are also given similar jurisdictions through Sections 61 & 62 in Singapore and Parts 81 & 82 of the Fiji Media Decree.

The Fiji Media Decree differs a little in that it makes use of the existing media codes. It establishes a Media Tribunal to handle complaints that the Authority or even individual complainants refer to it or the Tribunal decides to investigate on its own accord. Parties to a complaint can challenge the Tribunal's final decision in the Fiji Court of Appeal. Such a facility is not provided under the Singaporean law. After the brief consultations it held with the media industry, the Fiji regime reduced the penalties in the final decree from a possible fine of FJ$100,000 for individual journalists in the draft decree to FJ$1000 (US$500), while the jail terms were reduced to two years maximum from the proposed five years maximum in the draft decree. The fines for editors and publishers were similarly reduced from FJ$250,000 to FJ$25,000 while for media companies it was reduced to FJ$100,000. The reduced fines in the final decree are similar to those imposed by the Singapore Media Act. Overall, the decree was drafted in the same vein as the Singapore Act and many of the sections were copied word-for-word by the Fiji decree. The main features of the Fiji Media Decree are outlined below.

Part 2 of the Decree creates the Media Industry Development Authority of Fiji, which will have a chairperson and five other members. All six members will be appointed by the minister responsible for the administration of the decree. Apart from the chairperson, the five other members include the solicitor general, a representative each of consumer affairs, children's interests, women's interests, and a person from the media industry. The MIDA has powers to enforce the media codes of practice and the advertising and programme classification codes; to monitor news content for any material that is deemed against 'national' or 'public interest' or which creates communal discord; to accept complaints against the media, investigate and refer them to the Media Tribunal and to advise government on media-related matters.

Part 3 of the Decree incorporates the Media Code of Ethics and Practice, the General Code of Advertisements, the Code for Advertising to Children

and the Television Programme Classification Code. These codes have existed previously as the Fiji Media Council Codes and apart from the Television Programme Classification Code, which has seen a few minor changes to encourage greater local content, the other three codes have been used unaltered. In essence, what was previously an unenforced media self-governing document has now been brought into law. An addition is a ban on political advertising.

Part 4 deals with content regulation stating that the media must not produce material that is against public interest or order, national interest or anything that would create communal discord. None of the terms are defined or any parameters suggested which makes this part open to interpretation by the MIDA or the government. Any offences related to content regulation could see the media organisation face a maximum FJ$100,000 fine or in the case of editors and publishers, up to FJ$25,000 fine and/or maximum two year jail term.

Part 5 gives the MIDA the power to investigate suspected infringements of the provisions of the decree, powers to enter, search and seize documents under warrant, and to require documents and information which the Authority needs for its investigations. But this section also limits the MIDA's ability to seek the identity of sources, especially in relation to cases of corruption and abuse of office. The MIDA would need to apply to the Media Tribunal for a warrant and show reasonable grounds for the warrant to be granted. Anyone who fails to produce the required documents; who obstructs the MIDA's access to search and seize documents; destroys or falsifies documents; or who provides false or misleading information, will face a maximum fine of FJ$10,000 and/or up to two years in jail.

Part 6 sets out the registration process for media companies—sworn affidavits need to be lodged with the MIDA for all media organisations in Fiji. For newspapers and print media, the requirements are the names of the proprietor, the publisher and printer; for broadcast media, details of the proprietor, location of stations, repeater stations and production buildings, as well as frequencies and coverage maps.

Part 7 sets out the features of media organisations and the ownership rights of locals and foreigners. Foreign ownership is limited to 10 percent of beneficial shares. Cross-media ownership is allowed but limited to 25 percent non-voting shares in organisations in the same medium; while the restriction is 5 percent non-voting shares in organisations in a different medium. Infringements to both parts 6 and 7 fines of up to FJ$10,000 and/or maximum two years jail time, while companies can be fined up to FJ$100,000.

Part 8 establishes the Media Tribunal, which will be made up of a chair-person, appointed by the President on the advice of the Attorney General. The chairperson would need qualifications to be a judge and will have powers to hear and determine complaints referred to it by the MIDA, or those directly received from complainants. It will also adjudicate any breaches of the media codes. The Tribunal can be given policy directions by the Attorney General but is expected to maintain independence from government and any other person.

Part 9 sets out the process through which the MIDA can receive and act on complaints and also sets out the recourse available to complainants if the MIDA decides to summarily dismiss any complaints. It also empowers the MIDA to act and investigate a matter on its own accord if it has to do with media organisations failing to meet provisions of this decree or for infringe-ments relating to the media codes.

Part 10 outlines the proceedings before the Tribunal and the procedures that are to be followed during the referral and hearing of complaints and media disputes. The decisions of the Tribunal are binding, but the decree makes an allowance for complainants and/or defendants to seek redress in the Court of Appeal if they are unhappy with the Tribunal's decision. Media companies are only allowed the right to appeal the Tribunal's decision if the ruling is an award of more than FJ$50,000. The Tribunal can fine individual journalists up to a maximum of FJ$1000 for transgressions under the decree, editors and publishers up to $25,000 while media organisations can be fined up to a maximum of $100,000.

Part 11 contains miscellaneous sections, parts of which allow the minister to make directives during emergencies, the jurisdiction of the magistrates and high courts, the limitation of commencement proceedings to six months from the date of alleged offence and the repeal of the Registration of Newspapers Act and the Press Corrections Act.

Analysis: Media theories and journalism models

In 1956, Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm developed their four theories of the press—the *authoritarian, libertarian, communist* and *social responsibility* models, stating that the 'the press always takes on the form and coloration of the social and political structures within which it operates. Especially, it reflects the system of social control whereby the relations of individuals and institutions are adjusted' (Siebert, Peterson & Schramm, 1956, as cited in Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng &

White, 2009, p. 3). Christians et. al. (2009) have restructured the four theories of press into four roles of journalism: the *monitorial* role, the *facilitative* role, the *radical* role and the *collaborative* role. Monitorial journalism is similar to the watchdog role, scanning the public and government sphere for information and events, which are then reported, based on what might be of interest to the public. The facilitative role builds upon the reporting functions with the idea that journalism will support and strengthen civil society and its activities. The radical role gives the media a critical voice in society, whereby it can openly challenge government and any authority with its own perception of the truth. The collaborative role creates a relationship between the media and the sources of power in which the media is expected to contribute towards the political and economic successes of a society.

Prior to April 2009, the Fiji news media held a radical role, in which according to Christians et. al. (2009, p. 31), the media act as a 'voice of criticism in their own right' and 'provide a platform for views and voices that are critical of authority and the established order'. Following the military takeover of government in December 2006, the Fiji media continued to play the radical role, openly criticising the military establishment and giving voice to the opposition forces like the ousted prime minister Laisenia Qarase (see Kikau, 2007; Army wrong, 2007; Vunileba, 2008; Qarase rejects, 2008). Walsh (2010a) contends that the *Fiji Times* gave anti-Bainimarama government spokespeople four times the opportunity it afforded spokespeople from the government.

It could be argued that it is the execution of the radical role by the Fiji media, which might have triggered the military regime to focus its attempts on suppressing and limiting media freedoms (Robie, 2008, p. 109). When Fiji's 1997 Constitution was abrogated in April 2009, the military-backed government not only limited the freedoms enjoyed by the media, but by introducing the new media decree, it has tried to fundamentally change the role the media plays in the greater Fiji society (Bainimarama, 2009). Bainimarama called on the media to play a 'collaborative role' and to support him in his vision of achieving peace and harmony in Fiji. Christians et al. (2009) set out the conditions in which governments might require this role of collaboration:

> Even today, under certain circumstances, the news media are called on to support civil or military authorities in defence of the social order against threats of crime, war, terrorism, and insurgency. The claim

> to media cooperation can be more general and involve demands that
> journalism support authority. In developing societies, journalism may
> be directed to serve particular developmental goals. (p. 31-2)

Theoretically, this role should not be imposed on the media. The 'collaboration' should come from acceptance of the role from within the media organisations' structures and values. Instead of an imposition, the media should see it as their role to work with the authorities to achieve the specific development results that a society or nation might want to achieve. According to George (2007), Singapore is one nation that has been able to engender this level of cooperation from its news media industry through the use of 'calibrated coercion'. This coercion has been achieved using a combination of stifling media laws and its implementation through a court system that has rarely ruled against the government on media matters (Article 19, 2005; Tey, 2008; Christians et. al., 2009). The Singapore media's role is one of social responsibility with the aim of assisting the development of the Singapore nation. Like Fiji, Singapore was also a British colony, had a fractious multiracial population and at independence, faced similar challenges in creating peace, unity and national prosperity. The People's Action Party has managed to form the successive governments since 1959 with the aid of a compliant media industry that does little to question the status quo. George (2007, p. 136) and Vasil (2000, p. 233) have argued that this has given Singapore a level of political stability from which the government has pursued and attained the nations economic success.

Over the past four decades, Singaporeans have been led to believe that their model of news media suits the interests of their wider society and that the media's role is to support the government its quest to promote harmony, solidarity, tolerance and prosperity, rather than to question the existing social, political and economic structures. In Fiji, Bainimarama wants to achieve a similar application of development journalism to that in Singapore—that is for the media to assist the state in building and sustaining a national agenda for peace, stability, progress and prosperity (Bainimarama hails, 2010; Bainimarama, 2009). His efforts to impress this model upon the Fiji media between December 2006 and April 2009 were met with stiff resistance (Bainimarama urges, 2008; Bainimarama defends, 2007; Julliard, 2010). Between April 2009 and April 2010, when the Bainimarama regime ruled with the Public Emergency Regulations, it found the *Fiji Sun* newspaper

warming to its idea of development journalism—but the *Fiji Times* ignored most government-related stories (Walsh, 2010a). Christians et al. concede that the idea of collaboration is not popular as might be perceived as impinging on the independence of the media, but it can be legitimate if there are grounds of necessity.

The collaborative role, however, is scarcely represented at all in the literature on press roles, largely because it goes against the libertarian and professional journalistic grain and expresses some truths that many would rather leave unsaid. (2009, p. 127)

Christians et al. posit that articulating and accepting a viable collaborative role for the media requires a greater understanding of the relationship and arrangements between the media and the state 'than most Western views of press freedom permit' (p. 217). Simplifying the relationship between media and the state to the adversarial does not work in every situation, as different political, social and cultural environments need to be contextualised. Bainimarama's version of development journalism qualifies for the collaborative role devised by Christians et al. (2009, pp. 198-9), but only as 'collaboration as compliance' which the authors believe is the 'weakest and least compelling rationale for a collaborative role for the media'. In the table below, Christians et al. show that there are three levels of collaboration—collaboration as compliance, collaboration as acquiescence and collaboration as acceptance.

Given that the Bainimarama government has promulgated a decree to promote development journalism in Fiji, under the collaboration model, it would be classed as 'collaboration as compliance' and 'coercion'. This condition exists in Fiji because the media has been subjected to a law that it does not necessarily agree with and the industry has no option but to comply with the law because it governs the industry's existence. If the industry were in agreement with the law, the condition then would change to 'collaboration as acceptance'. Christians et al. (2009) state that 'collaboration as acceptance' provides the best model for co-operation between the government and the media. Examples of collaboration as acceptance can be seen during times of war or terrorism such as the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States or during hosting or bidding of a major event such as the Olympics in a country. The media usually unites in a patriotic bind with the government and other agencies for the greater good of the nation. While this level of collaboration is issue-based, it can also be a useful model for development journalism (Christians et al., 2009; Manning, 2009).

Table 1: Conditions for collaborative role of the media	
Collaboration as compliance	
Coercion	No choice in the matter; a law or some other form of overt control compels the media to cooperate.
Apathy	Indifference or ignorance; cooperation exists in the absenceof any serious attention to it.
Tradition	Custom dictates action; journalists accept history as a justification for cooperation.
Collaboration as acquiescence	
Pragmatic	Cooperation is unappealing but inevitable; journalists avoid coercion and acceept their fate
Instrumental	Cooperation is unappealing but instrumentally useful; journalists accept some kind of trade-off
Collaboration as acceptance	
Practical agreement	Given what is known about particular circumstances, journalists judge cooperation to be right or proper.
Normative agreement	Given all that needs to be known about these circumstances, journalists judge cooperation to be right and proper.

Source: Adapted from Christians et al 2009, p. 199

> Collaboration in the tradition of development journalism usually in-
> volves a partnership with the state, though not always a formal one, a
> relationship premised on a commitment by the press to play a positive
> role in the process of development. From this perspective, responsibility
> tempers press freedom; journalists can question, even challenge, the
> state, but not to the point where they undermine a government's basic
> plans for progress and prosperity. (Christians et al., 2009, pp. 200-1)

The Fiji media, though is not without choices about whether or not to partici-
pate in Bainimarama's version of development journalism—the *Fiji Times*
has shown since April 2009 that if it cannot print criticisms of the govern-
ment, then it would not print praises of it either. The Fiji Media Decree
touches every aspect of the industry—from reporting, content regulation and
ethics to ownership and complaints and accountability mechanisms. Robie
(2010) argued that while 'in a democracy, a media development authority
could have its merits … in a dictatorship it is dangerous. This smacks of
blatant and insidious control'. The suspicion among the media and the pub-
lic of possible of collusion between the Fiji Media Industry Development
Authority (MIDA), the Media Tribunal and the government is a defining factor.

The government appoints officials to both media bodies. At the same time, the government also controls the appointment of judges and magistrates. However much Bainimarama's government claims all these bodies are independent of each other and the government, the stigma of an being unelected military-backed regime will always create doubt among the public and the media about the sincerity of this media governance and accountability system.

Currently, Singapore's media industry can generally be classed into either collaboration as acquiescence or even collaboration as acceptance. George (2007) has argued the initial process was one of 'calibrated coercion'—a phase which is just starting in Fiji. According to Article 19 (2005), Singapore's leaders have used a combination of media laws, defamation suits, ownership and harassment to breed a culture of self-censorship that is prevalent at all levels of the Singapore media industry. Tey (2008) explained that Singapore's leaders have always rejected the libertarian approach to free speech and advocated that the wider interests of the public and the nation override the interests of individuals.

> It is a political ideology that places primacy on constructing a political
> and legal framework conducive to nation-building, economic progress,
> and social and political stability … (Tey, 2008)

Rodan (2003) suggests that the hallmark of Singapore's authoritarian governance is the combination of 'legal limits to independent social and political activities … and extensive mechanisms of political co-option to channel contention through state-controlled institutions'. The use of laws to create the Media Development Authority of Singapore and the appointment of its officers by the government minister serve as an example to Rodan's assessment. According to George (2007), Tey (2008) and Article 19 (2005), these actions were part of the calculated and strategic decisions that Singapore's leaders made in order to ensure their vision of Singapore was carried through.

Conclusion

The two-way process in the freedom to communicate between government and the public would be seen as an ideal for any country in the world. It would be rare, if not impossible for any one country to achieve what might be termed absolute media freedom. The model many nations end up with is

a compromise between absolute media freedom and absolute control by the government. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights may bestow the right to freedom of expression and to seek, receive and impart information and hold opinions, but Article 29 (2) of the same declaration places limitations as follows:

> In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society. (UDHR)

But Gallimore (1995, p. 57) asserts that, '[c]ensorship, licensing and restriction of the media are common practices engaged in by despots around the world who fear' that dissidents could use freedom of expression and a free media to whip up public opinion, create an uprising and bring down a dictatorship. Bainimarama's regime views the media decree as utilitarian tool—unavoidable for attaining greater media accountability. The regime defines development journalism as the media working with the government and other institutions of society in order to bring about prosperity, modernisation, peace and harmony for the benefit of the whole nation. It wants a commitment by the media to play a positive role in the socio-economic development and advancement of a society or nation. Merrill (1995) states that government leaders who try to achieve political and social viability know that absolute freedom to communicate can place national stability and status quo at risk. As spelt out in the UDHR, governments can choose to place limitations on media freedoms through regulations to maintain the levels of peace and stability and "[c]ontrol, then, is the common—not the exceptional—state of things in the world ..." (Merrill, 1995).

According to Vasil (2000), Singapore's 'limited democracy' might not be the best model for Western nations, but it could provide a lesson for those emerging nations which are trying to find their feet after decolonisation. Bainimarama's regime has set its sights emulating the success that Singapore has had in controlling its media and working together with it towards achieving its vision of internal harmony and economic prosperity. Adapting a model from a country that has a similar colonial history, as well as a melting pot of racial and cultural groups, is something that Vasil (2000) recommends for

countries for which the Western liberal democratic model has failed to work. Singapore's leaders have worked for the past five decades to achieve the level of 'collaboration' that they currently enjoy with the media industry. Before independence Singapore had a media industry that was similarly vibrant and free as that in Fiji pre-April 2009, but over the years it has been pummelled into self-censorship through submissive tactics and laws. Looking at Singapore's media through the lens of 'collaborative journalism' created by Christians et al. (2009), in theory and in practice, it would appear to be a workable model for the situation that Singapore found itself in following independence. It is a model that the Bainimarama regime has imposed on Fiji. The regime may claim that it has noble intentions (and over time it could well prove so) but the law provides for journalists to be fined or jailed for doing their work, it forces them to reveal sources and it allows the government to control the media authority through appointments. It is a perfect tool to inculcate a culture of self-censorship and to control Fiji's otherwise vibrant news media.

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Reggie J. Dutt is a Master of Journalism student at Bond University. He is a graduate of the University of the South Pacific regional journalism programme and has worked at the Fiji Sun *and Fiji Television as a journalist.*

rdutt@bond.edu.au

11. Pacific freedom of the press: Case studies in independent campus-based media models

ABSTRACT

South Pacific university-based journalism school publications were innovative newspaper publishers from 1975 onwards and among early pioneers of online publishing in the mid-1990s. Several publications have become established long-term with viable economic models and have had an impact on Oceania's regional independent publishing. All have been advocates of a free press and freedom of expression under Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Among early trendsetters were *Uni Tavur, Liklik Diwai* in Papua New Guinea, and *Wansolwara* and *Pacific Journalism Online* in Fiji. *Wansolwara* and its online edition was also the flagbearer for independent publishing under the pressure of two coups d'état in 2000 and 2006 in Fiji. All newspapers have contended with censorship in various forms. Now *Wansolwara* has embarked on a publishing partnership with a leading post-coup Fiji daily newspaper. This article analyses the independent media published by communication studies educational programmes in Fiji and Papua New Guinea. It examines how a variety of niche publishing formula have boosted independent coverage and issues-based journalism on wide-ranging topics such as human rights, news media facing censorship and freedom of information.

Keywords: academic freedom, censorship, freedom of information, human rights, independent publishing, *Uni Tavur, Wansolwara*

DAVID ROBIE
Pacific Media Centre, AUT University

E VERY national constitution in Oceania includes some reference to press freedom, even though it is perhaps breached more than honoured. It is often enshrined in documents, such as Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. South Pacific nations also take the

annual observance of the UNESCO World Press Freedom Day on May 3 rather more seriously than their southern neighbours, Australia and New Zealand. However, there is little agreement on the detail of what 'press freedom' actually means or much debate on balancing this right with other freedoms accepted as part of a modern democracy (Stevenson, 2004, p. 67). At times, there is also a perception in Pacific countries that media organisations have a self-interested view that has more to do with the freedom of the broadcasters and publishers rather than the basic rights of citizens to be informed (Robie, 2001a; 2008a; Singh & Prasad, 2008).

The study of an independent student press and online or broadcast media in the Pacific has been neglected and rarely raised in any industry debate on media freedom (Robie, 2002). South Pacific university-based journalism school publications were innovative newspaper publishers from 1975 onwards and among early pioneers of online publishing in the mid-1990s. Several publications have become established long-term with viable economic models and have had an impact on Oceania's regional independent publishing. All have been advocates of a free press and freedom of expression under Article 19. Among early trendsetters were *Uni Tavur and Liklik Diwai* in Papua New Guinea, and *Wansolwara* and *Pacific Journalism Online* in Fiji. *Wansolwara* and its online edition was also the flagbearer for independent publishing under the pressure of two coups d'état in 2000 and 2006 in Fiji. All newspapers have contended with censorship in various forms. In 2009, *Wansolwara* embarked on a publishing partnership with a leading post-coup Fiji daily newspaper. This article analyses the independent media published by communication studies educational programmes through selected case studies in Fiji and Papua New Guinea. It examines how a variety of niche publishing formula have boosted independent coverage and issues-based journalism on wide-ranging topics such as human rights, news media facing censorship and freedom of information.

In the Pacific, I have had the privilege over a decade of teaching a remarkable diversity of students involved in the campus press, sometimes in the face of threats and risks. For example, in Papua New Guinea I taught the daughter of a former Defence Force Commander and the daughter of the then Chief Justice of PNG. In Fiji, I taught a police inspector and a captain charged with establishing a media unit in the military forces. One of my journalism graduates at USP also became one of the first two women drafted into the Fiji military and, unfortunately, she became one of the military officers at the forefront of Fiji censorship after the Easter putsch.

The vast majority of student journalists have remained staunchly committed to a free press in the Pacific, often in the face of great adversity and hardship. Some are now in key positions in the news media around the Pacific, such as Gorethy Kenneth at the Buka office of the *Post-Courier* in Papua New Guinea; Stanley Simpson, news director at the Fiji Broadcasting Corporation; and Emily Moli, news editor at Fiji Television.

Covering the 2000 Fiji attempted coup and the three months of intensive trauma that followed has been the toughest call faced by the then seven-year-old University of the South Pacific Journalism Programme and by me personally as a journalism educator. Many stories of courage emerged out of the events—the neophyte 'Indian' journalist who was kissed uninvited by rebel leader George Speight, the 'barefoot' journalists who slipped daily into Parliament by bushtrack, and the editing team who camped out in the newsroom, sometimes sleeping there to avoid curfew arrest.

In more than a decade in journalism education in the Pacific, I encountered many examples of threats to press freedom and student journalists responding courageously and with resilience. The case studies outlined here reflect this.

Uni Tavur (Papua New Guinea)

The University of Papua New Guinea's training publication *Uni Tavur* played an important role in the formation of journalists for more than two decades (Robie, 2004; 2008). *Uni Tavur* was launched on 24 July 1975 by New Zealand television journalist and media educator Ross Stevens. Tavur means 'conch shell' in the Tolai language of the Gazelle Peninsula, East New Britain. The shell was the paper's masthead logo. Journalism student Robert Elowo, who died tragically the following year in a car accident while working for the National Broadcasting Commission's Radio Kundiawa, designed the original version. Uni is derived from the university. The first newsroom was set up in 'the dungeon'—dubbed this by the students because of the claustrophobic bunker-style room used below the Michael Somare Library (cited in Robie, 2004, p. 128).

Uni Tavur's first edition carried news items, including social and sports events. It consisted of four A4-size pages and had a circulation of 200 copies. Student reporters were assigned rounds with a brief to cover anything of news value for their readers. Recalled former Vice-Chancellor Joseph Sukwianomb:

> *Uni Tavur* came […] to play a significant role in the university scene
> in terms of changing ideas […] generally about that period from

> independence […] the campus was very vibrant, very active. The students were well aware of what was happening. This was the time of student demonstrations and strikes. They were all reported from student angles by student journalists. (Cited in Robie, 2004, p. 129)

Over the following quarter century, *Uni Tavur* experienced many changes but persisted with a vigorous and gutsy reporting style: 'Whether it was life on campus, life on the borderline, the political scene or anything of national interest, the students sweated to get the paper going,' wrote first-year journalism student Jessie Waibauru in the 20th anniversary issue (1994, p. 10). Stories covered ranged from the West Papuan issue and border tensions with Indonesia, corruption and a draft law introduced in Parliament to gag the news media. It was later withdrawn (Robie, 2004, p. 238). In a retrospective survey of *Uni Tavur*, Waibauru captured the essence of a lively publication and a snapshot of post-independence history.

The newspaper marked two decades of publishing by being relaunched as a tabloid newspaper with some four-colour editorial and advertising content in 1995. *Uni Tavur* came of age by being printed as a half-reel on the *Post-Courier* presses. The same year, it won the Journalism Education Association prize for the best regular publication—the first Pacific or New Zealand title to do so, in part because of a series of groundbreaking investigative journalism reports published by the paper. Two years later, *Uni Tavur* student journalists reported on the Sandline affair when the Sir Julius Chan government hired a mercenary company in an attempt to crush the Bougainville rebellion. This led to a revolt in the PNG Defence Force with troops ordered by commander Brigadier-General Jerry Singirok to arrest the mercenaries in Operation Rausim Kwik on the night of 16 March 1997. Chan was ultimately forced to resign. At the height of the crisis, the students at the University of Papua New Guinea boycotted classes in support of Singirok.

The Topul Rali affair

After surviving attempts to gag the newspaper by politicians, the following year witnessed *Uni Tavur* defending its independence from the university administration after publishing an exposé about a senior academic administrator implicated in a violent protest over the killing of anthropology lecturer on campus in December 1995 (Robie, 1998). The dead woman, Janet Kisau, was the second lecturer to be murdered at the university in less than

seven months. Also, two students were murdered during 1995 during a security crisis at the university (Johnston, 1996). Protesters caused an estimated K10,000 worth of damage in an administration office, trashed a computer and an administration staff member was wounded.

Although the incident was hushed up by the administration, the incoming Vice-Chancellor Dr Rodney Hills, an Australian, instituted an inquiry into the raid in February 1996. In March, the University Council voted at an extraordinary meeting to dismiss Dr Topul Rali, one of the university's most prominent local academics who was widely regarded as a potential future vice-chancellor. He had been implicated in the administration protest and an open letter in *The National* alleged a news media cover-up of the scandal (*The National*, 23 February 1996).

Uni Tavur gathered information about the affair and published reports without fear or favour. These included a fullpage background article and front page story about the sacking of Dr Rali (Miise, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c). The university administration pressured the paper over the stories in an attempt to prevent publication but avoided doing so in public. News reports from the paper about the affair being filed to the regional news agency Pacnews were secretly removed from the university administration facsimile room and destroyed. The lecturer supervising the newspaper (along with two senior faculty members) was summoned to the vice-chancellor's office and the newspaper was accused of 'breach of confidence' and 'defamation'. A campaign of vilification against the newspaper and the journalism programme was conducted in some academic quarters. A demand was made to reveal the newspaper's sources to identify who had leaked information from the University Council. However, the public response to the publication of the stories was overwhelmingly favourable.

In the next issue (26 April 1996), *Uni Tavur* published an editorial exposing the pressure on the paper and defending its decision to publish the stories in the public interest. The university administration remained silent. An account in *Pacific Journalism Review* said:

> By publishing information about the Dr Rali affair, the newspaper *Uni Tavur* defied suppression and brought a hushed up affair into the public arena, exposing a double standard on ethical behaviour in Papua New Guinea's leading national university. And by making public the pressure on it from the administration, the paper thwarted attempts to muzzle its freedom to report and interpret on behalf of the public. (Robie, 1998, p. 124)

However, less than three years later the university closed the journalism programme in spite of a struggle by students and staff for resources and support. The programme was reinstated a year later after the then vice-chancellor left for another post in Dubai. Among sporadic editions of the paper that continued to be published, *Uni Tavur* produced a special edition on 30 July 2001 marking 'Black Tuesday'—the night four people were shot dead, three of them students, during protests against World Bank structural adjustment policies. Several student journalists later gave testimony before a commission of inquiry set up to probe the shootings. One of those students, Wanita Wakus, wrote in a *Uni Tavur* article headed 'I couldn't stop crying':

> The sound of gunshots woke me from my deep sleep. I could also hear the footsteps of people running along the exposed corridors of my dormitory. I opened the door, curious to know exactly what was going on, only to hear someone somewhere in the shadows of the trees yelling at girls to get in and shut their doors. The sound of the gunshots seemed to be getting louder, so I assumed the gunmen were coming closer…
>
> [She fell asleep to the sound of the gunfire].
>
> I woke up again to the screams and gunshots but this time the sun was up … Walking towards where the group of ladies stood, I saw that the gunmen were none other than the law enforcement officers, the police…
>
> In their hands were the instruments of death. (Wakus, 2001)

Wakus demonstrated both the value of student journalists bearing witness to civil strife and human rights violations, and also the insecurity of campus life at Waigani. A tradition of independent student journalism established 26 years earler was still alive. The mantle of crusading student media was also taken up by the Divine Word University training newspaper, *Liklik Diwai,* named by using the Tok Pisin words for 'small' and 'tree', or the little newspaper and Diwai is also a moniker for Divine Word. The newspaper focused many reports on human rights, social justice and development issues.

Wansolwara (Fiji)

The University of the South Pacific is a regional university with 12 member countries with main campuses in Suva, Port Vila and Apia. (1) The first journalism course established at USP was a Certificate in Journalism programme (Robie, 2008b, p. 241). It was founded by New Zealander Dr Murray

Masterton with support from the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC) in 1987, coinciding with Sitiveni Rabuka's military coups d'état. After a successful start, this course eventually wound down in 1991 at the conclusion of a funding cycle. Situated within the then Department of Literature and Language at USP, a completely separate journalism degree course was established in the same department with post-coup French government aid. François Turmel, a specialist radio journalist who had spent many years based in London with the BBC World Service, took early retirement and took up appointment as the senior lecturer and founder of the course. A Papua New Guinea-born Australian colleague, Philip Cass, appointed in 1995, encouraged the creation of the *Wansolwara* newspaper at USP because there was 'no real outlet for journalism students' work' (Cass cited in Robie, 2004, p. 179). The name *Wansolwara*—'one sea'—is also derived from Tok Pisin. 'Wansolwara' expresses the idea that 'all of us who are born or live in the Pacific are bound together by the ocean' (p. 180).

Five of the first editions of *Wansolwara* featured a distinctive vertical blue reverse masthead for the title on the left side of the front page while the early issues relied on voluntary work by founding editor Stanley Simpson and his student team. The newspaper was not actually funded by the university. But when I arrived at USP in 1998 from the University of PNG to head the journalism studies programme, the department integrated the newspaper into a formal course assessment structure and set up an advertising regime to recover printing and production costs. New Zealand television journalist Ingrid Leary similarly revitalised the broadcast components of the programme.

Wansolwara has arguably been the most successful economic model for a training newspaper in the South Pacific region because it has been able to self-fund publication for 15 years and consolidate its publishing structure. The newspaper has also published concurrently with its sister publication *Wansolwara Online* at *Pacific Journalism Online* (www.usp.ac.fj/journ/) and has won a string of awards (Pearson, 2001; Robie 2004). The newspaper has provided strong coverage of environmental issues, development strategies, human rights and social justice, but coverage of the George Speight attempted coup in May 2000 was one of the highlights of the newspaper's history.

The Fiji student internet coup
Within days of the Speight coup, the students' website and newspaper had created its own international niche market. In a sense, this was an 'internet

Figure1: *IPI Global Journalist*, **3rd quarter, 2000, pp. 26-29.**

coup', and the students were a vital part of it. And the plaudits were full-some: 'Young and brave,' said *The Global Journalist*. 'In a Pacific island paradise, journalism students cover a strange coup attempt for course credits'

(Ransom, 2000). 'From trainees to professionals. And all it took was a coup,' said the *Commonwealth Press Union News* (Gounder, August, p. 7). 'Some of the best reporting has come from USP's journalism program ... it was a goldmine of information until it was shut down by the university ... "for security reasons",' wrote New Zealand's *City Voice* (Rose, 2000)

Although the USP programme was ill-equipped logistically for such sustained daily reportage, it at least had a well-established, two-year-old website in the formative days of online media, *Pacific Journalism Online*, and a training newspaper, *Wansolwara*, already in place. It also normally had access to a student FM radio station on campus, Radio Pasifik, but university authorities closed this immediately after the coup.

The beginning

On Friday, 19 May 2000, almost to the day of the first military coup in the Fiji Islands in 1987, George Speight, a *kailoma* (mixed race) and bankrupt businessman, tore off his balaclava to reveal his identity after seizing Parliament and the elected government at gunpoint. Within minutes of the news of the hostage taking being flashed on Radio Fiji news on that day's 11am bulletin—scooped by one of our final-year students on attachment—Professor Subramani came into my office and said: 'There's been another coup'. I was sceptical. Although a coup had been rumoured as being imminent for sometime, I just could not believe it.

After quick phone calls to confirm the facts, sketchy as they were at that stage, I met senior student editors to decide what should be done. At that stage, it was felt the crisis would be over in a few days and we decided to go all out to cover the events—but with a campus perspective. Three months later the students were still covering the crisis (Cass, 2002; Robie, 2001b).

The journalism programme already had a team of reporters at a protest march in downtown Suva that morning (which later erupted into rioting); the news editors set up our radio and television monitors; reporters were dispatched to Parliament (the rear of the university grounds is close to the chamber); the television class was cancelled and a crew sent downtown to Suva where they filmed footage of the riots and arson in the capital. As reporters returned with their stories and digital images, we posted hourly updates on *Pacific Journalism Online.*

By the time martial law was declared ten days later, on May 29, the student team had posted 109 stories, dozens of soundbites and scores of digital

photographs. But for the first day, the students stumbled through the hours, in some cases overcome with shock and the trauma over what was unfolding. One talented 20-year-old student was so traumatised that he could not write about what he saw. He went home shaking. However, he recovered by the next day and took a leading role in the coverage for the next three months, finally winning an award for his coup efforts.

On Saturday morning, the students carried on with the coverage but were already facing logistical problems. It was the weekend and not all journalism students were aware that the team was covering events. And the university was about to close and send its 5,000 students home. A small core group managed to see through the weekend.

On Monday morning, May 22, three shifts were organised among the student reporters and editors to cope with the curfew—morning and afternoon shifts, and an overnighter comprising students who actually lived on campus. Sometimes reporters slept in the newsroom. I personally worked from about 7am until curfew time daily.

At one stage, a group of the students worked 36 hours in one hop, barricaded in the newsroom, to complete the editorial production of a special coup edition of *Wansolwara*. Although I had a curfew pass, and some of our senior students also had passes, the USP team was handicapped by its lack of logistics. The university was not geared for this sort of journalistic activity and the students had no vehicle—taxis were very unreliable. To add to the frustration, a senior administrator frequently passed the newsroom muttering loudly that journalism students were a threat to the university: 'What will happen if George comes after us?' she complained.

Student online editor Christine Gounder, now a journalist with Radio New Zealand, later produced a masters thesis on the Speight attempted coup and the so-called Stockholm syndrome (Gounder, 2006). She wrote about the putsch at the time as part of an article in the *CPU News* titled 'From trainees to professionals. And all it took was a coup' (*CPU News*, 2000):

> Student journalists chose to be on the job. But it hasn't been easy. They survived threats, bureaucratic attempts to gag their website and newspaper, and a shutdown of the university to deliver the news.
>
> Grabbing the opportunity to hone their skills, the young journalists didn't waste any time rushing to be on the spot at Parliament on May 19 and the looting and arson sites, around the capital, Suva (Gounder, 2000).

Another student, Tamani Nair, was on internship with the Fiji Broadcasting Corporation at the time of the coup and wrote about his experience (Nair, 2000):

> Fiji's third coup could not have come at a better time for student journalists—especially those on attachment. It was a baptism by fire for us.
>
> May 19 was the day it all started. I was fortunate enough to be part of the team that broke the news of the coup.
>
> Radio Fiji records every parliamentary session in the newsroom itself and this saves reporters the torture of going to Parliament and sitting there all day.
>
> We were having our morning tea and joking about parliamentarians—especially the Opposition with their funny comments they made while interjecting.
>
> Deputy Prime Minister Dr Tupeni Baba was speaking at the time. Then we heard somebody yelling and telling the people to remain seated in Parliament and gunshots were fired.
>
> Everybody in the newsroom was shocked. We left everything and moved closer to the radio—and then the lines were cut.
>
> Samisoni Pareti and Sandhya Narayan instantly volunteered to go down to Parliament. I begged the editor, Vasiti Waqa, to let me join the team.
>
> She said 'yes' immediately and told me of the danger which at that moment was the least of my concerns.
>
> On the way to Parliament, Pareti kept saying: 'Oh, not a coup, not again!' And that got me frightened and excited at the same time.
>
> The speed at which we were travelling to Parliament was not funny at all.
>
> Samisoni had reported on the last coup when it had happened in 1987 and it felt like *déja vu* for him.
>
> The coup took place at 10.35 am and we were outside Parliament by 10.45am. We were greeted by a gunman at the entrance who told us to 'piss off'.
>
> So Pareti reversed the car into a road leading into the cassava patch and we filed our stories for the 11 am news. The timing was perfect.
>
> I believe that we had the upper hand since we recorded parliamentary proceedings. The other journalists were too busy covering the protest march [in Suva] that day and it would have been a shame if we had not broken the news.
>
> When the police arrived at the scene a little after 11am—together with the other media organisations—we were stuck in the middle of

> Battery Road. This was between the gates and the road block erected by the police.
>
> This got the other journalists irritated since they wanted to be in the 'exclusive spot' also.
>
> I look like an Indian and this worked against me whenever I tried to get into Parliament. However, my name, Tamani (which is Fijian) always managed to save the day.
>
> Even rebel leader George Speight who was in the middle of one of his anti-Indian speeches looked at me and said: 'I hope you don't mind'.
>
> And when he was told I was a 'half-caste' like him, he quickly said, 'You know how I feel and what I mean?'
>
> I wanted to say, 'No! You bald-headed freak' but had to keep quiet.

Customary obligations are frequently a burden on Pacific political reporters. Barely starting as a journalist, Nair had already faced the pressures of traditional loyalties. During the Speight coup many journalists were unable to function 'objectively' under the crisis pressures (Moala, 2001, p. 127).

The shutdown

On Sunday, May 29, hours after a mob attacked Fiji Television and cut transmission for almost 48 hours, the university authorities closed the USP journalism website without explanation, fearing a similar raid on the sprawling Laucala campus (Cass, 2002; Gounder, 2000; Gurdayal, 2000). Undaunted, the students were offered an alternative site hosted by the Department of Social Communication and Journalism at the University of Technology, Sydney, and carried on publishing from the next day (www.acij.uts.edu.au/archives/index.html). Australian Centre for Independent Journalism director Associate Professor Chris Nash at UTS said: 'The suggestion that journalism staff and students, and indeed any academics, might somehow desist from reporting, commenting and publishing on the current situation is akin to suggesting that doctors and nurses should turn their backs on wounded people in a conflict. It's unconscionable.' (Nash, 2000).

Alison Ofotalau, a young Solomon Islander who had been a former *Wansolwara* editor, said it was an unfortunate decision by the university since *Pacific Journalism Online* was one of only three Fiji websites which were reporting internationally with primary source material on the coup: 'It was a great opportunity for us … and we are lucky to be reporting on a major world event.' Ofotalau compiled a transcript of the controversial Fiji TV *Close-Up*

programme, which was claimed to have sparked the attack on the station (Robie, 2000a). The transcript was reposted widely on websites internationally and republished from USP by news agencies. Ironically, it was the last item posted on the USP Journalism website before *Pacific Journalism Online* was itself shut down.

At a meeting three days after the website closure, requested by the Journalism Programme with the Vice-Chancellor, senior university officials said they wanted 'self-censorship' and for the regular journalism training newspaper *Wansolwara* to be 'postponed'. When told that *Wansolwara* had already gone to press, the authorities wanted distribution of the paper stopped and for the paper to be inspected with a view to removing articles. This was refused by the programme staff.

An American graphics designer, Mara Fulmer, who had worked with the Media Centre at USP in the mid-1990s, independently hosted the students' gagged newspaper *Wansolwara Online* at her Looking Glass website in the US (www.lookinglassdesign.com/wansolwara/wansol.html). Fulmer said: 'I consider it an honour and privilege to do this for freedom of the press. The students have worked so hard on this. They have truly earned their journo stripes' (*Noted*, September, 2000).

A series of protest letters to the university administration from groups and organisations as diverse as Reporters Sans Frontières in Paris (Ménard, 2000), the Commonwealth Journalists' Association, the NZ Journalism Education Association, Queensland University's Journalism Department, PEN New Zealand and the Committee to Protect Journalists in New York followed. (Robie, 2000). The RSF general secretary, Robert Ménard, wrote to USP vice-chancellor Ali'imuamua Esekia Solofa on 9 June 2000:

> Reporters Sans Frontières respectfully asks you to allow *Pacific Journalism Online* to be reopen[ed] and guarantee that journalists and students can work freely as long as they comply with the law. RSF considers that gagging a website that merely publishes news, and in a professional manner, is a violation of press freedom, Finally, RSF asks you to ensure that [the] newspaper *Wansolwara* can publish freely. (Ménard, 2000)

Murray Burt, president of the Commonwealth Journalists Association, wrote from Canada: 'I beg you to legitimise the voice of your student

media. Demonstrate that a free press is critical to democracy and the only hope for saving it' (Burt, 2000). Professor John Henningham, then head of the journalism department at the University of Queensland, wrote: 'Suspension of a news and information-based website is equivalent to closing down a newspaper or television station, and clearly breaches the most fundamental of press freedoms to which all journalists (and academics) are pledged' (Henningham, 2000). The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists protested about the website closure as part of a two-page statement condemning 'violence against journalists in Fiji' (CPJ, 2000). The CPJ had documented several cases of journalists being detained, assaulted and threatened: 'In one case, a cameraman was shot in the arm; in another incident, soldiers ransacked a local TV station.'

Solofa ignored all the international letters of protest. Instead, I was sent a letter of 'reprimand'—after *Wansolwara* had been distributed in defiance of the attempt to ban it. He said:

> The decision I had taken to close down the Journalism Programme website was a straight-forward decision based entirely on one consideration: the safety and security of the property of the university and of the lives of the people engaged in it...
>
> Let me make an important observation which should cover the criticisms you and others have raised over the closure of the website...
>
> The USP Journalism Programme is not a media agency, neither is it a news/information outlet. The USP Journalism Programme is an education and training facility for future journalists and others who need journalism knowledge and skills in their work... The current closure of the Journalism website has clearly illustrated that our students do not need it to publicise or publish their pieces if that is what their true intention is (Solofa, 2000).

The comeback

Solofa's letter was leaked from his office to *Islands Business* magazine, which published it in full in the 'Whispers' column without any contextual or balancing information (Whispers, 2000). Three senior academic staff immediately protested and the president of the USP Staff Association, Dr Biman Prasad, called for Solofa's letter to be withdrawn, saying it was 'unjustified' and condemning 'self-censorship'. Prasad added: 'Academic freedom is always fundamental to the survival and operation of a university, even more

so when there is a crisis and threats to academic freedom' (Prasad, 2000a). Prasad later described the incident in a paper about the 'crisis of conscience' for USP academic staff when addressing the annual conference of the New Zealand Association of University Staff (NZAUS) in Wellington:

> The staff association was vigilant and took a firm stand on issues that we felt were designed to promote self-censorship. For example, soon after the May 19 coup, the university administration in panic unilaterally decided to close the journalism programme website. The journalism students were provided with a fabulous opportunity to practise skills in the real life situation what they were learning in theory. Their reporting on the crisis was appreciated around the world.
>
> The administration's drastic move to shut the website down was rather regrettable from the point of view of both staff and students of journalism. The Association of USP Staff protested vigorously against the closure and it was allowed to continue. (Prasad, 2000b)

On June 28, the website was allowed to reopen (to enable students to access its teaching resources and *Online Classroom*), on condition no further news was posted about the Fiji coup. Almost a month later, on July 25, the 40-strong academic staff of the School of Humanities' Board of Studies passed an unanimous resolution condemning the administration over the shutdown of the website. Two letters dealing with the political crisis and the role of the university were later forwarded formally to the Academic Committee. One of the important justifications that the academics gave was that the existence of the journalism website provided important information for their security. The letter defending the website, signed by the acting Head of School, Dr Desma Hughes, said:

> We believe [the closure of the journalism website on May 29] was unsound pedagogically...
>
> It has been stated that the purpose of the journalism programme's productions and publications are as training grounds for prospective journalists from around the region. We consider that the journalism website provided outstanding and excellent training for the journalism students in that it involved reporting and commenting on real issues.
>
> The situation that evolved during the time of the coup can hardly be simulated for the purposes of teaching.

> The coup gave our students an ideal opportunity to practise their journalism skills under the supervision of one of the school's professional staff members, especially in the area of investigative journalism. We therefore find it difficult to understand the rationale behind the decision to suspend the website that deprived our students. (Hughes, 2000)

The Board's letter said that being informed was a crucial element of personal security. While the university's security needs were understood, the journalism programme's 'unique contribution' to the distribution of reliable and objective news and commentary to Pacific people and the world should have been carefully considered.

But while the academics wrangled over the issues of security versus academic freedom, the student journalists carried on with the job. They continued to feed stories and digital pictures on the Fiji and Solomon Islands crises by email to the ACIJ website until the end of August, when the USP Journalism website editorial policy was resolved—and unchanged. News coverage returned to normal at the Laucala campus.

The aftermath

The USP Journalism awards night on November 24 was exemplary. Four students were honoured with prizes for their reportage during the coup and a group of second-year students showed their mini-documentary about the closure of the website, *Frontline Reporters: Coup Coverage by Student Journalists*. Tamani Nair, a reporter who scooped the takeover of Parliament for Radio Fiji won the Best Student Radio Reporter Prize; Matelita Ragogo, who was briefly held captive in the Parliamentary press gallery by the rebels, won the Best In-depth Story Prize for a profile on George Speight; Reggie Dutt won the Best Editor Prize for editing *Wansolwara* and *Pacific Journalism Online* during the coup; and Joe Yaya won the Most Promising First-Year Student Prize for his pictures of masked gunmen and other images that were published around the world.

But a remarkable point about the awards event was a diplomatic row unleashed by the chief guest, then New Zealand High Commissioner Tia Barrett, who took a modest swipe at the slowness of bringing the coup perpetrators to justice. He also made an important statement about Indigenous issues and journalism which riled the military-installed regime:

> What is difficult to accept in this dialogue on Indigenous rights is the underlying assumption that those rights are pre-eminent over other more fundamental human rights. This just cannot be so, not in today's world ... Nowhere is it written in any holy scripture that because you are Indigenous you have first rights over others in their daily rights. You should be respected and highly regarded as an indigenous person, but respect is earned, not obtained on demand. (Barrett, 2000)

In the end, said Barrett, information would make the difference in the process of cultural change for Pacific Islanders in the face of globalisation to improve people's lives. This was where the journalist played an important role. Barrett appealed to the coup-surviving graduates to always bear in mind the needs of their people and their thirst for knowledge.

A footnote to the affair came a week later in the Journalism Education Association (JEA) awards in December 2000. Known as the Ossies, after the late Australian foreign correspondent Osmar S. White and funded by his estate, USP students won two of the major awards and were highly commended in four others for their reporting of the Speight attempted coup. *Pacific Journalism Online* website, 'devoted to daily coverage of the coup', won the Dr Charles Stuart Prize for best student publication in any medium while the Pacific students' newspaper *Wansolwara* was awarded a highly commended in the same category. *Pacific Journalism Online* also won the award for best regular publication (cited by Pearson, 2001). Category judge, deputy editor Mike van Niekerk, of *The Age Online*, said the students working on the publication 'rose to the challenge of providing high quality reports of a dramatic international news event on their doorstep':

> They did so in challenging circumstances and by providing these reports on the internet they were one of the few sources of information at critical times of the events taking place. As such, the quality of the writing is of a high standard for students. Taken as a body of work, it is very impressive. (Cited by Pearson, 2001)

Ironically, after a standing ovation at the JEA awards, a conference paper that I presented on December 6 about media coverage of the Speight coup entitled 'Coup coup land: The press and putsch in Fiji', stirred an international controversy, particularly in Fiji (Robie, 2000b). Five days later, a *PINA Nius Online* email report misrepresenting the paper was distributed to

Pacific newspapers. A campaign of bitter personal attacks against the author followed on the JEANet and Penang Commonwealth editors email list-servers over the next two weeks. A two-page article published in *Pacific* magazine presented the furore as a 12-round boxing match fought out on the internet, 'heavily slanted in favour of the *Fiji Times* and PINA' (Pacific, 2001). The anonymous author wrote:

> The magazine cited a formal complaint by the newspaper's expatriate publisher and editor-in-chief to the University of the South Pacific, alleging 'manufactured evidence to establish an erroneous conclusion'. This was rejected by the university. The magazine did not interview the author or seek a copy of the paper, nor did it canvas vews of other media commentators supporting the analysis. (Robie, 2001a, p. 157)

Rejecting the *Fiji Times* criticisms and protesting against *Pacific* magazine's misrepresentations, Association of University of the South Pacific Staff (AUSPS) spokesperson associate professor Scott MacWilliam said in a letter to the editor: 'AUSPS is concerned that, while the *Fiji Times* and other news organisations purport to support the freedom to express opinions, such opinions are only acceptable if they sustain the same organisations' views of themselves' (MacWilliam, 2001).

The legacy for Fiji journalism

A decade on, the author has contacted several former and students and staff involved in the coup coverage at the time to gauge their reflections and how they consider the experience has impacted on them today. Matelita Ragogo was one of three journalists reporting in the parliamentary press gallery on the morning of 19 May 2000 when Speight's gunmen walked in. A senior journalist on the *Fiji Times* at the time, she recently accepted a Commonwealth Secretariat scholarship to study in Britain a decade on from that fateful day. Immediately before moving to Brighton, she was studying for a Postgraduate Diploma in Pacific Studies at the University of the South Pacific. As an independent journalist, her reporting had included being a correspondent for Radio New Zealand International (RNZI) and contributing to local and regional outlets such as *The Fiji Times*, *Pacnews, Islands Business* and *Pacific* magazine. She recalled:

I was in Parliament when [George Speight] walked in with his crew. They were a dishevelled bunch, obviously disorganised. No one reacted, I think the initial reaction was more of amusement—in the press gallery it was. At least until the first gun shot when we realised it was more sinister than what met the eye.

It was interesting to watch the reactions of the MPs—you noticed who did not place their phones in the waste basket that was taken around to the members. [Prime Minister] Mahendra Chaudhry and Tupeni Baba [one of two deputies] and the rest of the male members of government were dragged out of their seats and kicked behind the knee to force them down—it was a sad process to watch.

What irony to watch someone who everyone in Traps [a well-known Suva bar] knew was a [failed businessman] issuing orders and talking about Indigenous rights to governance. It was definitely the first time I saw him in a *sulu*; I knew he could not speak Fijian fluently, his Australian accent did not help!

A plainclothes soldier had by now positioned himself behind us, with his M16. Josephine was crying. John and I could just stare at the horrible way things were unfolding downstairs. And then we heard the noise. The [demonstrators] who had marched through town had reached Parliament.

Watching the winding dark line of humans marching up to Parliament sent chills down my spine—the mass finally made me confront what was happening: A repeat of 1987, except I was actually witnessing it this time.

Everything after that—the first press conference, those who felt they could swing Speight's plans off, a whole company of soldiers marching in; civilians with guns—was a blur for me. You could cut the atmosphere with a knife—there was real hatred in that place.

My worst memory is hearing them, those who had taken over a government, having their devotion and singing hymns in rooms several feet away from where the hostages were kept.

This was not Christianity, never mind the caring, hospitable lot Fijians were known as (M. Ragogo, email interview with author, 22 April 2010).

Ragogo subsequently reported for international media, always with a strong commitment to democracy and against armed political interventions. The Speight coup had made a deep impression on her and the combinaton of student journalism at *Wansolwara*, industry experience and legal studies gave

her an edge with her media freedom work. Asked about the closure of the USP journalism website when martial law was declared, Ragogo recalled:

> I did hear about the journalism website shutting down (by now they—journalism students—were part of the media corps that staked out the Parliament complex) and felt that as a university, USP had definitely failed its students: Obviously, it did not want to risk attacks from the rebels nor risk its funding from whichever group would make up the new government.
>
> The willingness of another university to publish the students' stories was admirable but there were also discussions making the rounds about its motivations. By now, our parachute journalists had truly pitched their tents and the students' contribution may have been giving them a run for their money. As well, it represented another source of information they had to check. (Ragogo, ibid.)

What are your reflections about independent student journalism and publications at journalism schools?

> As a former editor of *Wansolwara*, [I found that] student journalism and publications at journalism schools are essential for such opportunities. Dependent on the dynamics of the student newsroom and how team-oriented the students are, such newspapers offer an introduction to the ethical and professionalism the students will have to apply in the real world. To already have that discipline can mean a much easier integration to the real [media] world. (Ragogo, ibid.)

Has your journalism experience been a different formative one from what you might have experienced without this training and development?

> You come out stronger as a believer in democratic principles, especially when you see how members of the government were humiliated, when you catch glimpses of the hostages walking around their tiny rooms, when you see young men, teenagers, pretend to be soldiers in morning drills, when you see how desecrated what was once a Parliament, when you hear of rebels shooting dead a policeman and trashing a newsroom, when you witness an atmosphere of hate and distrust … I could go on.
>
> The changes I saw in some senior journalists though caused some disillusionment: No matter what happens, there will always be people who benefit and if your newsroom bosses are of one politic and you another then obviously, frustrations will occur.

I left the [*Fiji Times*] two years later, for very different reasons, but knowing that wherever I worked, I would remain objective and never ever fabricate things just for a good story. And I have no doubt that I will always oppose the forceful removal of democratic governance, however it is justified.

Shailendra Singh was editor of *The Review* news magazine at the time of the Speight putsch and has since become divisional head of journalism at the University of the South Pacific. He has been responsible for development of *Wansolwara* in the post-millennium years. He found the Speight period and the closure of the USP journalism website a 'defining moment' for the regional university. The campus administration was challenged over freedom of speech and academic freedom issues.

At the time, people [in Fiji] were still learning about the internet. The coup brought home the power of this new medium. The internet had made censorship virtually impossible. The Australian Centre for Independent Journalism stood in solidarity with USP journalism over media freedom issues. It showed how important international networks are when media freedom comes under threat and news is being suppressed. (S. Singh, email interview with author, 21 April 2010).

Singh believes strongly campus-based training newspapers such as *Wansolwara* 'play an important role in training students in real world journalism':

They get to experience what is meant by deadlines and some of the other daily pressures of being a journalist—such as attempts by people to intimidate them, or to influence news. They make mistakes and learn from them. Such publications are an alternative source of news. They are not beholden to advertisers, neither do they face the kind of commercial pressures that mainstream news organisations do. Student publications can be bolder, they can take risks and they can experiment to try out things that commercial media may not be able to. (Singh, ibid.)

Reggie Dutt, then editor of *Wansolwara* and also on the editorial team of *Pacific Journalism Online*, is now on a postgraduate programme at Bond University, Queensland, after having worked at Fiji Television and other media, and as a researcher for the Fiji Human Rights Commission.

At the time, reporting on the May 2000 coup was an exciting challenge for me. At no point did I stop to think about not reporting, or continuing to go to university every day to work on the *PJO*, while the semester was put on hold by the University. Only when the university closed down the website, did I think the situation through. Even then, I was against the university's decision to shut us down and felt it was unfair to prevent us from learning 'on-the-job' from this unique opportunity.

As it happened, a number of avenues opened up for the *PJO* to be published on mirror sites, like the one created at ACIJ. Personally, I was disappointed with the university, but was happy that we had the mirror sites to publish our stories on. Would I do the same all over again? Without a moment's hesitation. (R. Dutt, email interview with author, 27 April 2010).

Christine Gounder, then working for the *Fiji Daily Post* and also editing online at *Pacific Journalism Online* is now a Radio New Zealand journalist and has filed a steady stream of Fiji-based stories in recent months. She recalls:

I feel privileged to have been part of the student team that took the opportunity to put to use the skills learnt in the school newsroom into practice. It was both a nervous and an exciting time and something we can be proud of for our lifetime. I still remember the day we received a threatening call asking us to shut down *Pacific Journalism Online* as we were one of the few telling the world what was happening in Fiji. That phone call made us aware of how important our job was and made us want to work even harder.

We were disappointed when the USP vice-chancellor at the time, Esekia Solofa, decided that *PJO* would be temporarily closed for our safety and for the safety of USP. This wouldn't have happened if we [had been] an independent online news service or newspaper, but we had to comply because we didn't have the independence we thought we should have had. We were delighted when the ACIJ offered to be a mirror for our website, and so the work went on.

I believe serious journalism students will learn a lot more from taking on the type of responsibility that independent publications present. The exposure to the pressures of producing the publication on time, having quality news, feature and sports stories, as well as layout and advertising to pay for the publication, gives students an appreciation of the processes in a wholesome manner. With *Wansolwara* and *PJO*, I experienced real-life journalism which helped put the journalism

profession in perspective for me (S. Gounder, email interview with author, 27 April 2010).

Noora Ali was an international student from the Maldives studying journalism for three years at the time. She is now the director of Project Maldives Pvt Ltd and provides media consultancy, research and training in documentary film making. Before taking up the appointment in mid-2009, she held the position of Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture in the Maldives and was responsible mainly for the media and arts component of the ministry's work:

> I remember trying to go to Parliament to cover stories, managing to get in, being mistaken for an Indo-Fijian, and writing stories for *Wansolwara*. Sad for Fiji were those days, but for a journalism student it was really a time to step up from being a student to the real world of journalism.
>
> I am very proud to have been a part of the *Wansolwara* team who covered the Fiji 2000 coup. Proud to have worked with David who showed us how real journalists carry themselves and the triumph in bringing news to the people and the world in difficult and trying times. (N. Ali, emailed interview with author, 27 April 2010)

Noora Ali says that the coup coverage experience was one of the most profound experiences she has ever had and it provided guidance for her career future:

> The USP journalism days shaped me. They also provided an atmosphere of free thinking on media reforms that needed to take place in my own country. [This] certainly laid the foundation for the work I did ahead in my media career, mostly in the area of policy formulation. (Ibid.)

At the time, Patrick Craddock was senior/media producer at the USP Media Centre and was teaching broadcast journalism. His previous media background had been with Radio New Zealand where he worked for more than 20 years as a producer of *Morning Report*, on the *Insight* weekly documentary programme, on Radio New Zealand International and as manager of the Continuing Education Unit. During the attempted coup, Craddock was in charge of a broadcast audio studio at USP. After establishing the small Radio Pacific FM station at the university several years

before the coup, he began experimenting with internet broadcasting in spite of the narrow broadband width then available at the university. He recalls:

> For at least 48 hours, maybe longer, there was little news going out of Fiji to the outside world media. David knew this and so did I. I began recording audio from local Suva radio stations and did this task on an hourly basis. The news was quickly edited and sent by the internet to media agencies in New Zealand, Australia and Britain.
>
> My memory of the time is of recording audio from the public and private radio stations for around 16 hours a day and sending audio packets over the internet. By around the third day after the coup, the world media had landed in force in Suva and was well established. I kept recording, editing and dispatching audio news for several weeks. (P. Craddock, email interview with author, 11 May 2010)

Craddock regards the establishment of *Wansolwara* as an important part of journalism education at USP: 'It encouraged students to write, see their work published and to receive comments back from the published exposure' (Craddock, 2010).

> Over the years I have seen numerous editions. It still serves a genuine training ground with real news. That is its strength. When I left [Fiji] in 2007, more than 3000 copies were being printed and students wrote news and feature stories. Year Three journalism students researched and wrote full-page articles, the first year students did shorter ones. Advertising was well established with the aim of making the newspaper pay its way. Students learned to walk the streets, knock on doors, smile, and talk and get money for advertisements for *Wansolwara*. (Ibid.)

Conclusion

Given the socio-political realities and demographics of both Fiji and Papua New Guinea, it has never been easy being a journalist. In Fiji, both the leading ethnic groups—indigenous and Indo-Fijian—'feel equally aggrieved' (Singh & Prasad, 2008, p. 3). Fijians believe they are marginalised in business and the professions and fear losing political control in their homeland. However, Indo-Fijians believe they have been denied their fair share of political power, and they are discriminated against in education and government jobs. Also, voting in Fiji is along ethnicity lines, and for decades many politicians have played on these prejudices in electorates.

In Papua New Guinea, complex rivalries between ethnic and cultural groups also divide the nation and have serious impacts on the effectiveness of the news media.

In this context, the student press and broadcasters in the Pacific universities need to be proactive in their coverage and philosophy as news media. They need to defend the freedom of the press and freedom of expression in the traditions of an independent Fourth Estate while also helping Pacific nations forge a common vision shared by all its citizens. This is not an easy challenge because while *Wansolwara* and other student publications are exempt from registration under Fiji's new *Media Industry Development Decree 2010*, they are still subject to the same harsh penalties for breaches. Self-censorship pressures mean that editors would 'think twice' about publishing any criticism of Fiji state policies or players. Thus today it is far more difficult to match the free press benchmarks set by the student press in earlier years. However, in late 2009 *Wansolwara* struck a partnership with the *Fiji Sun* to publish the newspaper as an independent 16-page tabloid liftout and continues to win awards for its social justice issue investigations and professionalism (*Fiji Sun* boosts *Wansolwara's* readership with hot press deal, 2009).

A shared view of many of the students reflecting on what they learned during the putsch is that student journalism was in many respects more independent than the mainstream commercial media driven by profit. Some thought that 'the sheer experience was worth a three-year journalism degree'. A novel idea and popular perhaps but not one that was realistic. While reporting the coup was certainly cathartic, and led to some pedagogical changes, such as including critical 'military studies' with journalism school workshops alongside peacekeeping soldiers on leave from Timor-Leste duties in the Suva barracks—to better understand the military psyche—the experience proved a unique one-off case. When the next coup came with Bainimarama seizing power in December 2006, students were already on vacation and the regional campus was virtually empty. Nevertheless, like the Sandline mercenary crisis in Papua New Guinea, the Speight coup experience helped propel them into the real world and tested their ability to hold their nerve and provide ethical guidelines as young student journalists: 'I don't think any of us blinked and it gave us all a huge amount of confidence. It gave our team members a self-belief that they could report on the big stage, asking the right questions and writing good stories' (Dutt, 2010).

Note

1. Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

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University of the South Pacific: www.usp.ac.fj

Dr David Robie was head of journalism at the University of Papua New Guinea and then University of the South Pacific from 1993-2002. He is now director of the Pacific Media Centre. A version of this article was presented as one of the University of Queensland World Press Freedom Day Lectures at St Lucia, Brisbane, on 29 April 2010.
david.robie@aut.ac.nz

12. A case for Fiji's grassroots citizenry and media to be better informed, engaged for democracy

ABSTRACT

Democracy in Fiji has been top-down where primarily the middle class and the wealthy elite have understood its true merits and values. Politicians, professionals, academics and civil society organisations, rather than the grassroots population, have been at the forefront of advocating against coups. Democracy was described as a 'foreign flower' by ethno-nationalists for two decades. Some critics see it as having failed to work properly in Fiji because a lack of infrastructure and development means grassroots people are not sufficiently informed to make critical decisions and hold leaders accountable. This, and a lack of unity, led to a failure of widespread protests against coups. Civil society, political activists and individuals were isolated in their struggle against coups. The media has been a key player in anti-coup protests as it relayed information that enabled networking and partnership. Media censorship since April 2009 has restricted their role and violated citizens' Right to Information. This article argues that for democracy to work, the infrastructure and communications technology needs to reach the masses so people are adequately informed through an uncensored media.

Keywords: civil society, communications technology, democracy, development, grassroots, political activism

MOSMI BHIM
Civil Society Advocate, Fiji

DEMOCRACY in Fiji has been top-down where primarily the middle class and the rich have understood its true merits and values. Politicians, professionals, academics and civil society organisations, rather than the grassroots population, have been at the forefront of advocating against coups. Democracy was described as a 'foreign flower' by

ethnonationalists for two decades. Now many of them believe elections are the right way to choose Fiji's leaders. The 5 December 2006 coup has thrown up a series of complex questions about democracy as some advocates for equal rights and democracy gave their support to coup-makers, and as ethnonationalist politicians turned against an indigenous Fijian coup-maker.

Past elections in Fiji have been won on votes cast in response to emotional appeals by politicians as opposed to criteria based on better services and accountability of the government. The lack of widespread protests against coups is seen in the context of the need for basic services at the grassroots level, including the lack of infrastructure (roads, water, electricity and telecommunications) and its contribution to the malfunctioning of democratic processes in Fiji through a citizenry that is not adequately informed by media or research. A lack of good leaders has contributed to this problem, as has the discomfort experienced by ordinary citizens when seeking accountability and transparency from their leaders. The comprehension of ordinary citizens is essential for democracy to work, as is a realisation of economic, social and cultural rights.

Civil society, political activists and individuals were isolated in their struggle against coups. The media has been a key player in anti-coup protests as it relayed information that enabled networking and partnership. Media censorship since April 2009 has restricted their role and violated citizens' Right to Information. This article argues that for democracy to work, the infrastructure and communications technology needs to reach the masses so people are adequately informed through an uncensored media. Civil society, politicians and individuals need to unite to fight for democracy.

Nature of democracy in Fiji

The nature of democracy in Fiji is a system introduced by departing colonisers after a century of colonisation, and 'Fijianisation' of Christianity. Asesela Ravuvu (Ravuvu, 1991) talks at length of how Fijians were colonised, tamed and rebellions controlled. After Cession in 1874,

> Fijian chiefs were generally unhappy that their once despotic authority had been curtailed by the presence of the colonial government. Now and then they would reassert their authority by disobeying certain arbitrary orders of the colonial administrators'... Chiefs and people who disobeyed orders by government officials were usually severely dealt with. They were either put under custody or deported to other remote

> and foreign areas in Fiji away from sight and support of their kinsmen.
> Some were placed in European plantations to work out their penalties,
> and some were tried and executed. (Ravuvu, 1991, pp. 18-19)

Fijians were thus subjugated and colonised by the British. Indian indentured labourers brought to Fiji to work in sugar cane plantations from 1874, were over-worked and suffered unimaginable abuse and indignities. Descendents of the Indian indentured labour force began struggling for democracy as early as the 1920s. Indians went on strike in 1920 and 1921 to demand for an increase in wages. It is said Indians understood democracy better due to India's colonial legacy and the fight for independence going in the mother-land. Indians were keenly aware of being discriminated against and the need to work to establish themselves in this new land, far away from the country of their ancestors.

Indians continued struggling for equal rights and in 1929 moved a motion for common roll. The colonial government reacted to this by granting the franchise to Indians, but the Fijians remained without franchise. While Indians elected their leaders, the Fijian leaders were selected by the Great Council of Chiefs. However, ordinary Fijians did not fight for their right to vote, they were granted the right to vote in the 1960s.

Fijians did not struggle for independence and equal rights after colonisation. This means Fijians have yet to undergo the civil and political revolution often necessary to establish democracy. The coups in Fiji could symbolise the anti-colonial struggle for democracy by Fijians as it has been directed against the perceived ruling class. Each country goes through its own cycles of peace and revolutions to achieve democracy. The 2006 coup is seen as a struggle against the chiefs and Fijian elites who established a stronghold since the 1987 coup. This view is echoed by Dr Satish Chand in a paper where he argues that Fiji is on a 'rocky road of coups to democracy' (Chand, 2009, p. 1). The paper was withdrawn by Chand after it received widespread criticism from fellow academics. Chand argues that Fiji never was a real democracy, that each of the coups has moved Fiji closer towards a representative democracy, and that Fiji is as close as ever to bringing about democratic reforms (ibid.). If this interpretation of modernisation theory is correct, then true sustainable democracy may be achieved in Fiji after ordinary Fijians make a revolution to realise their rights.

Grassroots remain voiceless

The elections in Fiji are fought on the grounds on ethnicity, values and fears of the ordinary people. The parties who win are those that show that they indentify with the common people—to do this, they must not only show a ready understanding of their basic needs of low cost food items, water, health, education and infrastructure facilities, but also of culture, traditions and economic safeguards. An analysis of the 2001 elections results reveal that political parties exploited to the full the different customs and traditions of the races and cultures in Fiji.

> The winners were the political parties that most successfully exploited and manipulated traditional, ethnic, cultural and religious influences. Overall, these influences compartmentalised the voters making them less free to express their will. (Yabaki, 2009, p. 401)

The 2006 election results were found to have the same trend as the 2001. Fiji's elections have been unkind to reformed politicians who publicly acknowledge wrongs. Those who once supported ethno-nationalist policies but came to embrace multiracialism have been treated poorly at the polls by their people. For example, Sitiveni Rabuka, Ratu Meli Vesikula, and Ratu Epeli Ganilau have all suffered electoral defeat after embracing multiculturalism. Jai Ram Reddy was voted out after the National Federation Party (NFP) formed a coalition with coup-maker Rabuka's party Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei. Fiji's society is not providing space for politicians to hold different views, as should be the case in a democracy.

Elections are not providing leaders who are truly responsive to the needs of the people. Elections are also not providing leaders with vision and integrity. This means that democracy in Fiji has not worked because it has not reached the grassroots. The growing educated middle-class of all races enjoy democracy as they are privy to the knowledge base which, with an informed society, is a prerequisite for proper functioning of a democracy. It was largely the middle class, or those with the capability of climbing up the social ladder, that participated in elections and were candidates, and who represent the professions of accountants, lawyers, doctors, teachers, small-business owners, academics, and communications workers. It is mainly from this class that the 'human rights activists' and democracy defenders also tend to come from.

The grassroots seem unable to put themselves forward as candidates who have integrity and vision. They are dependent on civil society organisations (CSOs) articulating their needs. This is a common problem in Third World countries. Some CSOs are introducing initiatives to teach how citizenship can be claimed and rights realised through the actions and agencies of people themselves (Kabeer, 2005) in countries such as Bangladesh, Brazil, Britain, Nigeria, Peru, Rajasthan, South Africa and the United States. It is hoped that such education will make 'institutions more responsive to the needs and voices of poor people'.

A lack of critical citizens can result in elections being won by mediocre candidates put forward by political parties, as has been the case in Fiji and other South Pacific countries. The democracy defenders and politicians are from the middle class, which means poor leadership is located in this class. The question many ask is how do leaders benefit if the grassroots population remain underdeveloped and uninformed?

Failure of widespread protest against coups
After the 1987 coup, a group of democracy advocates emerged, steadfast in their protest, comprising of academics such as Vijay Naidu, Wadan Narsey, Claire Slatter, Sitiveni Ratuva, women's rights activists such as Peni Moore, Shamima Ali, Imrana Jalal, and also the late Amelia Rokotuivuna and lawyer Richard Naidu. Many others, such as Dr Anirudh Singh who was abducted and tortured by the military, resulting in hospitalisation after the 1987 coup, have also been involved, but the names mentioned above were more widely known. Their struggle was based on standing up for what they felt was morally right. The rights-based non-government organisations (NGOs) had been vocal opponents of the 1987 and 2000 coups, many putting their activists' safety at risk by voicing concern against human rights abuses.

The 19 May 2000 coup saw a more organised response from activists. By then there was an NGO Coalition on Human Rights (NGOCHR) comprising of Aids Taskforce, Citizens' Constitutional Forum (CCF), Ecumenical Centre for Research Education and Advocacy (ECREA), fem'link Pacific, Fiji Disabled People's Association (FDPA), Fiji Human Rights Commission (FHRC), Fiji I Care, Fiji Trades Union Congress (FTUC), Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC), Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM), Fiji Young Lawyers Association (FYLA), Greenpeace Pacific, National Council for Women in Fiji

(NCWF), Pacific Islands Association of NGOs (PIANGO), Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT), Women's Action for Change (WAC), Equal Ground Pasifik, and the Pacific Concerns Resource Centre (PCRC).

The NGOCHR has been administered by a rotating secretariat. The first secretariat in 1997 was the FWCC. In June 1999, the Secretariat moved to CCF with director Reverend Akuila Yabaki as chairperson. In June 2006, the Secretariat moved to FWRM. Only rights-based NGOs, including CCF, FWCC, WAC, Fem'link, ECREA, and FWRM, participated in anti-coup protests.

The CSOs with a large membership of ordinary citizens tend to refrain from making anti-coup statements. These include workers and teachers' unions which have large memberships and tend to align at strategic times with political parties. These CSOs have done their share of protesting, but stop when their members' livelihoods, or their own jobs, are put at high risk.

Perceived discord within the NGOCHR

In the aftermath of the 5 December 2006 coup, there was a perceived discord within the NGOCHR, which was evident in the lack of a media release. Instead, there was a news release on 7 December 2006 from the newly created Coalition for Democracy and Peace. The chair of the NGOCHR, Virisila Buadromo, explains:

> There was no issue about getting the NGOCHR together to put out a statement following the coup. The issue was that there were concerned citizens and organisations [which] were against the coup; they joined the NGOCHR meetings in support of democracy and the rule of law and the overthrow of the elected government. (V. Buadromo, interview with author, 12 December 2007)

The coalition was strongly supported by FWCC, FWRM, Pacific Centre for Public Integrity (PCPI), and Fem'Link Pacific and held regular meetings in December 2006, through which an action plan was prepared. The Coalition prepared a 'Call for a Presidential Commission of Truth, Justice and Resolution' which would have established an inquiry going back to the events of 2000, to 'clarify the truth regarding the events of 2000 attempted coups and mutiny; clarify the constitutional issues raised by the post-2000 events leading to the current impasse', make fair judgement holding national interest paramount, make recommendations on demands presented by Republic of

Fiji Military Forces (RFMF), 'make any other recommendations as it sees fit to ensure that there is Sustainable and Just Resolution of the current crisis; end this abhorrent cycle of coups'.

The Coalition fully supported the deposed Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase and did not accept that the RFMF had 'any authority from the people of Fiji for their current actions in forcing the removal of a constitutionally elected government'. The Coalition proposed 14 members for the Presidential Commission.

The Coalition lasted three weeks and no communication was received after Christmas 2006. Buadromo explains that, 'initially, there was a lot of support, unfortunately since the coup occurred in December and it was the holiday season and maybe people either went away for holidays or offices closed for the festive season… As such, it ended up being very few organisations and individuals who continued to pressure the regime.' (Buadromo, 2007).

The lack of coverage by the media on NGO statements created a feeling of a lack of reaction from NGOs on the coup and that discord existed. The real rift occurred after the abduction and torture of a group of young activists on Christmas Eve in 2006, including Virisila Buadromo. The appearance of a lack of swift reaction from NGOs creates a sense of betrayal, compounded by selective media reporting. The impact on Buadromo was traumatic, and the NGOCHR was not reconvened until months afterwards.

Salt was added to wounds by FHRC Director Shaista Shameem who had played a leading role in protests against human rights abuses during the 56-day hostage crisis of the 2000 coup. Dr Shameem's paper released on 4 January 2007 justified Frank Bainimarama's military takeover on the grounds of the 'doctrine of necessity' (Shameem, 2007). The paper argued that as the lawful government deposed in the 2000 coup was not returned to power, all subsequent governments were 'unconstitutional'. The paper highlighted policies of the Soqosoqo ni Duavata ni Lewenivanua (SDL) government from 2001 to 2006 which it rationalised as unconstitutional because of breach of various human rights. The alleged improper conduct of the 2006 elections, comprising various irregularities and voter registration discrepancies, is cited as the 2006 government was not legitimately elected (Shameem, 2007). The paper outraged NGOs and increased the rift within the NGOCHR.

The division grew stronger after the swearing in of Bainimarama as interim PM on 5 January 2007. NGOs such as ECREA, working with marginalised

and poor communities 'who suffered under the SDL government' were not forthcoming in criticising the coup. New activists were accused of being political party supporters. A regional NGO, PCRC, which had left the coalition after the 2000 coup, rejoined in 2007 to protest against the 2006 coup. WAC resigned from the coalition on what it terms as 'personal and political' agendas dominating the coalition.

A few NGOs took a hardline stance of non-engagement and outright condemnation of the new interim regime (FWRM, FWCC, PCPI and Femlink'). NGOCHR, however, agreed that they were united on two issues:

1. They opposed the illegal overthrow of the government
2. They opposed all human rights violations.[1]

The NGOCHR succeeded in its functions as a human rights coalition as they were united in opposing all human rights violations. The events of 2007 however, revealed that the human rights NGOs in Fiji are small entities, vulnerable in times of conflict. They do not enjoy special privileges or protections that diplomatic and international organisations enjoy. Their size and specific organisational purpose means that human rights NGOs cannot spearhead a movement for return to democracy in Fiji as they would not have sufficient resources for this cause, and the activity would fall outside their core objectives.

Who protested?
The 2006 coup found NGOs feeling isolated and fighting for ideals of democracy without the backing of grassroots. PER prevented publishing of some statements and also any public support. Ordinary citizens failed to protest against the military takeover. The 1987 and 2000 coup failed to trigger mass protests because it was felt those coups were in favour of indigenous Fijians. However, Prime Minister Qarase, ousted in the 2006 coup, had won the elections through over 80 percent Fijian votes. Qarase was kept under house arrest for two days after the coup before departing for Mavana. His supporters failed to protest, and were confused by his departure. People may have protested if Qarase had decided to continue being held in captivity. But people continued living their daily lives, prioritising economic needs over civil and political ideals.

NGOs have found themselves isolated fighting for an ideal that few want to fight for, but majority would like to enjoy—as is the case for most civil and political rights. They also felt isolated among themselves as some took a strategy of non-engagement whereas others decided to engage to find solutions.

The 2006 coup was different because it was '…in the name of "good governance", anti-corruption and anti-racism, and appealed to the rather severe moral values of Fiji's urban elites (Firth & Fraenkel, 2009, p. 7)'. Those that advocated against the 2006 coup found themselves without former allies and without the moral public support of the grassroots. The grassroots, on their part, could be easily swayed by provision of essential services in their area by the coup-installed government—services that elected governments had neglected to provide for decades.

Disunity destroys opportunities

To take a middle ground is as difficult a task for NGOs as it is difficult for donors to understand. An opportunity to take the middle ground was presented by a proposal by John Samy for a Charter process in Fiji. NGOs were approached through CCF, as this process had a potential of delivering the best outcome to Fiji if it was driven by CSOs. CCF's own attempts to engage in dialogue with the interim regime to find a way back to democracy, was regarded with suspicion by other NGOs. NGOs were reluctant to respond to Samy's proposal for a Charter process to find a way forward for Fiji. Time was ticking by… CSOs failed to take up the Charter initiative. Instead, the Interim Government (IG) finally agreed over the concept and decided to provide space for it.

CCF, ECREA, WAC and Fem'Link were four NGOs that participated in the Charter process while other NGOs criticised and derided them. Numerous donor applications by Samy proved futile. These donor funds would have enabled the Charter process to operate independently. The Charter team disbanded in 2008. Samy could be credited for preventing a further deterioration in the Fiji situation for two years[2] while the Charter process was underway, the IG strived for good governance. After disbanding of the Charter team, authoritarianism by the IG increased. Soon afterwards, the IG abrogated the 1997 Constitution—a day after the 9 April 2009 Court of Appeal judgment against its legality, and imposed Public Emergency Regulations (PER) under which human rights were severely constrained. The question remains whether

the Charter process would have provided solutions to Fiji, if CSO's and political parties had embraced it and contributed to its development and if it was funded by independent donors.

The collapse of the Coalition for Democracy and Peace three weeks after its inception in December 2006 also provides food for thought as it was widely regarded as a good concept that recognised a variety of concerned individuals and organisations needed to join and have a united voice for a return to democracy. A lack of a long-term plan or vision and a lack of leadership caused the demise of the coalition.

Two years after the coup, on 5 December 2008, a new Movement for Democracy in Fiji was launched by eight NGOs and political parties, namely PCRC, FWRM, National Council of Women Fiji (NCWF), Fiji Islands Council of Trade Unions (FICTU), Fijian Teachers Association (FTA), United People's Party (UPP), NFP, and SDL (*Fiji Times*, 5 December 2008). A statement from the movement said they had '… banded together to spearhead a joint campaign plan to return Fiji to parliamentary rule and persuading the interim regime to put in place a clear and credible process and time table for elections' (*Fiji Times*, 5 December 2008). The movement also established a fund for the Restoration of Democracy. NFP's Attar Singh, who is also the general secretary for FICTU was named the chairperson of the movement and PCRC the secretariat (Fijilive, 2 January 2009).

The movement did not gain widespread support as it had restricted its membership to a select group of NGOs, unions and political parties. A bias towards the deposed government and animosity to those with different ideologies prevented membership from a wide group of people and caused further division within civil society.

Thus a major reason that protests against the 2006 coup did not succeed was due to the lack of unity between NGOs, CSOs, unions, political parties, and the wide variety of organisations and people who make up civil society. NGOs tend to be isolated in their fight for democracy. But the failure of ordinary citizens to protest made NGOs lose hope as did the failure of Qarase's supporters to protest. Ordinary citizens prioritised their economic needs over civil and political ideals. While most were afraid of protesting, some wanted to see if the Bainimarama interim government would deliver better basic services.

Restrictions on the media

The restriction on the media in Fiji after the abrogation of Fiji's 1997

Constitution on 10 April 2009 eroded the progress Fiji had made on Freedom of Opinion and Expression in the public and the media. After the 1987 coup, Fiji underwent a period of repression where democracy and equal rights were harder to talk about. However, censorship of the media only happened for a short while after the 1987 coup. The media was again targeted straight after the military takeover in 2006. Military personnel moved into the newsrooms of media outlets late afternoon on December 5 and issued a directive that all news items would be screened by the military and demanded that nothing negative be aired or published against the commander, Commodore Frank Bainimarama, or his takeover (IFJ News Release, 6 December 2006). Local journalists were warned not to publish any condemnation by local and international NGOs. In response, Fiji TV did not run its 10pm bulletin on December 5, and no issue of *The Fiji Times* was published (IFJ News Release, 6 December 2006). The next day, after a meeting with senior executives of four media companies and Chairman of the Fiji Media Council Daryl Tarte, Acting Commander Esala Teleni gave an undertaking that there would be no censorship and no further interference by the military in the role of the nation's media (Democracy for Fiji campaign launched, *Fiji Times*,7 December 2006). Fiji still enjoyed relatively free media under a tense political situation.

On 10 April 2009, the reinstated Bainimarama government promulgated the *Public Emergency Regulations 2009* (PER) which severely restricted assembly, meetings, public gatherings and discussions in Fiji. The eight-page decree was the fifth one promulgated by the President that day, after the abrogation of Fiji's 1997 Constitution. The education, health and private sector appeared to have suffered little impact. However, NGOs, CSOs, trade unions, political parties and other bodies and individuals critical of the government now found their activities were more severely scrutinised. NGOs, CSOs, churches, unions and even private bodies now had to apply for a permit to hold a meeting or assembly. If the agenda of the meeting suggested that any 'political' issue may be discussed, then the permit would not get approved. Even CCF, a human rights NGO, is required to apply for permits to conduct educational workshops and public lectures.

Government 'censors' are sent to newsrooms to check stories published by daily media outlets. All stories critical of the government, military or the current status quo are ordered to be removed. Edwin Nand, a *Fiji One News* television reporter was arrested and detained by police for 48 hours for

preparing a news story that the government did not like. On the weekend of 9/10 May 2009, Fijilive reporters Dionesia Turagabeci and Shelvin Chand were arrested (RNZI, 10 May 2009) and detained for a news item about the CCF (CCF, 7 May 2009) criticising the government for releasing eight soldiers and a policeman on Compulsory Supervision Orders. The men, convicted of manslaughter, were released two months after being sentenced to serve four years and four months. A *Fiji Times* article on the same issue managed to get printed at a later date. However, censors had the article removed from the *Fiji Times* website later that day. Ironically, a statement by government spokesman Lieutenant-Colonel Neumi Leweni, justifying that their release under a CSO '… is provided for by law … and …done in accordance with the *Prisons Act*' (Fijilive, 13 May 2009) was allowed to be published.

The PER is extended every 30 days and was extended again for the 17th time in August 2010 (PER extended, *Fiji Times*, 21 August 2010). The new extension came into effect on August 24. The *Media Industry Development Decree 2010,* promulgated by the Fiji government on 25 June 2010, entrenches censorship as journalists and media organisation heads can be fined or jailed for publishing certain types of news. The ordinary citizens living in rural areas of Fiji, who were already disadvantaged in receiving news and information because of a lack of infrastructure and access to communications technologies, now face a further disadvantage in Fiji because the censorship means they can only hear what the government approves of or wants them to hear or see in the newspapers, radio or television. In fact, everyone in Fiji now can only hear or see news that is approved by the government. By restricting the Right to Information through censorship, the Fiji government is effectively preventing any meetings or information dissemination that could assist in forging alliances to fight for a return to democracy. Without a free media, it is very difficult for Fiji to return to democracy. If ordinary citizens do not fight, then free media also may not return for a long time.

Infrastructure and democracy

Looking at theories of modernism, post-modernism and neo-colonialism, Fiji is still in a development stage. While flourishing democracies in the world are in an era of post-modernism—whereby they have achieved modernity through the phase of industrial revolution, technological development, and advanced infrastructure and communication facilities that makes travel and communication a readily available activity, Fiji has not yet comple-

ted this phase of development. Fiji is in a phase of modernity where the infrastructure is still being built. One only has to drive less than two hours away from the capital, Suva, and they are transported to a rural area such as Viria, Vunidawa and Naluwai in Naitasiri, and Naisausau and other villages in Tailevu, off the Korolevu highway. Here, people still live semi-subsistence, modest lives. There is no tarsealed roads in the interior and only scarce bus services. There are problems of water and electricity supply. There are no supermarkets and availability of goods for purchase is only through small shops with limited supplies. Some villages located two hours from Suva city have never had electricity.

Visits to the Namosi provincial highlands, the interior of Sigatoka, Nagado and other villages located less than an hour's drive from the jet-set Nadi tourist town, reveal a similar scenario.[3] The story is the same for the second largest island, Vanua Levu whether one travels to Seaqaqa, Batanikama and other villages in Labasa, or to Viani and other coral coast villages in Savusavu, or to the other islands Ovalau and Taveuni.

A Community Submission to the 2010 Budget, made by CCF in July 2009 (CCF, 2009) highlighted that people in very different localities in Fiji identified needs that were similar, and which had been in existence for many decades. CCF has conducted grassroots education workshops on the National Budget since 2006 in Suva, Lautoka, Labasa, Savusavu, Levuka, Korovou, Navua, Sigatoka and Taveuni. These needs include: roads, regular transportation, health centre with qualified staff and equipment, water supply that is also clean, farming and agricultural assistance, vocational training schools, and stable electricity supply. Roads were identified as a common concern as it was a root cause of their problems. Without roads, they have difficulty accessing services such as health care, schools, jobs, and market for farm produce. Many of the problems highlighted are synonymous with similar problems in rural areas around Fiji.

Fiji's situation is similar to many other Pacific Island countries which are undergoing a process of modernisation. Historians have also described this as neo-colonialism, whereby institutional structures of bureaucratic systems, parliamentary methods, Christianity, and village organisation structures left behind by colonisers are still operational. Apart from the French territories, most Pacific Islanders have not fought for independence and democracy. Fijians did not struggle for democracy.

During the phase of modernisation, countries go through an industrial

revolution which involves rapid development and growth. Most importantly, they also go through a phase of civil and political awakening, the end result of which is normally a political situation whereby the ordinary citizens have more say in the affairs of their country. In the European countries of Britain, France and Ireland, this is evident. In fact, the modernisation phase in Europe was accompanied by colonisation and resettlement of other parts of the world and the spread of Christianity. In big developing countries of the world, such as India and China, while there are segments of urban parts of the country that are flourishing in 'post-modernity', the bulk of their rural areas are still undergoing modernisation. This has resulted in democracy not being able to function properly in these technologically advanced developing countries.

According to the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), four common problems impede development and democracy in the Commonwealth: the inequality of power between government and the citizen; the consequent lack of accountability and near impunity of politicians and public officials; corruption; and exclusion of the public from participating in decisions that affect their lives (CHRI, 2003, p. 75). CHRI recommends that open governance and assured access to information offer the key to address these complex issues.

> Information must be harnessed to create short cuts to development and democracy. It must be shared equitably and managed to the best advantage of all members of society. The means are available but sadly the will is often not. It is an indictment of the Commonwealth that so many member states continue to fail to live up to the democratic ideals that are reflected in the commitment to the right to information (ibid.).

Fiji is one of the most developed Pacific Island Countries (PICs). However, major parts of the country has limited or no access to electricity, tap water, roads and reliable transport. In urban and peri-urban areas, television, newspapers, magazines, internet, and other sources of information are available. Radio in the vernacular language, remains the most effective means of communication as newspapers and magazines rarely reach remote areas, and lack of electricity and economic means rules out internet.

The developed world is at an advanced stage with democracy where the population can choose to be fully informed to take part in democratic decision-making. The lack of a similar choice to be informed in Fiji means leaders have more opportunity to make decisions which may not be in the

best interests of citizens. Ordinary citizens end up being bystanders, at the receiving end of policies they had little input in, grappling to understand the bad consequences of failed government activities. Where the decisions are made by coup-makers, citizen apathy is greater.

Not knowing better, citizens decide to stand by and not take any action thinking, 'What would I do with democracy if there is no food on the table?'

The question of rights

The preamble to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) states '…. Recognising that, in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the ideal of free human beings enjoying freedom from fear and want can only be achieved if conditions are created whereby everyone may enjoy his economic, social and cultural rights, as well as his civil and political rights'.

The 1945 Charter of the United Nations, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) as well as other major international law documents, recognise the importance of the realisation of economic, social and cultural rights in order for civil and political rights to be enjoyed. These two categories of rights are interdependent.

Inherent to the realisation of economic, social and cultural rights are the right to work freely, fair wages, decent living, safe and healthy working conditions, rest and leisure, the right to join unions and strike, the right to social security, protection and care for the family including education of children and protection of mother. The ICESCR, most importantly also provides under Article 11 'the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions'. Article 13 provides for the right to education which 'shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms'. Further, education is expected to '…enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society…'

The realisation of economic rights are recognised as essential to the development of a person to enjoy their civil and political rights, as vice versa. Over 40 percent of Fiji's population live in poverty. Those slightly above the poverty line, and those living in semi-subsistence situation in rural and peri-urban areas may be able to meet basic needs but not much more. Those

living in rural and interior areas, where roads are bad and transport irregular, find it difficult to access basic services such as health care and government facilities. A single errand to main government centres can take a day, or more to achieve. They cannot be expected to be readily available to participate in democratic processes. In fact, most people living away from the urban centres feel disconnected to what is happening in the government and in the capital Suva.

There needs to be more education on the true spirit of democracy, which provides for everyone's rights, needs, and identities to be respected. This will enable better understanding by voters of the process of governance and how voting fits into the control over state power. People will then understand why their civil and political rights are important and how it can be utilised to make democracy work through articulation of their demands for resources and development for their communities. More education on governance, citizenship, human rights and democratic processes are also necessary for creation of a common sense of identity in the diverse ethnic groups in Fiji. Here again, a lack of unity among Fiji's leaders has contributed to stronger identity with one's ethnicity, rather than the nation. When people understand their democratic power, coups will be virtually impossible to be carried out.

Inadequate funds for infrastructure needs

The development of infrastructure and communications is essential to the realisation of economic as well as civil and political rights. 'Fiji—The State of the Nation and the Economy Report' (NCBBF, August 2008, p. 9) reveals that increasing government debt with higher payments for interest has pre-empted funds for vitally needed infrastructure such as water, roads, sewerage, electricity and housing. The report reveals Fiji's Economic Growth has been on a slow downward curve since 1970. It emphasises that the 'government's involvement in the economy should focus first on the provision of public goods, which by their nature cannot be supplied by anyone else. It is clear that at present, the demand for basic utilities such as water, sewerage, electricity, telecommunications and other infrastructure (such as roads, ports and airports) is not being satisfactorily met' (p. 27). The report highlights the weak service delivery in the public sector as a 'serious constraint on national development and that is adversely affecting the lives of many of Fiji's people, particularly the poor and the vulnerable' (p. 33).

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) notes (ADB, 2010) 'only about

50 percent of the population has access to safe water and proper sanitation. Access to sanitation is 75 percent for urban areas, and only 12 percent for rural areas'. ADB states that, 'most of the country's public external debt ... comprised official multilateral loans from ADB, European Investment Bank, and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. ADB contributed about 73 percent of these loans.' The major project of the Rewa Bridge (Qarase, 26 February 2004) construction was made possible through $24 million aid from the European Union (EU). In 2005, under Fiji's road upgrading programme (Chand & Cula, 10 August 2005), the ADB, World Bank and the Exim Bank of Japan co-funded projects up to $118 million in Viti Levu and Vanua Levu.

In 2004 (MoF, 2003, p. 89), the government allocated more than $31 million for infrastructure projects. In 2009 (PWC, 2008, p. 26), the Interim Government allocated $38.30 million for infrastructure and works. The 2004 elected government received large donor funds enabling it to spend a further $19 million on the EU funded Rewa Bridge and Kinoya Outfall Project, and the Chinese-funded Navuso Linking Bridge (MoF, 2003, p. 108). While the Interim Government allocated more for infrastructure in 2009, it lost out on donor-funded major infrastructure projects, which is revealed through the allocation of only $4.3 million for the Navuso Bridge and the Somosomo Mini Hydro Scheme (MoF, 2008, p. 56). These infrastructure projects are in addition to the normal roads and infrastructure maintenance work carried out by the government each year. The high reliability of new infrastructure development projects on foreign aid means that the normal government budget allocation each year is sufficient to maintain infrastructure only—it is not sufficient to create major new infrastructure development. It may be many more decades before basic services, infrastructure and knowledge technology, essential to democracy become available throughout Fiji.

Conclusion

Democracy has failed to work properly in Fiji because parts of the country are still undergoing a process of modernisation. The struggle for democracy has yet to occur in Fiji. Protests against coups has largely been by the educated middle class where the CSOs activists and politicians tend to come from. Bad leadership has contributed to a lack of development in Fiji and to the coup culture, as has the gap between the middle class and ordinary citizens. For true democracy to be achievable in Fiji, infrastructure and communications technology needs to reach the masses. This will enable creation of

a knowledgeable society. There needs to be adequate realisation of economic rights of people, as this is essential to the realisation of civil and political rights. There needs to be a free media for ordinary people to know what is happening and for dissemination of information for creation of alliances and holding the government accountable.

Alison Lazarus, former director of the Peace Building and Development Institute at the UNDP Pacific Centre, once said: 'For the people to govern, the people need to remain engaged. The citizen has to stay vigilant to her own needs and hold government accountable for delivery' (Lazarus, 2007). Lazarus argues that the

> strategy of cooperation and non-cooperation too has its time and its limits. There was only so long that people will boycott and disengage the state. For always people just want to live and learn and get on with their lives ... if the root causes of conflict are not addressed … times of withdrawal are often the time for rearming and reconstituting one's forces to live to struggle and fight another day.

A new movement is needed in Fiji with a visionary, inspirational leadership and a simple objective, inclusive and open to people from any political, social, economic, religious or ethnic background to join freely. Such a movement would transcend the CSOs, ethnic, political or other ideological divides. José Ramos-Horta and Mahatma Gandhi's example reveal it is important to be open to talk to everyone with different beliefs for democracy to be achieved. When the time is right and an opportunity is presented, the citizens must not remain a bystander but engage. For after all, a country is only as good as its citizens and a democracy can only work if all people in the country take the responsibility to make it happen.

Notes
1. Human rights has formed the basis of most media statements from the NGOCHR in the aftermath of the 5 December 2006 coup.
2. Author's viewpoint as an internal observer of the process.
3. These areas have been visited by the author while conducting education workshops for Citizens' Constitutional Forum CCF, where she is employed.

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13. Life under Decree No. 29 of 2010: The Fiji Media Development Decree

ABSTRACT

This article examines the domestic and regional impact of a punitive media law introduced in Fiji in June. Decree No. 29 of 2010, the *Media Industry Development Decree*, is the first of its kind in the South Pacific. It brings to an end the tradition of media self-regulation, one of the hallmarks of a free media. All Fiji governments since independence have tried to introduce tougher media laws. The Bainimarama government, which took power in a coup in December 2006, has succeeded where others failed. Its media decree prescribes hefty fines and jail terms for journalists who fall foul of the law. Given the precedent in Fiji, it is unlikely that a future government will move to change this law, which could become a permanent fixture in the country. This article looks at the impact of the law in Fiji and raises the possibility of copycat laws in other island countries where governments distrust media. The article also questions the applicability of conventional journalistic approaches, which place a premium on conflict as a news element, in politically fragile island countries.

Keywords: bias, censorship, self-regulation, media law, media ethics, media regulation, objectivity, race relations

SHAILENDRA SINGH
University of the South Pacific, Fiji

THE DATE 28 June 2010 will go down as a fateful day in Fiji's history. New media laws enacted on this date have changed the way journalism has been practised in the country. Whether for better or worse depends on whom one speaks to. Supporters of the *Media Industry Development Decree* feel that punitive laws prescribing fines and jail terms are needed to curb media excesses. They believe that Western media models

do not sit easily in democratically fragile, multiethnic societies such as Fiji, which has experienced four coups in 20 years since 1987. The Fiji media, they argue, put itself at risk through unrestrained, aggressive coverage of sensitive racial and political issues. Opponents of the law, on the other hand, see it as a naked attempt to control the media. They believe that a free press is a strength not a weakness. They liken the new law to a stake driven through the heart of freedom of expression and predict dire consequences for the nation. One clause in the decree, for instance, stipulates that all media in Fiji should be 90 percent locally owned. This will force *The Fiji Times*, wholly-owned by News Limited, to sell up or shut down. *The Times* celebrated 141 years in Fiji in September this year. Many readers are left lamenting the possible demise of this iconic, if sometimes controversial, newspaper.

Emergency Regulations

The media decree was introduced by Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama's government. It brings to an end the tradition of self-regulation, one of the hallmarks of a free media. Military Commander Bainimarama had taken power in the December 2006 coup. For 15 months prior to the decree's promulgation, the country had its first taste of what it was like living under prolonged media censorship. Government introduced 'Emergency Regulations' in April 2009, with censors sent into newsrooms to clear copy for publication. Overnight, news that was critical of the government dried up. Government opponents in the trade unions, academia and politics were effectively silenced, although a few received some foreign media coverage. It was a new, uncanny experience for Fiji which, apart from a brief period after the coups of 1987, has always had a free media on a par with Australia and New Zealand. There were occasional rants or threats by politicians to shut down newspapers. But such threats were never carried out and journalists did their work virtually unhindered (We are global: From Fiji, a journalist's stand on censors, bloggers and future of free press expression, 2010).

Copycat media laws

Fiji's media decree could inspire copycat laws in a region where some governments are suspicious of the press and habitually threaten tougher media laws. Papua New Guinean Prime Minister Sir Michael Somare offered tacit support for the media crackdown in Fiji (PNG prime minister offers

Bainimarama tacit support, 2010). Somare, a former journalist, is a long-standing critic of both domestic and international media coverage of Papua New Guinea. In 2008, when questioned on his stance on the deportation of two of Fiji's newspaper publishers, Somare warned PNG reporters to expect the consequences of what they report. He said: 'You are very lucky I have not deported anyone of you yet, for writing something contrary' (Somare Warns PNG Media, 2008).

Tonga, another country whose leaders have had strained relations with the media, is considering adopting a more restrictive media law (Tonga's Information Minister moves to clamp down on Island's newspapers, 2010). Criticism of Tonga's royal family and nobles, who dominate the island kingdom, is held to be contrary to Tongan culture. The media, however, has ignored etiquette and exposed many financial scandals over the years. This has not endeared journalists with Tongan authorities. Island governments habitually accuse media of bias, inaccurate reporting and other ethical breaches. Sometimes the complaints are a retaliatory tactic against embarrassing media revelations of government wrongdoing. At other times such complaints are genuine and cannot be easily dismissed as a case of shooting the messenger. Media loses public support and plays into the hands of autocratic governments when it consistently makes mistakes and breaches ethics. It does not do itself any favours when it takes the high moral ground, acts as if it is infallible, and does not address its weaknesses.

In politically or racially tense situations, an overly confrontational media gives governments reason (or excuse) to tighten laws. After a coup, the situation is often unpredictable. There is more paranoia than usual about the media. Those in power impose censorship to control news in order to prevent, among other things, 'inflammatory reporting', as in Fiji. A report about Fiji that appeared in *The Australian* is a case in point. It cited an unnamed Australian foreign affairs official saying, 'the people may have no choice but to stand up to him (Bainimarama) and his thugs' (Perfect one day, brutal the next, 2010). Bainimarama's reaction to the report was predictable:

> This statement is inciting the people of Fiji to rise against my government and promoting further unrest … on the one hand they say they are concerned about the welfare of the people of Fiji, whilst on the other they are inciting and promoting unrest in Fiji (Hands off, Fiji's leader tells Australia, 2010)

Many in Fiji would consider the anonymous Australian foreign affairs official's statement as dangerous. Much as Australia and New Zealand dislike the Bainimarama administration, and however keen they are to see democracy restored, a rebellion is the last thing Fiji needs. Citizens would only be exposed to more violence and suffering. In coup situations unruly media is not just a danger to the public, but an excuse for the government to impose draconian laws.

Conventional journalism in conflict-prone countries

Recent developments in Fiji give rise to questions about the applicability of conventional styles of journalism in conflict-prone countries. Rooney, Papoutsaki and Pamba are critical of what they describe as the blind adherence to, and acceptance of, Western style reporting. They assert that this style cannot be transplanted into fragile Pacific societies with the assumption that they will serve the same purpose, meet the same objectives and be absorbed by the public in the same way (Rooney, Papoutsaki & Pamba, 2004). While traditional news reporting has demonstrable strengths in exposing corruption and keeping leaders accountable, there are perceived weaknesses in this model when applied in unstable multiethnic societies, especially given the emphasis placed on conflict as a key element of news (Singh, Prakash, 2008). Media in Fiji and the region have won plaudits for exposing corruption, but criticised for its reportage of conflicts. In Fiji, the media is paradoxically seen both as a champion of democracy and as a security threat. The same could be said of media in other conflict-prone island countries such as Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Tonga. Since independence, the Pacific has become increasingly volatile. But most journalists are still stuck in a mind-set of 1970s-style reporting inherited from the British and other European models. Hyping up and sensationalising conflict may not result in a coup or riots in well-entrenched democracies with homogenous societies. But it can have devastating effects in conflict-prone, multi-ethnic societies such as in Fiji. The report in *The Australian,* which suggested an uprising might be the only solution left for Fiji, is a case in point. Flippant remarks by people with little knowledge about or regard for the Fiji situation can be dangerous, especially when propagated by an ignorant or uncaring media. The propensity for unrest and violence in Fiji is often underestimated, even after four economically devastating coups and a deadly mutiny at the army

barracks in September 2006. With Fiji, people need to be careful about what they wish for. Their wish may well come true. Media should not inflame situations to the point that public safety is compromised.

'Pacific media approach'

With the news scene getting faster, more complicated and more contentious, journalism in Fiji and the region faces new challenges and demands. Independent Tongan newspaper publisher Kalafi Moala, while critical of Fiji's new media laws, recently spoke about the need for a 'new Pacific media approach' rooted in Pacific values. Said Moala:

> We need to let things that are important to us as Pacific people be the guide to the way we tell our stories—the events, the issues, the people of our various cultures. It is our stories that need to be told, in our way, in accordance with our cultural view of realities that is the Pacific life. (New media body to focus on keeping Pacific governments 'honest', 2010)

Moala, who now also publishes the government newspaper *Tongan Chronicle*, believes the way the Tongan press covered political conflicts in Tonga was partly to blame for the November 2006 pro-democracy march deteriorating into a deadly riot in the Tongan capital, Nuku'alofa. He contends that during debates about political reform, the media used inflammatory language and criticised key figures without giving them the opportunity to respond (Prominent Tonga newspaper publisher says unbalanced reporting helped ferment riot, 2007). Former Pacific Islands News Association president Monica Miller supports Moala's views about a Pacific Island media model:

> Journalists need to do more than go after the main news stories and fill the bulletin. They have to go after stories that will impact on people's lives. (New media body to focus on keeping Pacific governments 'honest', 2010)

Many Pacific Island journalists work in democratically fragile, ethnically polarised societies. Such societies are more prone to conflict than societies with greater ethnic homogeneity. Media should be conscious about the environment it is operating in and show sensitivity in the handling of

certain subjects, such as politics, ethnicity and religion. It needs to question established norms of reporting, be more open to new ideas, and explore new concepts rather than dismiss them out of hand. Conventional journalism places a high premium on conflict as an element of news. In the Pacific context, there should be a case for exploring journalism that is less adversarial, and more geared towards development. For instance, peace journalism is a dirty word in mainstream news media where objectivity and the 5ws and one H framework for writing stories—Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How—rule. But peace journalism is being tried in some parts of Asia, which has cultural similarities with the Pacific and which, as a developing region, faces similar challenges. In the more volatile parts of Africa, media is open to, and applying, different journalistic principles to suit the local conditions.

Fiji's Media Industry Development Decree

Bainimarama says his aim is to achieve a better Fiji by rooting out corruption, introducing a non-racial electoral system and creating equal opportunities for all races in Fiji (Statement by Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama, 2008; PM determined to transform Fiji, 2009). Media 'reforms' are an apparent part of the government's social re-engineering efforts. Fiji's Attorney-General Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum describes the media decree as a substantial progress in the laws relating to media. He believes it provides for proper accountability and transparency, introduces responsible reporting, and provides the public with more effective recourse for complaints (Commencement of the media industry development decree, 2010). Reporters Without Borders, on the other hand, labeled the decree 'deplorable' and a 'dangerous step backwards for press freedom and media development in Fiji. Fijian journalists risked jail at a time when the international trend is for press offences to be decriminalised' (Reporters Without Borders, 2010). The International Federation of Journalists said the decree would erase the right of journalists to report freely and fairly in the public interest (Fiji media decree entrenches regime's control, 2010)

A 'normal' relationship

In Fiji, relations between media and government have always been contentious. While credit for the media decree goes to the Bainimarama government, a succession of elected and unelected leaders since independence in

1970 have tried to muzzle what they see as an errant press (Singh, 2008). Fiji's founding prime minister, the late Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, had little patience with what he regarded as an impertinent media corps. Ratu Mara was a daunting presence at press conferences, and a steely gaze from him was enough to stop a question in its tracks.

Sitiveni Rabuka, who seized power as a third-ranking army colonel in 1987, saw the closure of the original *Fiji Sun*. Rabuka's government was beset by corruption allegations, including the biggest financial scandal in Fiji's history, the $372 million collapse of the National Bank of Fiji. Members of his government often lashed out at journalists and threatened news companies with closure, although Rabuka was more tolerant. Labour Party leader Mahendra Chaudhry, who came to power as Fiji's first prime minister of Indian descent in 1999, had a tenuous relationship with the media, which he accused of being in cahoots with nationalists wanting to bring down his government. Citing low standards, bias and the ineffectiveness of the Fiji Media Council, Chaudhry threatened to establish a 'swift justice' media tribunal and legislation to curb a 'distorting' and 'lying' news media (Fiji's Chaudhry duels with news media, 1999). Before he could make good on his threat, Chaudhry was toppled in the 2000 George Speight coup. He had been in power for just a year.

Defining moment for media freedom

The 19 May 2000 coup was a defining moment for the media in Fiji. Taking advantage of a protest march organised by Fijian hardliners in Suva, Speight and a handful of renegade soldiers stormed Parliament and captured Chaudhry and his government. The ensuing hostage crisis lasted 52 days until Speight's gang was captured and jailed by military commander Bainimarama. While the coup provided journalists with a lot of copy, it also gave rise to an unprecedented level of public and academic scrutiny in the inner workings of the media. The Fiji media found itself under the spotlight like never before. Many research papers and commentaries were written on media coverage of the Chaudhry Government's one-year rule, its forced removal and the ensuing hostage drama. The Fiji media was forced to defend itself against allegations of inflammatory reporting that allegedly emboldened Fijian hardliners and created the conditions for the Speight coup, and against claims of skewed and biased reporting during the hostage crisis.

Months before he was ousted in the coup, Chaudhry launched an extra-

ordinary attack on the Fiji media during an address at the launching of the Fiji Media Council's Code of Ethics and Practice in Suva. He said:

> Since taking office, my government has had occasion to be extremely disgusted by the antics of some elements in the media who have used the medium of the newspaper and television to further their own personal agendas to discredit the government. (Chaudhry, 1999)

The media dismissed the Chaudhry allegations as a case of shooting the messenger (Media: payback time for Fiji's news critics, 1999). *The Fiji Times*, in a two-page editorial, described Chaudhry's speech as a 'rambling diatribe riddled with contradictions, half truths and untruths'. It accused Chaudhry of escalating his attacks on the media in an effort to create a climate in which the public would be softened up for his draconian legislation (*Fiji Times*, 1999).

Political commentator Sitiveni Ratuva (as cited in Robie, 2000) believes the media did not create the conditions for the ethno-nationalist upsurge, which was already there. But it provided nationalists with the 'legitimacy' to roll on. Robie (2000) points to an 'unusually close' relationship in the early weeks of the insurrection between the media and hostage-takers, while Gounder (2004) describes how in their desperation to interview Speight journalists (wittingly or unwittingly) became his pawns. Some journalists developed the 'Stockholm syndrome' in that they began to sympathise with the Speight 'cause', while others found it hard to remain professional because of the strong cultural ties with the supporters of Speight's coup (p. 140). The then Fiji Media Council chairman, Daryl Tarte (2004), believes Speight knew that the media was the best channel through which he could propagate his 'crazy logic', and used it to garner Fijian support. He projected a personality that had media appeal (Media Councils in an unstable political environment, 2004; also see numerous evaluations of coup media coverage—Field 2000, 2005; Moala 2001; Robie, 2000, 2001, 2004; Thaman 2001; Chaudhry 2001). Speight's skills with the media showed how 'prominence' and 'conflict', two conventional news values drilled into student and cadet journalists, can be exploited by reporters to publish headline news (in order to make a name, get a promotion) and by newsmakers (such as Speight) to capture the headlines. Robie (2001) observed such a 'symbiotic relationship' between the media and Speight.

While the media denied culpability and insisted that a blundering Chaudhry

was to blame for his government's downfall, the paranoia had set in. Future governments, spooked by the events of 2000, intensified efforts to rein in the media. This was exemplified by the actions of the Laisenia Qarase government, which came in after Chaudhry's ouster in an interim caretaker capacity in 2001, before winning elections in 2003 and 2006. The Qarase government unveiled the draft *2003 Media Council of Fiji Bill*. At an editors' forum in Suva later, the Attorney-General at the time, Qoriniasi Bale, explained the Bill by saying that the quality of reporting in Fiji was poor enough to cause damage to governments (Bale, 2003). The Bill was shelved following a fierce 'No Media Bill' campaign mounted by the media. But after winning a fresh mandate in 2006, the Qarase government hinted that the Bill would be reintroduced. Mired in corruption allegations, the Qarase government may have had other motives to silence the media. But it was toppled by the Bainimarama coup before it could act. It was left to the Bainimarama government to take care of unfinished business, which it has. Since independence, all Fiji governments, whether elected or unelected, have tried to control the media. It seems unlikely that a future government will change a law that gives it a hold over the media. With the sword of Damocles hanging over the Fiji media (see Robie, 2004b), it could be the end of a culture of robust reporting that kept governments in check.

Complex society, challenging occupation

It must be said that being a journalist is not easy in a country like Fiji. Australian National University historian Professor Brij Lal describes Fiji as 'a bit like Churchill's Russia: a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma' (The ups and downs of Fiji politics, 2007). A multi-ethnic nation of more than 945,000 people, Fiji was a British Crown colony for 96 years before independence in 1970. According to the 2007 census, indigenous Fijians make up 57.3 percent of the population. Ethnic Indians, descended mostly from imported laborers who worked on colonial sugar plantations, are now 37.6 per cent of the population. Their numbers are dropping, thanks to migration and low birth rates. Europeans, people of mixed race, Chinese and other Pacific Islanders make up the rest of the population.

Voting in Fiji has always been on racial lines, and Fiji's two major races vote for the two major political parties that they believe best represent their interests. During elections, politicians cynically play the race card and fuel

ethnic tensions by cultivating and exploiting the suspicions and prejudices of their particular communities. The result is that both sides of the racial divide feel marginalised: indigenous Fijians economically, ethnic Indians politically. Each group blames the other for its problems (Singh, 2010). It is not easy being a journalist in a country where everyone has a grievance, and often, journalists are caught in the crossfire. Such is the situation in Fiji, all governments and political parties and their supporters feel they have been hard done by the media.

Because of their cultural and racial ties, journalists are susceptible to pressure from their respective communities. Analysing the 2000 coup coverage, former *Daily Post* editor Jale Moala (as cited in Robie, 2000) argued that local reporters 'confused by the heightened emotion at the time, the use of emotive language and the pleadings of the opposing forces', were drawn into different sides. This was true of both indigenous Fijian and Indo-Fijian reporters, said Moala.

Playing by the new rules

Under the *Media Industry Development Decree*, a one-member Media Tribunal appointed by the President and a six-member Media Industry Development Authority appointed by the information minister will regulate the news media (Media Industry Development Decree, 2010). Their role is to 'ensure that nothing is included in the content of any media service' which is:

- against public interest or order,
- against the national interest,
- against good taste or decency, or;
- creates communal discord

The various offences are punishable by fines of:

- up to $100,000 for media organisations
- up to $25,000 for publishers or editors, and;
- up to $1000 for journalists or other employees of media organisations

Furthermore, the tribunal may order compensation of up to $100,000 to be paid by media organisations to 'any person aggrieved or adversely affected' by media reports. The right of appeal against tribunal decisions is available

where a penalty of $50,000 or more has been ordered. The tribunal can also order media organisations and their employee to disclose sources. Refusal can result in a $10,000 fine, or jail terms of up to two years, or both (Media Industry Development Decree, 2010).

Media Council neutralised

The media decree puts an end to self-regulation overseen by the Fiji Media Council. The Council, made up of media industry, government and public members, has not been abolished but made redundant. It is now looking at its future, with folding up an option under consideration. The code of ethics adopted by the decree is virtually the same as the Fiji Media Council Code of Ethics. But the power bestowed on the tribunal to make media organisations pay compensation of up to $100,000 to persons adversely affected by inaccurate reporting is a major change. Previously, the Media Council dealt with complaints. If a complaint was upheld, the judgment was printed in full on the websites and print publications of the Council's affiliates. Even then, some people complained about the difficulty faced getting the media to retract inaccurate reports or to print an apology. Yet others considered the penalty of publishing media council judgments a mere slap on the wrist. Those who support the new provisions believe that it will uplift standards as well as ensure that complainants get fairly treated and receive adequate compensation. Opponents of the law say that it will open a Pandora's box. Media companies and the tribunal will be inundated with frivolous complaints. This will include complaints from opportunists attracted by the possibility of making money. Those who do not support the provision say that defamation, privacy and other media legislation currently in place offer adequate protection, recourse, and compensation to complainants. They caution about the unintended side effect of excessive legislation and punitive measures—a meek, ineffectual news media.

The public interest conundrum

Particularly troubling for journalists is the power bestowed on the authorities to 'ensure that nothing is included in the content of any media service which is against public interest or order, or national interest'. What is for or against the public interest can be a highly debatable issue. The government can have one view, the opposition another and the media an entirely different one. Some believe plurality of views is healthy for Fiji. Others

believe Fiji needs a benevolent dictatorship. But the question remains: Will a newspaper be guilty of a crime if it were to carry a strident editorial opposed to the government's stand on an issue concerning the national interest? For instance, when the media published the names of defaulters in the National Bank of Fiji loans scandal in the 1990s, the Rabuka government accused it of acting against the national interest. The government's stand was understandable: prominent businesses and the politically well connected topped the list of those who had taken huge, unsecured loans from the state bank. The finance minister at the time, Berenado Vunibobo, seemed keen to wash government's hands of the affair, and get the media off its back. In 1995, Vunibobo dismissed the collapse of the NBF as 'water under the bridge' (Lal, 2010). This was wishful thinking. In 1996 the NBF's bad and doubtful debts were estimated at more than 8 percent of GDP—equivalent to a $10 billion mistake had it been in New Zealand (Grynberg, Munro and White, 2002). The biggest financial scandal in Fiji's history eventually cost taxpayers $372 million, according to the Fiji Reserve Bank Governor, Sada Reddy (Raising investment a challenge, 2010).

Disclosure provision
There is concern that the disclosure provision in the decree can be used by future governments to hide corruption. Non-compliance with this provision will attract fines of up to $10,000, or jail terms of up to two years, or both. The decree does exempt media organisations from disclosing the identity of the sources of any news item relating to corruption or abuse of office by a public officer (Media industry development decree, 2010). Nevertheless, such a provision, it is argued, will kill off a fairly healthy whistle-blowing culture in Fiji. The cynical describe the disclosure provision as a 'shield law': not to shield whistleblowers, but to shield government corruption and misrule. While the Bainimarama government has set up the Fiji Independent Commission Against Corruption (FICAC) to investigate and prosecute cases of bribery, the new disclosure laws will discourage people from providing media with information. Even if insiders do pluck up the courage to provide confidential information in the public interest, the media will baulk at using it because of the possible penalties.

Local shareholding clause
A provision in the decree that requires all news media to have 90 percent

local shareholding has snared *The Fiji Times*, wholly owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Limited. *The Fiji Times* was given three months from the date of the decree's promulgation to sell up, or close down.[1] This is no mean feat for an institution that has been in Fiji for 141 years, and is valued at F$ 140 million, according to a columnist with *The Australian*, owned by News Limited (Day, 2010). Bainimarama denied that *The Fiji Times* was being 'targeted' for refusing to cooperate with his government, although in an interview with Radio Australia, he accused the newspaper of being biased against his government (Frank, uncensored, 2009). Letters of support for *The Fiji Times* poured in locally and from abroad. One letter by Reapi Nayacaka-lou of Nadi reflects the status the newspaper has acquired with many readers:

> I will certainly miss this newspaper that has been part of my life for the past four and a half decades. Every bit of it from the first page to the last has been filled with a lot of interesting and educational materials and news items. (Nayacakalou, 2010)

The Fiji Times was given until September 28 to comply with the decree. The sale or closure of the iconic newspaper will be another fateful day in Fiji's history, making 2010 a 'memorable' year for media 'transformation' in Fiji.

Concluding remarks

The Bainimarama government has succeeded where other Fiji governments failed in introducing a punitive media law. Some see the law as an attempt to cower and control the media, while others see it as a means of improving reporting standards and making media accountable. Fiji may have set the precedence for copycat laws in other island countries where governments are generally suspicious of the media. There are concerns about the effect of excessive legislation and punitive measures on the media's ability to re-port bad governance, including corruption, which is the bane of some island countries. Developments in Fiji also give rise to questions about the suit-ability of conventional media approaches and practice in ethnically divided, politically tense Pacific Island nations. The value placed on conflict as a news element in Western journalism can lead to serious consequences when used in fragile, multiethnic societies. The challenge facing Fiji and other Pacific Island governments is how to regulate the media without simultaneously suppressing the freedom of speech. This is an issue that is taking on greater

significance and needs to be the focus of further research. The Fiji media, on its part, needs to carefully consider its priorities because Fiji has great needs. More than 45 percent of the population lives in poverty. People are paid a pittance for their labour and generations remain caught in the poverty trap. Fiji not only needs a free media, but also a socially responsible media less focused on prominence and conflict, and more committed and devoted to the needs of its people. Fiji needs a media free of political influence and manipulation, and unencumbered by excessive government control and persecution.

Note

1. On Tuesday, 22 September 2010, after completion of this article, News Ltd officially signed over ownership of *The Fiji Times* to the Suva-based Motibhai group. Chairman Mahendra Motibhai Patel, who is also the new *Fiji Times* board chairman, named Australian journalist and executive Dallas Swinstead, a former publisher of *The Fiji Times* from 1976 to 1980, as new publisher.

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Shailendra Singh is divisional head of journalism in the School of Media at the University of the South Pacific and a former editor of The Review news magazine. He has researched and written widely on Fiji corruption and governance issues for Inter Press Service and other news media.
singh_sh@usp.ac.fj

Articles

Reporting HIV in Papua New Guinea: Trends and omissions from 2000 to 2010

ABSTRACT

This article presents the findings from a longitudinal content analysis on the reporting of HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) in Papua New Guinea's two national newspapers—*The National* and *Post-Courier*—in 2000, 2005 and 2010. The authors tried to answer two key questions: Did press coverage of the disease increase and did the topics change or remain the same? Data from the content analysis showed that coverage of the disease increased significantly during the ten-year study period, and that the framing of the disease moved beyond representing HIV as purely a health story to one that was linked to socio-economic conditions and cultural practices. The feature stories gradually showed more sensitivity to people living with HIV, while they recognised and challenged the social stigma still associated with the disease in much of the country.

Keywords: content analysis, culture, framing, health reporting, HIV/AIDS, social change communication, social stigma

TREVOR CULLEN and RUTH CALLAGHAN
Edith Cowan University, Perth

Introduction: The HIV epidemic in PNG

IN COUNTRIES where HIV is a serious public health threat, journalists have a responsibility to inform the public about the situation. Whereas HIV is not a major health issue in countries such as Australia, New Zealand and other small Pacific countries, it is classified as an evolving generalised epidemic in Papua New Guinea. The United Nations AIDS programme

(UNAIDS, 2009) estimates that there are at least 54,000 people living with HIV in Papua New Guinea, and forecasts that by 2012, the country will face a prevalence rate of more than 5 percent, with more than 200,000 people being infected with the virus (UNAIDS, 2009). Currently, up to 1.8 percent of the adult population in Papua New Guinea lives with the disease, and prevalence in urban areas may be as high as 3.5 percent (UNAIDS, 2009). New infections rates have increased about 30 percent a year since 1997. The first HIV infection in PNG was recorded in 1987, and by 2008 PNG accounted for 99 percent of reported HIV cases in the Pacific region (UNAIDS, 2009).

In 2006, the Australian government's Overseas Aid programme (AusAid) developed an epidemiological model to project the future course of the HIV epidemic in Papua New Guinea. The following outcomes were predicted:

- a generalised epidemic with over 500,000 people living with HIV
- HIV prevalence of over 10 percent of the adult population by 2025
- the workforce reduced by 12.5 per cent and GDP by 1.3 percent
- 300,000 adult deaths by 2025
- 70 percent of medical beds occupied by people living with HIV by 2025

(AusAid, 2006)

In June 2009, Prasado Rao, former head of the United Nations programme for AIDS in Asia and the Pacific, stated that Papua New Guinea was not able to deal with current infection rates, let alone predicted ones. He was speaking at an international AIDS conference in Indonesia, and stressed that Papua New Guinea was of real concern to the whole region.

> Apart from increasing infections, the most challenging thing to me is the PNG scenario where much of the health system is in a state of collapse. So outside the capital, Port Moresby I don't think we can even think of a health system that really delivers services. (Rao, 2009)

In fact, health outcomes in PNG have improved little over the last 30 years, and in 2010 Papua New Guinea's health system struggles to meet the expanding health demands of a growing nation. A 2007 World Bank report titled, *Strategic Directions for Human Development in Papua New Guinea,* painted a grim scenario: a population of more than 5.5 million growing at 2.7 percent per annum; 40 percent of people living on less than $1 a day; life

expectancy at 59 years, and only 40 percent of the population with access to safe water. Alarmingly, infectious diseases such as HIV were described as the leading cause of death in the capital's main hospital (World Bank, 2007).

The risk factors associated with HIV outbreaks in PNG include a combination of ignorance and denial, not low condom use, increasing migration and widespread incidents of domestic violence. These factors are further aggravated by inadequate health and counselling facilities, as well as poor access to antiretroviral drugs that slow the spread of the disease in infected individuals. In 2007 such concerns were raised by the HIV project director of the Lowy Institute for International Policy, Brett Bowtell: 'HIV spreads first where there's social dislocation, poverty and high numbers of young people, which pretty much describes most of the Pacific' (Bowtell, 2007).

What worries health experts about the current generalised HIV/AIDS epidemic in PNG is that certain sexual behavioural practices remain widespread. A survey conducted by the Medical School at the University of PNG in 2005 on sexual behaviour and the prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases revealed these disturbing findings.

> We believe that 45-55 per cent of PNG men in the sexually active age range of 19-45 are having sex with more than one partner, possibly multiple partners. And it's the combination of multiple sex partners and the increasing prevalence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) that puts Papua New Guineans most at risk of a devastating social catastrophe…These are not nightmare stories designed to frighten people. These are medical facts of an epidemic already deeply entrenched in our society (Sapuri, 2005)

The 2009 UNAIDS Epidemic Update stated that fewer than half the young people surveyed in PNG reported using a condom during their last sexual encounter. Former director of PNG's National AIDS Council Secretariat (NACS), Dr Ninkama Moiya, worries that efforts to lessen infection rates could fail:

> Getting the message across to people is not a problem, but it is changing attitudes and behaviour that is the issue. People know AIDS has no cure but still continue to have sex without a condom…We can say and do all we want, but if people at the individual level can't respond positively to prevent HIV, all we've done will count for nothing. (Moiya, 2008)

Given the extent of this epidemic in PNG and the enormous impact it has on life in this country, the media coverage—or lack thereof—is something that needs to be monitored in order to ascertain how well the population is being kept informed of the progress of the virus, the methods of transmission and preventative measures. This article tracks both the extent and the type of press coverage from the two largest papers in Papua New Guinea over a period of ten years, and identifies a clear shift in reporting towards better explanation of the disease in the context of broader social and cultural issues. This is important as it indicates not only the evolution of HIV and AIDS reporting within this nation, but also highlights a strategy that may offer an example to other nations tackling this epidemic.[1]

Challenges for journalists when reporting HIV

Reporting on HIV presents several challenges for journalists in PNG, the first of which is to find an appropriate response while working within organisational constraints. The reality in the newsroom is that coverage of the disease has to compete with many other issues. In recent years, under traditional newsgathering routines and standards, journalists have failed to persuade their editors to run HIV stories (Brodie, Hamel, Kates, Altman, & Drew, 2004). Editors, for their part, do not want to be seen as merely relaying public health information. Moreover, there is a feeling that 'HIV fatigue' has set in, where readers are saturated with narratives of infection, suffering and death.

Ratzsan (1993) argued in his book on effective health communications that despite differing views on the precise role of the media in reporting HIV, there is broad agreement on the fact that the media are an important and influential source of health and medical information, and that they shape public understandings of and responses to current epidemics. 'The media have enormous potential to help stop the spread of AIDS if they could inform the public continuously and accurately about the true nature and scope of HIV risks around the world' (Ratzan, 1993, p. 256). He stressed in the early 1990s that journalists should rise above the epidemic of complacency, stigma, and denial to uncover solutions for slowing HIV infection in the most devastated areas of the world. 'Effective health communication is our primary and most potent weapon in preventing the spread of AIDS. Until a vaccine or cure for HIV infection is discovered, communication is all we have' (Ratzan, 1993,

p. 257). This insight is still relevant today, especially since scientists are no nearer to finding a vaccine or a cure for the disease.

A decade later, Swain (2005) followed a similar line as Ratzan, arguing that the media, particularly journalists, exercise a significant influence, and that much of society's understanding of the disease, including who it affects and its future possibilities, comes from the media (Swain, 2005, p. 258). However, this is contested; some stress that the role of the press in reporting HIV/AIDS is still unclear and limited, and that better information and education on HIV equals improved health outcomes is problematic. Thus, the matter is far from settled.

Turning the focus back to PNG—perhaps the advice offered in 2002 by former PNG editor, Anna Solomon, whose reporting career in PNG spanned more than thirty years, is still relevant. She claimed: 'AIDS is boring to report—so let's try to make it interesting' (Solomon, 2002). In keeping with this exhortation, journalists could report on issues that are closely linked to the disease. For example, initially the global epidemic of HIV was seen as a crisis in public health. This is now generally seen as too simplistic and much interest has been generated by reflecting on the complex social, cultural and economic determinants and consequences of the epidemic.

Another slant on the topic has been derived from scholarly analysis of the content of HIV reporting such as in the United States (Kaiser, 2003), in Southern Africa (Panos, 2004), and in parts of Asia (International Federation of Journalists, IJR, 2006). There was broad agreement in all three studies that the language and tone of HIV stories from the mid-1990s onwards showed greater sensitivity to people living with HIV. It seems that editors and journalists were encouraged to amplify the voices of those infected by the disease and to increasingly report HIV as a story with medical, political, social, economic, cultural and religious aspects. So how did newspaper journalists in Papua New Guinea's two national newspapers report on HIV during the period 2000 to 2010?

Methodology

In health communication research, the most favoured methodology used to document media representations of disease has generally adopted a quantitative approach. This longitudinal study, however, opts for both a quantitative and qualitative analysis of HIV stories in PNG's two national daily newspapers, *The National* and *Post-Courier* from January to March 2000 and from

January to March 2010. Also, a similar content analysis was undertaken in 2005 but the time span was shorter due to difficulties in assessing information from the websites of both newspapers. The 2005 study analysed all news items on HIV in both newspapers during the middle week of each month: 10-14 January, 10-14 February and 14-18 March (Cullen, 2005).

Data collection for the 2000, 2005 and 2010 studies included all news items on HIV, and content analysis involved identifying each newspaper cutting on HIV as:

- • an editorial,
- • a letter,
- • a local story,
- • a foreign story,
- • a front-page story
- • or a feature.

In the category section, 'foreign story' refers to news items about HIV in foreign countries while 'local story' refers to news items on HIV within PNG. 'Harms' refer to a news story that describes the consequences of contracting HIV, namely sickness, stigma and death. MI stands for Mobilising Information and refers to stories that contain information about how to prevent infection. PLWA is the acronym for people living with AIDS. These categories followed closely those chosen by Kasoma (1995) and Pitt and Jackson (1993) when these researchers analysed press coverage of HIV/AIDS in Zambia and Zimbabwe. The analysis of the data is framed by two questions: Did coverage of the disease increase over the years and did the topics change and or remain the same?

One major reason for the focus on press reports of HIV/AIDS rather than a wider study on media coverage of the disease is due, in a large part, to having better access to archival print data. Print copy was easier to locate and avoids the long arduous task of trawling through broadcast tapes of the 1980s and 1990s when transcripts were not readily available. Also, news stories that appear in print or online are frequently used by radio and television news editors to provide background, and often actual content, for their daily broadcast news services. Moreover, the press can keep issues and debates in the public forum and move items onto and up the political agenda (Conley & Lamble, 2006, p. 27).

Papua New Guinea's two daily national newspapers were selected for this study: the *Post-Courier,* which started in 1969 and was until mid-2007, the largest-selling South Pacific daily with a circulation of 27,460. *The National* began operating in late 1993 and in 2009 it had a circulation of 37,291.

Summary of findings

The most significant finding was the rise in coverage over the period studied, with the total number of stories published in 2010 representing a 350 percent increase on the number published over the same time frame in 2000

Table 1: Post-Courier and The National: News items on HIV													
Year	Front page		Editorial		Feature		Local news story		Foreign news story		Letter		Total articles	
	P-C	N	P-C	N	P-C	N	P-C	N	P-C	N	P-C	N	P-C	N
2000	2	3	1	0	0	0	6	7	2	4	1	1	12	13
2005[2]	1	1	1	0	0	0	9	13	1	2	2	1	14	17
2010	2	1	1	5	8	0	48	25	0	0	0	2	59	33

Note: Type and number of news items.
[1] Front page stories were not included in the local or foreign news tallies.
[2] Due to the technical difficulties in accessing information from The National and the Post-Courier websites in 2005, it was only possible to take samples in three weeks (one in each of the three months) on 10-14 January; 14-18 February and 14 -18 March

(Table 1). While the 2005 figures are unable to offer a suitable comparison, as it was only possible to obtain data for one week in each of the three months, it can be seen that even in that very limited period, the number of published stories (31) outstripped those in the entire three-month span in 2000 (25). This speaks not only to the growing importance of HIV as an issue in the nation over this time, but also to the willingness of the newspapers to cover the issue with increased regularity. Table 1 also reveals the increase in coverage was not identical; *The National* increased its coverage by 250 percent between 2000 and 2010, while the *Post-Courier* saw a 490 percent increase in that time.

The type of article published did not change significantly in the early studies. A comparison of the 2000 and 2005 studies of press coverage of HIV in PNG revealed that in neither year was a feature article published in the two daily newspapers (Table 1), and the topics did not change (Table 2). Between 2000 and 2005 the reporting of workshops, the latest figures for HIV/AIDS and 'harms' scored the largest number of stories. Differences did emerge in the 2005 study with new attempts to humanise the story. This resulted in four

Table 2: Post-Courier and The National, HIV topics

| | Post-Courier | | | | The National | | | | Grand Total | |
	2000	2005	2010	Total	2000	2005	2010	Total	Number	Percent
Figures	5	4	6	15	9	3	7	19	53	20.6
Workshops	3	3	11	17	6	3	5	14	45	17.5
Harms	8	2	8	18	8	4	5	17	52	20.2
Cures	1	1	5	7	1	2	3	6	19	7.4
MI	3	0	10	13	4	0	5	9	31	12.1
PWA	2	2	6	10	2	2	4	8	26	10.1
Human Interest	1	1	13	15	1	3	4	8	31	12.1
Total	23	13	59	95	31	17	33	81	257	100.0

stories on people living with AIDS (PLWA) and four human-interest stories about people caring for those living with the disease. News items on prevention and protection, however, were not reported in the 2005 study and only one such item appeared in the 2000 study (Cullen, 2000, p.70). One significant finding was that none of the news items in the 2000 and 2005 studies contained any direct educational messages about ways to prevent infection. This is surprising as the number of HIV infections in PNG continued to show significant increases in all 20 provinces. Also, infection rates were predicted to reach Sub-Saharan African proportions in a few years (Piot, 2005).

Content analysis of all HIV news items in the *Post-Courier* and *The National* from January to March 2010 revealed some significant changes in comparison to the 2000 and 2005 studies. As discussed, there were far more stories in the 2010 study—92 news items on HIV (compared to 25 in 2000 and 31 in 2005), which indicates that the disease was still considered newsworthy. There were 73 news stories, together with eight feature stories, six editorials, and three front-page stories.

Moreover, six out of the eight feature stories contained preventive messages. This was not the case with the 2000 and 2005 studies when there were fewer news or feature stories and no preventative or educational content in any of the news items. To sum up: there was a shift towards the inclusion of more educational content in the feature stories, implying that both information and educational content are an essential part of reporting the story, regardless of their impact on reducing the rate of HIV infections. Other significant developments include: the inclusion of 15 stories with mobilising

information (there were none in the 2005 study), and in nearly all the feature articles there was much greater acceptance of people living with HIV, including transgender and homosexual people, indicating that the disease was becoming more accepted. And in the 2010 study, stories allocated to people living with AIDS had increased, and stories about funding and workshops had decreased compared to previous years.

Not all the HIV coverage could be considered as promoting greater understanding and awareness of the disease—at least in the form that public health advocates might support. In February 2010, an editorial published by *The National* criticised the widespread promotion and availability of condoms, arguing that, 'The condom, rather than contain the rampaging march of HIV and AIDS, seems to be promoting promiscuity,' (Condoms promote promiscuity, February 5, *The National*). This provocative piece was followed by considerable debate in both newspapers on the issue, with opposing perspectives offered by letter writers, the Catholic Church and the head of the National Aids Council in PNG. Although the initial article undermined the public health message, it induced a very public discussion about the various methods of avoiding infection and the riskiness of promiscuity.

Another interesting trend in the coverage was the recognition of the social stigma surrounding people with HIV in PNG. Several articles coded PLWA made it clear that the person described with the disease was not at fault. One notable article in the *Post-Courier* described the road to infection of a 29-year-old woman from Balimo who became the second wife of a 'well-built man who was a land-owner' from the region. It was only after her husband began losing weight rapidly that she discovered he had been diagnosed with HIV some time earlier; but he had not disclosed it. The article directly addressed the societal pressure both for her to remain with her husband and to hide the disease:

> She went back to her family and they are supportive in the situation and want to help raise (her HIV-infected daughter) who is four years old. She said she disclosed her status to the community and to date had not suffered stigma. The community is supportive and I believe that is due to ongoing awareness of the virus, she said. (Sad tale but true in PNG, *Post-Courier,* 25 March 2010)

Other articles addressed the stigma associated with key at-risk groups, including homosexual and transgender individuals, reporting moves to

encourage greater acceptance, while simultaneously applying social pressure and advocating sanctions against those who wilfully spread the disease. This is clearly seen in an editorial in *The National* calling for tougher laws to stop actions, such as those of a 26-year-old Siassi Island man who knowingly infected a number of women.

> The HIV/AIDS law is far too lenient on this kind of crime. The Act was drafted, it would appear, with the intention of protecting HIV carriers and AIDS sufferers against discrimination, forced testing and unauthorised disclosure. It is too lenient on people in Senet's shoes who have gone around wilfully infecting innocent people. Yet we have heard of far too many stories which are similar to Senet's. There was the woman in Manus, who while dying on a sick bed, announced that scores of men would follow her because she had given the virus to them. There was the man who, knowing he had the virus, picked up K20,000 from the NCD and spent it on hire cars and women all up and down the Waghi Valley. Many more such stories abound. (*You do the crime, you pay the tim*e, January 29, 2010, *The National*)

From a public health perspective, these positive developments are laudatory; however, the nature of HIV coverage clearly needs to vary in order to be sustained by newspapers—writing the same message, however worthy, loses impact over time. Perhaps the most interesting innovation in the 2010 coverage is the publication of a serialised fiction story in The *Post-Courier,* using a vehicle for messages and education effectively. It is the story of Vavine, a young girl infected with HIV, who is forced to leave her village after her parents' deaths from AIDS. She keeps her infection secret but because of her circumstances, she is forced to work in a club where sex is freely traded. What makes the story an educational tool, rather than soap opera, is the constant reinforcement of the safe-sex message and exploration of other social issues, including sorcery, beliefs surrounding magic and death, and promiscuity. Take, for example, this passage in which Vavine considers what might happen to her if the club owner finds out her infected status:

> Vavine thought about her HIV status. But she knew Dennis wasn't aware of it and there was no way she was going to volunteer that information. Who knows what he'll do to me if he finds out, she thought. Many people in PNG didn't care about or truly comprehend how dangerous certain behaviours could be. The message that unsafe sexual activities could

literally kill you was being ignored by a great deal of the population. mainly the uneducated. This was another reason AIDS was tightening its deadly grip on Papua New Guinea—countless people simply didn't understand the disease and how it was spread. (Vavine is assaulted, *Post-Courier,* 12 January 2010).

From the perspective of Australian print media, this may be a dubious method of promoting a message: however, it fits well with the established tradition of using popular culture such as television or serialised stories to deliver and clarify health messages. The trend to widen coverage of HIV in PNG began some years earlier, as revealed in a study by Cullen (2007) who analysed all online news items on HIV from the websites of the *Post-Courier* and *The National* during a three-month period from September to November 2007. Surprisingly, while stories on HIV were similar in content to those found in Cullen's 2000 and 2005 study on press coverage of HIV in PNG, there was a new focus on domestic violence in 2007 with both daily newspapers running 10 items each on the topic in October 2007. *The National* ran four editorials, three front-page stories and three new stories while the *Post–Courier* included two editorials, one front-page story, one in-depth feature and six news stories.

Domestic violence is a major social problem in PNG and an issue closely linked to HIV because it undermines the ability of PNG women to control their bodies and negotiate safe sexual practices. In November 2007, the *Post-Courier* wrote two editorials calling for an end to domestic violence and three news stories about a woman who suffered major burns after her husband set her alight. *The National* included three news items on the same incident and three news items on the rising number of rape cases in the country. While there is little research on press coverage of domestic violence in PNG, it could be argued that the emphasis on domestic violence in September, October and November 2007 in both newspapers represented a change in the reporting of HIV in PNG, and suggested journalists had started to link HIV with the wider social and cultural context of the disease.

Conclusion

This article presented the findings from an longitudinal case study on the reporting of HIV in PNG's two national newspapers, *The National* and *Post-Courier,* in 2000, 2005 and 2010 and tried to answer two questions:

Did coverage of the disease decrease or increase over the years, and did the topics change and or remain the same? Although the data was limited, there was enough of it to provide some tentative answers to these questions. First, figures reveal that there was a gradual increase in news stories in all three studies. There were more in-depth educational feature articles, and the tone revealed a change in attitude among PNG journalists to report the disease with greater sensitivity towards people living with the disease and to include information about how to avoid infection. Overall, there was still a strong emphasis on reporting harms, infection rates and regional workshops. Journalists in PNG, however, did begin to widen coverage of the disease (Cullen, 2009, p. 157). Current and former editors and journalists from *the Post-Courier* and *The National* newspapers should be highly commended for consistently tracking and reporting the spread of the disease for the past decade. There is, however, room to expand the links to HIV and so cover the story more fully.

An understanding of some HIV communication theories may help journalists to broaden the current scope and content of HIV reporting in PNG. One theory in particular — Social Change Communication (SCC)—challenges the media to extend coverage of HIV from primarily a health story to one that is linked to social, economic, cultural and political factors. In contrast, Behaviour Change Communication theory (BCC) was found to be less effective because it was limited mainly to promoting the knowledge and skills of individuals without taking into account the wider social and economic contexts (Kippax, 2007). Nevertheless, both SCC and BCC theories challenge journalists to rethink their approach when reporting on HIV. One reason for this is that the BCC approach still continues to dominate both the clinical and social sciences and this is where journalists often seek expert views. Another reason is that SCC is difficult to implement in socially repressive environments where such stories could threaten the privilege of the status quo.

Many questions remain and a deeper consideration needs to be given to the role of journalism in health promotion/development contexts. The next stage of this research project is to undertake in-depth interviews with both journalists and editors of the newspapers in PNG to further explore their attitudes towards HIV coverage and news priorities in this area. It is expected that this will provide further detail not only about the motivations of news organisations in covering this topic but clarify the role that educators and other

agencies can play in maintaining its presence in the news. For now, the most challenging aspect for editors and journalists in PNG (and elsewhere), especially where HIV is a serious public health threat, is to realise the complexity and interconnectedness of the issues linked to the HIV pandemic. In this way, the PNG experience of connecting reporting of the disease to broader social and cultural issues may serve as an example to other nations at an earlier stage of tackling this disease. Indeed, the relationship between the disease and these macro issues is almost universal: HIV is not merely a medical problem but operates like a magnifying glass that magnifies the exploitation of women, domestic violence, gender inequality, illiteracy, the lack of health facilities and the kind of rampant poverty that forces people to migrate. The connectivity of these issues has important implications for political and financial reporters, editorial page writers, television producers and radio journalists.

Note

1. In this article, the acronym HIV is used to include those living with HIV, and also those living with AIDS, which is the next stage of the disease, when the human immune system breaks down. The term 'media' refers primarily to the print journalists.

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Dr Trevor Cullen, associate professor of journalism, coordinates the journalism programme at Edith Cowan University in Perth, Western Australia. His doctoral thesis focused on press coverage of HIV/AIDS and he is the author of several peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, workshops and conference papers on the topic. Co-author Ruth Callaghan is a lecturer in journalism at ECU. She has worked as a journalist and health editor for more than 10 years.
t.cullen@ecu.edu.au

The changing role of the citizen in conflict reporting

ABSTRACT

New technologies have facilitated the rise of citizen journalism, which promises to dramatically change the role of citizens in conflict reporting from consumers to producers and victims and witnesses to framers and analysts. If this potential is realised, the implications of this new form of journalism are significant, as they stand to challenge the government's traditional role as the dominant source and interpreter of conflicts. This study examines the degree to which the citizen's role has changed in conflict reporting through a comparative analysis of the 2008 Mumbai attacks in the *New York Times, New Zealand Herald,* London *Times* and the *Times of India*. The study finds that the rise of event-driven conflict news reporting offers a limited window of opportunity for non-governmental sources, particularly at the beginning of the conflict, to influence media coverage.

Keywords: citizen journalism, comparative analysis, conflict reporting, foreign policy, non-government sources

BABAK BAHADOR and SERENE TNG
University of Canterbury

FOR four days in November 2008, attacks in Mumbai by the Islamic militant group, Lashkar-e-Taiba, became a media spectacle for the world. The minute news broke, social networking sites like Twitter and Facebook were flooded with a huge volume of messages, turning it into on-the-ground intelligence for mainstream media (Busari, 2008). This included live-blogging offering real-time eyewitness accounts with content originating from Amit Varma, Sonia Falerio, Rahul Bhatia, who were stranded close to Taj Mahal—one of the hotels under siege (Busari, 2008; Mishra, 2008; Amour, 2008). Vinukumar Rangathan, a journalist, also posted some of the first photographs of the attacks on Flickr, a photo-sharing website (Mishra, 2008). International and Indian news organisations quickly featured these

accounts and images in their news reports, making individuals like Varma and Rangatham media personalities (Mishra, 2008).

The attacks were hailed not just for their military and political significance, but also as a demonstration of the growing importance of citizens in news reporting (Busari, 2008; Mishra, 2008; Amour, 2008; Stelter & Cohen, 2008; Caufield & Karmali, 2008; Sreenivasan, 2008). While citizen journalism was not new, the Mumbai attacks substantially raised the profile of this new craft. Citizens were no longer just consuming the news but also producing it and potentially even challenging the government's dominant role as the major source and interpreter of conflicts. This study attempts to assess the influence of citizens as news sources and the degree to which event-driven news enables the inclusion of more non-governmental sources in conflict reporting. Studying the sources of news is important in understanding today's rapidly changing and diversifying news environment (Messner & Distaso, 2008, p. 449). Sources that manage to get their positions across most prominently in the media are most likely to influence perceptions and gain an advantage in potentially affecting foreign policy processes and outcomes (Nacos, 1994, p. 16).

Citizen journalism: Rhetoric versus reality
Citizen journalism is defined as the role citizen play in collecting, report-ing, analyzing and disseminating news and information (Bowman & Willis, 2003, p. 9). In recent years, the quantity and quality of citizen contributions to news stories has moved beyond novelty, allegedly challenging the ways in which journalists and audiences produce and consume news (Sambrook, 2005; Bruns, 2008). The proliferation of the internet, video recorders and digital cameras enable citizens to supply eyewitness accounts that may be difficult for journalists to capture during a conflict, and these contributions become most critical when no journalists are present (Lyon & Ferrara, 2005, p. 15). Matheson and Allan suggest that citizens are highly valued for their vicarious, intimate and breaking-news accounts (2007, p. 12). One exam-ple of a citizen blog that made an impact was Salam Pax's Iraq war blog. His personal, unfiltered accounts of the Iraq war attracted the attention of not only the blogosphere but also the mainstream news media. To readers, Salam Pax's blog and others are more convincing because of their perceived realness, easy intimacy and personal feel as compared to packaged, one-size-fits-all reporting by mainstream news media (Matheson & Allan, 2007).

Blogs and other forms of citizen journalism also often offer an alternative perspective, opening up news coverage to multiple viewpoints (Bruns, 2008; Bowman & Willis, 2003).

Despite this potential, however, many studies have also concluded that citizen influence on mainstream news reporting is not particularly significant (Haas, 2005; Safran, 2005; Ward, 2006; Stabe, 2006; Paulussen & Ugille, 2008; Hermida & Thurman, 2008). In general, these studies suggest that the mainstream media's use of citizen sources is limited and cautious. Haas suggests that citizen-generated information in blogs, in particular, does not challenge the discourses of mainstream news media with alternative viewpoints but may in fact mimic them (2005).

At a primary level, the mainstream media appears to use citizen sources more for their firsthand accounts as victims and witnesses than for their opinions and analysis (Cottle, 2000; Lyon & Ferrara, 2005; Skoler, 2005). Cottle's study (2000) on the citizen's ability to define environmental risk in the media reinforces the use of citizen sources as victims and witnesses. In his study, he characterised the nature of news sources in two dimensions: 'public-private' and 'analytic-experiential'. According to Cottle (2000, p.35, 37), a public comment addresses the world of public affairs, collective concerns, or shared circumstances, and a private comment addresses an individual's own circumstances, familial world or personal relationships. Furthermore, a comment can be characterised as analytic if advancing a rationally engaged point of view and experiential if based on an experience or response that is often emotionally charged. Cottle's study found that over 80 percent of citizen voices were experiential accounts and that citizens were routinely accessed by the media to symbolically represent and embody lay experience as victims or witnesses.

While the internet offers greater avenues for source selection, the credibility of citizen-generated information remains a critical challenge for mainstream media (Safran, 2005; Matheson & Allan, 2007; Matheson, 2008; Ward, 2006; Stabe, 2006). Matheson and Allan (2009) argue that while eyewitness bloggers gain credibility in conflict reporting through their access, trust is still the most critical factor for audiences. With an increase in information comes the greater need to sort out story cues and meaning from raw, unfiltered information. Keohane and Nye (1998) suggest that in this environment, power will flow to the journalists, experts and story cue-givers that edit and make sense of the volume of information. Among these interpreters, credibility is key.

International terrorism

The Mumbai attacks represented to a particular type of conflict—international terrorism. The labeling of any group as 'terrorist' is, of course, politically charged as authorities often call their rivals terrorists to legitimise their own standing and cause. At a minimum, terrorism has the following characteristics: a fundamentally political nature, the unexpected use of violence against seemingly random targets, the targeting of civilians and an act perpetrated by non-state actors (Cronin & Ludes, 2004, p. 4). According to Stohl (1988, p. 3), terrorism is not simply violence. It includes violent acts intended to influence a wider audience. How the audience reacts is as important as the act itself. Post-September 11 terrorism is more directed by religious fundamentalism (Sandler, 1003, p. 784). Tiffen describes it as much more lethal and borderless in its reach (2006, p. 103). Support is galvanised through organised, interconnected networks using the expression of religious fanaticism, an ideology that is both abstract and unattainable. It makes use of the potent capacity of the media to create the psychological fear of death on a grand scale.

The role of the media is a fundamental aspect of terrorism. Graber (1980, p. 229) describes that when there is a crisis such as a terrorist act, media coverage goes through three stages. In the first, the media serves as the primary information source. The media's key roles are to describe what has happened. Their top priority is to get accurate information, which relieves uncertainty and calms people. In the second stage, media coverage focuses on making sense of the situation. In the third and final stage, which overlaps with the first two, the media make efforts to contextualise the crisis within a larger political and temporal perspective.

Event-driven news

Event-driven news is the coverage of activities that, at their initial occurrence, are spontaneous, accidental and not managed by the government within institutional settings (Lawrence, 1996; Bennett & Livingstone, 2003). Event-driven news results from accidents, natural disasters or unanticipated acts of violence. Event-driven news threatens the government's ability to have full control of the political environment. Lawrence (2000, p. 9) explains that in such circumstances, the media serves as an informal screening mechanism for the policy process, a key arena in which competition over problem

definition is played out. According to Lawrence (1996), event-driven news differs from the indexing of views associated with routine news. As journalists seek to make sense of dramatic events, news routines may extend to underutilised sources and marginalised perspectives, opening up new gates for citizens and other voices with challenging ideas to enter the news.

Bennett, Lawrence and Livingstone (2006, p. 470) suggest that media framing discretion is at its highest in the immediate aftermath of an event, when dramatic imagery can challenge the news management skills of authorities. For this to happen, certain conditions are necessary. The characteristic of the event itself must offer the possibility of challenging framing. Journalists must have marginalised discourse available to them through sources that are actively advancing challenging ideas (Lawrence, 1996, p. 446). Often, however, dramatic events are met by a unified official response, which triggers an indexing norm and reigns in alternative frames introduced by journalists (Lawrence, 1996, p. 446). Event-driven news frames and especially those in matters of high consequence are thus constrained by the deference of mainstream news organizations to political power (Bennett *et al.,* 2006, p. 481). Bennett and Livingstone (2003, p. 375) found that event-driven stories facilitated by technological advancements, as a result, contained substantial government sourcing.

Methodology

To assess the changing role of citizens in mainstream conflict reporting, news from *The New York Times* (NYT), *The New Zealand Herald* (NZH), London *Times* (LT) and the *Times of India* (TOI) regarding the Mumbai attacks was analysed from 27 November to 2 December, 2008. This six-day period was chosen to cover the actual event and several days afterwards when the attacks were still on the news agenda, but focus was on analyzing and contextualising the event. The four news organisations selected were all leading English-language daily newspapers. The print media was chosen as its news reports usually cover issues in greater depth, allowing potential citizen participation in conflict to be reported more fully. The Mumbai case study was selected because of the alleged significant use of citizen sources in news reporting. The print newspaper articles were compiled through the online search engine Dow Jones Factiva, which offered full text articles.

The unit of analysis was the source, defined as any person or entity directly quoted or attributed as a source in the text of the news article

(Li & Izard 2003, p. 209). Seven source categories were derived to reflect source usage in the findings: citizens, government, experts, media, foreign, non-governmental groups (NGOs) and the militants. These source categories were developed with reference from Li and Izard (2003), Nacos (1994) and Wigley and Fontenot (2009) source categories.

Citizen sources as defined by Berkowitz (1987) are individuals commenting in their individual capacity who are not associated or represented with any government entities, professional associations or media organisations. As opposed to earlier studies that allocated only one category for citizens, this study divided citizen sources into four sub-categories: Victims/families, witnesses, voxpops and citizen-journalists. Voxpops and citizen-journalist source categories were added to acknowledge the increasingly diversified use of citizens in news stories. Victims/families refer to those directly impacted by the incident either personally or through a family member. Witnesses are those viewing or experiencing the event firsthand as it unfolds. An example of a witness is:

> By 5am, Peter Keep, a British entrepreneur, had counted at least 40 dead bodies at Bombay's St George Hospital. 'It's not an experience that will leave me soon,' he said.—*The Times*, London, 28 November 2008

Voxpops refer to those who have been quoted with opinions about the event but who have not experienced the incident firsthand. An example of a vox-pop is:

> 'In 51 years, I have never seen this kind of thing,' said Dev B. Gohil, a tailor and lifelong Mumbai resident. 'We're scared for ourselves and for our families.'—*New York Times*, 29 November 2008

Citizen-journalist sources follow the definition of Wigley and Fontenot (2009) in which citizens are sourced from new technology such as blogs, social networking sites like Twitter, phone text messages or any other citizen journalism ventures.

Government sources as defined by Berkowitz (1987) are local government officials and spokespeople elected or apppointed to office in local, state or federal government entities. Foreign sources consist of foreign government officals and their military or police spokespeople. While both local and foreign

government sources can be grouped together and be considered as the government source, this study will analyse these sources separately as it provides a more accurate perspective on the use of the sources.

The content analysis of news reports measured the frequency, direction and timing of citizen sources. In terms of frequency, the analysis measured the proportion of citizen source used in relation to government and other sources. In terms of timing, the analysis sought to discover when citizen sources were used during the crisis. To compare the use of sources throughout the Mumbai incident including its immediate aftermath, the six-day period was divided into three stages based on Graber's description of the stages of media coverage during a crisis (1980). Based on an initial review, the first two days (27 to 28 November 2008) represented the beginning stage of the crisis. The next two days (29 to 30 November 2008) represented the stage where the media attempted to make sense of the situation. The final two days (1 to 2 December 2008) represented the stage where the media offered context.

In terms of direction, citizen comments in news reports were evaluated based on their nature and frame type. Cottle's (2000) earlier content analysis categories were used to guide the nature analysis, based on the following four categories: private-experiential (Pte/E), private-analytic (Pte/A), public-experiential (Public/E) and public-analytic (Public/A). Li and Izard's (2003) study was used to guide the identification of six news coverage frame types: political, economy, disaster, human-interest, safety and criminal activities. An additional frame of citizen journalism was also added to this list. To check for intercoder reliability, 21 articles were randomly selected, making up about 10 percent of the sample of 213 articles for a trained coder unfamiliar with this study to review. The intercoder reliability test produced a coefficient of .86, which exceeded .70, the minimum requirement for reliability.

Findings

The findings from this study revealed that citizens were the most frequently used source type. Of the 1,408 sources identified in 213 news articles from all four newspapers, citizen sources led at 33 percent, followed by government sources (29 percent), foreign sources (14 percent) and non-governmental groups (12 percent). Table 1 outlines the use of different source types by newspaper and in aggregate in percentiles. Results demonstrate that citizens were used more heavily in the first few days of the crisis while government

Table 1: Media coverage of Mumbai attacks: source frequency

	Citizens	Govt	Experts	Media	Foreign	Militants	NGOs
NYT	28.94*	12.45	8.79	4.76	34.43	1.83	8.79
NZH	35.06	11.69	3.9	14.29	27.27	6.49	1.30
LT	37.72	6.23	12.8	3.11	23.18	2.08	14.88
TOI	32.25	44.47	5.59	1.82	1.69	1.85	12.22
Total	32.88	28.62	7.60	3.34	13.85	2.20	11.51

Frequency of sources for each newspaper
* Reflects the proportion of usage of each source in percentage, rounded off to two decimal places.

Table 2: Media coverage of Mumbai attacks: source usage by stage

	Beginning stage		Making sense stage		Context stage	
	27 Nov	28 Nov	29 Nov	30 Nov	1 Dec	2 Dec
Citizens	45.45*	45.27	38.96	32.58	19.72	38.96
Govt	11.36	30.35	27.92	39.02	42.96	44.16
Experts	4.55	11.94	7.92	12.12	6.34	0
Media	5.68	1.49	4.17	4.55	4.93	0
Foreign	19.32	8.46	19.58	6.82	24.65	16.88
Militants	4.55	2.49	1.46	4.92	1.41	0
NGOs	9.09	12.94	13.13	6.82	23.35	14.29

Overall proportion of source usage in three stages of the crisis
Note: Source usage is shown from 27 November 2008 onwards as there were no print reports on 26 November 2008 when the Mumbai attacks occurred.
* Reflects the proportion of source usage in percentage, rounded off to two decimal places.

sources were used more frequently as the crisis progressed. In the first day of the crisis, for example, citizens represented over 45 percent of sources while the government accounted for only 11 percent. By day five, citizen sources had declined to 20 percent of total sources, while government sources had risen to 43 percent. The percentages of different source types over the different stages of this crisis are outlined in Table 2.

It is perhaps not surprising that citizens constituted a fairly high proportion of news sources during the Mumbai attacks, especially in its early phase. According to Lawrence (1996) and Bennett *et al.* (2006), the greatest media discretion in choice of sources and frames may be at the beginning of an event when the government may not have full control of the situation. The findings from this study demonstrate that a small window of opportunity clearly presented itself in this incident as government sources were obviously

Table 3: Media coverage of Mumbai attacks: citizen sources

	NYT	LT	NZH	TOI
Victim/family	62.03*	78.90	88.89	44.76
Witness	17.72	12.84	11.11	5.65
Voxpop	13.92	8.30	0	42.34
Citizen-journalist	6.33	0	0	7.26

Type of citizen sources for each newspaper.
* Reflects the proportion of usage of each source in percentage, rounded off to two decimal places.

Table 4: Media coverage of Mumbai attacks: source contribution

	Pte/E	Pte/A	Public/E	Public/A
Citizens	85.50*	85	12.78	12.61
Govt	6.95	8.33	39.46	34.85
Experts	0	0	0.67	18.21
Media	0.91	0	5.16	3.68
Foreign	1.81	1.67	20.63	16.81
Militants	0.60	0	3.14	2.63
NGOs	4.23	5	18.16	11.21

Overall contribution of sources for four types of accounts.
* Reflects the proportion of usage of each source in percentage, rounded off to two decimal places.

not expecting this incident and were therefore caught off-guard at the start. With this vacuum, citizens who had access to the event helped fill the gap and provided vital information otherwise unavailable.

The high proportion of citizen sources used, of course, did not mean that citizens determined the framing of the event. The next analysis reviews the degree to which citizens were used in their conventional roles as victims and witnesses versus for their opinions and analysis. As Table 3 demonstrates, citizens were used mostly as victims and witnesses. The majority of citizens featured by the *New York Times* (80 percent), *New Zealand Herald* (100 percent) and London *Times* (92 percent) were either victims or witnesses and were strongly associated with private/experiential (86 percent) or private/ analytical accounts (85 percent) (see Table 4) and disaster (45 percent) or human-interest frames (62 percent) (see Table 5).

Despite the claims surrounding the role of citizen journalism during the Mumbai attacks, this study found limited evidence of impact on mainstream

	Disaster	Political	Economy	Criminal activities	Safety	Human interest	Citizen journalism
Citizens	45.22*	12.35	0	1.67	4.40	62.35	93.75
Govt	24.02	35.59	10	61.67	51.65	29.41	0
Experts	2.67	16.47	42.50	3.33	6.60	1.18	6.25
Media	4.78	4.12	0	3.33	0	0	0
Foreign	12.36	19.71	10	28.33	8.79	0	0
Militants	2.25	2.94	0	1.67	1.10	0	0
NGOs	8.71	8.82	37.50	0	27.47	7.06	0

Table 5: Media coverage of Mumbai attacks: coverage frame

Type of sources used with each coverage frame.
*Reflects proportion of source association with each coverage frame, rounded off to two decimal places.

media news reports. In the four newspapers covered, there were no citizen-journalist sources cited in the London *Times* or the *New Zealand Herald*, and only 6 percent of the *New York Times* and 7 percent in the *Times of India* citizen sources were citizen journalists. One factor that likely contributed to this was the challenge of verifying of the high volumes of information from these sources, which no doubt add to the workload of journalists who choose to use them (Paulussen & Ugille, 2008). As such, unlike the traditional victim-witness citizens who were used frequently at the beginning of a crisis, citizen-journalists were used only at the latter stages of the crisis, from 29 November 2008 onwards. This finding indicates that mainstream media journalists may have needed additional time to validate the credibility of citizen-journalist sources and the value of their information. While the use of citizen sources was generally cautious, the findings did show some use of citizen sources beyond their conventional roles, especially in the *Times of India*. The *Times of India* used citizen sources widely throughout at all stages of the crisis.

Citizens were the second most frequently used source after the government in relation to public comments with analysis (18 percent), and critical political comments, in particular (29 percent). Even the small proportion of citizen-journalist sources used by the *Times of India* reflected mainly public/analytical viewpoints. It is interesting to note that while the other three newspapers (*New York Times*, London *Times* and *New Zealand Herald*) relied heavily on victims and witnesses for most of their citizen accounts, more than half of the citizens quoted in the *Times of India* did not experience the event firsthand, as they were voxpops and citizen-journalist sources.

Table 6: Mumbai: Similrities and differences in citizen source usage					
Most citizen influence →					**Least citizen influence**
Categories	TOI	LT	NYT	NZH
	32%	**38%**	**29%**	**35%**
Proportion of citizen sources used	45% of citizen sources were from victims and their families	89% of citizen sources were from victims and their families	79% of citizen sources were from victims and their families	62% of citizen sources were from victims and their families
	7% use of citizen-journalist sources	No use of citizen-journalist sources	6% use of citizen-journalist sources	No use of citizen-journalist sources
Timing of citizen source usage	Highest citizen source usage only on one day (2 December) but is the second most used source throughout all stages of the crisis	Highest citizen source usage at one stage - the beginning stage (27-28 November)	Highest citizen source usage at two stages—the beginning and making sense stages (27-30 November)	Highest citizen source usage only on one day (29 November)
Nature of citizen accounts	Mostly private/experiential and private/analytical	Mostly private/experiential and private/analytical	Mostly private/experiential and private/analytical	Mostly private/experiential and private/analytical
	18% contributed to public/analytical accounts	7% contributed to public/analytical accounts	4% contributed to public/analytical accounts	None contributed to public/analytical accounts
Citizen source frame association	Mostly disaster and human interest frames	Mostly disaster and human-interest frames	Mostly disaster and human-interest frames	Mostly disaster and human-interest frames
	29% contributed to the political frame	6% contributed to the political frame	None contributed to the political frame	None contributed to the political frame

Similarities and differences in citizen source usage.
*Citizen source influence for each newspaper was assessed based on the proportion of citizens contributing to public/analytical accounts and the political frame.

The use of citizen sources by the *Times of India* contrasted sharply with the three other newspapers. Citizen sources were limited to the first two days of the Mumbai attacks for the London *Times* and *New York Times*. Only a small proportion of citizens contributed to public/analytical (7 percent for the London *Times* and 4 percent for the *New York Times*) accounts and the political frame (6 percent for the London *Times* and none for the *New York Times*). Of the four newspapers, the *New Zealand Herald* saw the least use of citizen sources beyond their conventional roles. Despite a high proportion of citizen sources used for the *New Zealand Herald*, no citizen sources were used for public comments (both analytical and experiential) and citizens were only relied upon more on the last day of the attacks on 29 November 2008. Table 6 summarises the similarities and differences in citizen source usage across the four newspapers.

So why were citizen sources in the *Times of India* able to sustain their voices and offer more critical viewpoints? As Lawrence's event-driven explanation suggests, for underutilized sources like citizens to sustain their voices in event-driven news, certain conditions must be present. The characteristic of the event itself must offer dramatic narrative possibilities and suggest challenging framings of public problems. Journalists must have marginalised discourse available to them through sources that are actively advancing challenging frames and some of the political elite should preferably hold similar views. The Mumbai attacks had all of these conditions. The scale and sophistication of the attacks triggered the need for answers to fundamental questions. While India had a long history of violence, the Mumbai attacks stood out as the most audacious terrorist attacks since September 11. A further analysis of the *Times of India* reports showed a notable number of citizens offering critical viewpoints on India's security problem. At the same time, politicians from opposition parties were also featured criticising the Indian government for its lax security. According to Bennett (1990) and Hallin (1986), dissensus among the political elite provides the media with an opportunity to provide views critical of the government in the news, reflecting the legitimate political debate taking place in the country. Journalists were more than willing to reflect this wider range of viewpoints in this case, including such views from citizens.

In contrast, an analysis of news reports by the *New York Times*, London *Times* and *New Zealand Herald* found very little conflict between politicians on this issue in their respective countries. In fact, government officials were

united in denouncing the attacks. This was largely due to the fact that, in contrast to India, this was a foreign policy issue in these other countries—an area that opposition politicians often do not address unless there are important domestic implications. Without political dissent, the media had less incentive to reflect critical discourse and expand the range of voices. This could explain why citizen voices in the *New York Times*, London *Times* and *New Zealand Herald* were both more limited and used primarily as victims and witnesses.

While the findings show that event-driven news enabled greater inclusion of citizen sources, there was also continued heavy reliance on government or foreign sources (foreign government, military and police spokespersons) in all four newspapers. The *Times of India* relied most heavily on government sources throughout all stages of the Mumbai attacks and used government sources for public comments with analysis and important frames like the political, criminal and safety frames. The other newspapers relied more on foreign sources than their local government sources (see Table 1). Foreign sources were used most frequently in the *New York Times* and second most often in the London *Times* and *New Zealand Herald*. All three newspapers used foreign sources for public comments (experiential and analytical) and political frames. This result, of course, is not surprising given the location of the event.

Analysis of news articles in the *Times of India* demonstrated that the Indian government became proactive in its attempt to manage the news once the crisis broke. All quotes from Indian officials in the news articles appeared to be from organized press briefings, press statements or updates at the scene of the attacks. Due to the relationship between political power and media access, the political elite will generally still continue to enjoy greater access to the media and dominance of the news agenda. Journalists working with constrains such as deadlines and budgets are also likely to rely more on officials as authoritative sources because of their perceived hierarchy of credibility within the structures of power in society (Manning, 2001).

Conclusion

This study set out to examine the degree to which the citizen's role has changed in conflict reporting. The findings show that while the media continues to be cautious, using citizens more for their conventional roles as victims or witnesses, there are clear signs of change with some use of both citizen journalism and citizen analytical and political viewpoints present. For the media to use citizens beyond their conventional roles, certain factors must

be present as suggested by the event-driven hypothesis (Lawrence, 1996). First, the news event has to be spontaneous and dramatic at its initial occurrence. This encourages the media to initially go directly to citizen and other sources to make sense of the situation before the government has the ability to respond and attempt to take control of the flow of information and agenda. Second, the event itself must offer dramatic enough narrative possibilities for citizens to raise compelling and challenging ideas and issues. Third, there must be some political elite support for the challenging framing of the event or issues arising from it for citizens and their ideas to sustain themselves beyond the first stage of the crisis.

The findings from this study contribute to the literature on the relationship of mainstream media news reporting and the government in context of the rise of events-driven news and citizen journalism. As stated by Bennett and his colleagues (2006), what is important for theory building is to understand more precisely the limits of this interdependent relationship and the room provided by events (and other situational factors) for more independent media framing. Event-driven news clearly opens up a small window of opportunity for the media to include a greater diversity of voices in the news.

When it comes to using citizens as sources, credibility is critical and verifying citizen sources remains a constant challenge for the mainstream media. Contrary to the belief that citizen-journalists played an important role in the reporting of the Mumbai attacks, this study found their contribution to be limited compared to other sources. Furthermore, findings showed that the limited role of citizen journalism was not at the beginning of the breaking news story, but rather after several days into the story, presumably allowing time for citizen-journalist sources to be validated. Further research in this area could include additional case studies of conflicts across various media and contexts to test the validity of the findings from this study and establish possible patterns and trends over time.

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Dr Babak Bahador received his PhD in international relations from the London School of Economics and Political Science in 2005 and lectures in the media, communication and political science programme at Canterbury University's School of Social and Political Sciences. Serene Tng is a public relations practitioner, with ten years of public and private sector experience in Singapore and New Zealand. This article is based on data from her Masters thesis in Mass Communication with the University of Canterbury, completed in 2009.
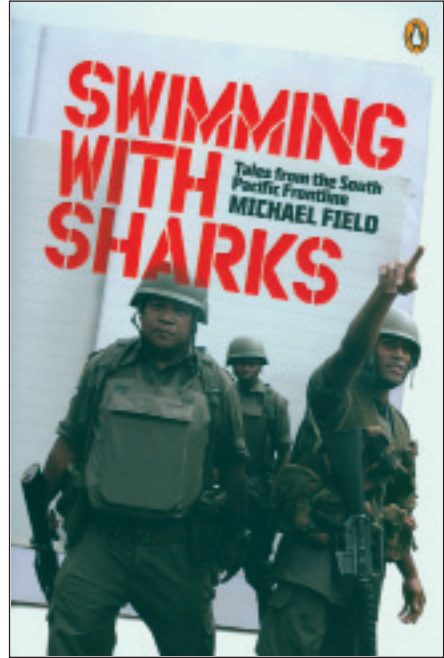babak.bahador@canterbury.ac.nz

Reviews

DR SCOTT MACWILLIAM,
formerly of the University of
the South Pacific, lectures on
development policy in the Crawford
School at the Australian National
University.

Action-packed travel? Yes. But analysis? Forget it.

***Swimming with Sharks: Tales
from the South Pacific Frontline,***
by Michael Field. Rosedale, New Zealand:
Penguin Books, 2010, 256 pp. ISBN 978-0-
14-320373-5

IN JOURNALISM, combining investigative reporting with auto-biography at a substantial level of proficiency can be extremely difficult. Along with intelligence, tenacity and a highly developed 'nose for news', the ability to recognise your own relative unimportance in almost every situation being reported upon is critical. Unfortunately this collection of stories inverts what should be every journalist's priorities. What might have been an informative account of events in the South Pacific over the last few decades instead becomes a disappointing, disjointed list of the experiences of one well-travelled storyteller.

From the first page to the last, Field insists on making his experiences and views THE STORY. Even the subtitle suggests a flair for over-dramatisation: the cover-photo of three armed soldiers clearly chosen to reinforce the image of a menacing region where bravery is the first requirement of any journalist committed to 'tales from the South Pacific Frontline'. More later on the comparative tameness of criminality and militarism in the South Pacific but for now, think David Bradbury's

Frontline and the photojournalism of Neil Davis.

The book commences with a Prologue, subtitled 'roaming around', derived from the name an anonymous Fijian woman gave to sharks which are claimed to frequent the Rewa River. Field appropriates the name to warn of the universal need to watch out for 'roaming-around sharks'. For Field, the warning is especially applicable for the South Pacific 'sea of states that ban me' (p. 9). Fiji, in particular, is a 'paradise for sharks' (p. 175).

There are actually just four countries—Fiji, Tonga, Kiribati, and Nauru—which have at various times banned Field from entering and the opening hyperbole is instructive for much that follows. The book has 12 chapters, from the first 'Never was paradise' to the last, somewhat contradictorily titled 'Paradise whatever'. Given the over-use of the expression 'paradise' in various descriptions of South Pacific countries and settings, the author can not be condemned for excessive originality.

The first chapter begins with Field's introduction to journalism as an NZ Volunteer Service Abroad person—writing 'how to' guides for Botswana's Ministry of Agriculture—and then working on the Samoan Prime Minister's staff. In the early 1970s, well before Derek Freeman's academic demolition of Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa*, 'it dawned on [Field] that Mead was wrong' about 'free love' (p. 15) in that country. The chapter also sets the tone for much that follows. Personal anecdotes intermingle with commentary, clichés ('Invariably, Fiji was different' [p. 18]), innuendo, and assertions. Clearly Field has a vast armoury of wink-wink, nudge-nudge stories, collected over many years.

There are subsequent chapters, on Samoa, Tonga, Kiribati, Nauru, Bougainville, and Solomon Islands, as well as on Disasters and Forum meetings. Partly because of very poor editing, so that multi-sentence paragraphs and oneliners appear with no clear logic for the differing formats, each chapter is more a collection of points than a coherent description or developed argument, jumping backwards and forwards without a clear chronology.

Take the introductory page and a half of Field's background description of the late 1980s-early 1990s revolt on Bougainville. It begins with a facile throw-away line: 'Francis Ona was king of an imaginary country when he died'. Over the next page and a half, of juxtaposed three, two and one sentence pars, the origins

and process of the conflict become no more than a set of clichés. BCL (Bougainville Copper Ltd) polluted 'a wide area down to the coast', Ona 'worked for BCL as a surveyor and found himself party to the destruction of his neighbourhood', so 'demanded AUS$10 billion in compensation' (p. 138). When Rio Tinto/BCL did not pay up, 'Ona created the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA)' (p. 138). And? Field says no more, assuming that all readers will know the rest or at least be sympathetic to the version he sketches.

Yet there is much, much more, available in published form as well as by the simple process of making phone calls. To take just one instance: it was never at all clear that the destruction of the countryside, which had been going on for some years prior to 1988, played much part in the original outbreak of the revolt, or that BCL was the main target of Ona and the BRA. The plundering of the Road Mine Tailings Leases Trust Fund (RMTLTF) by other Bougainvilleans was at least as significant, and has been well-documented.[1]

In short, for the introduction to an account published in 2010, Field reproduces a facile short-hand version of 'the causes' of the revolt, without checking to see if scholarship subsequent to his 1990s' visit to the area

had produced a more detailed and nuanced version of events which he witnessed and later chose to describe.

The lesson here for all journalists, academics and others is to ascertain diligently what is already available in a published form before writing up a story, article or book. Checking should always be done beforehand and then again afterwards, especially if trying to write up an account years later from notes taken at the time.

Fiji appears in much of the book, and provides an especially suitable lens with which to examine the Fieldian view of the region. The country's importance applies particularly to the shark-infested, conflict and corruption-ridden image of the South Pacific that the author seeks to portray, and which has to be exposed by intrepid investigative journalism.

A major deficiency of this portrayal is that by international standards, neither the South Pacific as a whole nor any country within it is especially exceptional. Rather than being 'a frontline', almost all that happens in the region's small countries with relatively few people occurs after it has occurred elsewhere. Money laundering, primary accumulation by a capitalist class–in-formation, chronyism, rigged elections, even in the case of one country, overt military rule: Zaire, Indonesia, Pakistan,

Russia and a host of other countries have been the substantial frontiers for these processes with the South Pacific trailing along behind.

Numerous people, including the most constant critics of military rule in Fiji, have pointed out that this country is not Burma or any other place where opponents of the regime are killed, tortured, dropped from helicopters, or made to disappear.

As for Field's account of Fiji and the current regime, it is remarkably like the 'official' version propagated by the Australian and New Zealand governments, with just enough radicalism to suggest Field is not a government 'tool'. PM Bainimarama is cruel, scheming, paranoid, power-hungry and vengeful: ex-NZ PM Helen Clark's description of the military commander as 'mad' lurks just beneath the surface of the journalist's assessment. Even though Bainimarama told Field that he had given former PM Laisenia Qarase two weeks to scrap proposed legislation that was clearly provocative, even racist and discriminatory, it was clear to the author that 'conceding ground on that was never going to be enough' (p. 214).

Why then give two weeks? How did Field know what the commander of the Fiji military intended to do? Silence reigns.

Field further takes up the official ANZ government line on why Bainimarama staged what he terms the 'fourth coup' in 2006. It was to save his own neck: the commander's role in the murder of soldiers and others during the aftermath of the November 2000 mutiny at the Queen Elizabeth Barracks was close to being revealed and form the basis of a prosecution (p. 202).

Much of the remainder of the Fiji sections focuses on those who have supported the military takeover: unsurprisingly, these are condemned.

The possibility that many who have decided to work with the regime are not just opportunists does not appear to have crossed Field's mind, for after all the South Pacific is full of 'roaming-around sharks'. Instead, they are complicit in all that has occurred, including the killing of mutineers and the Counter Revolutionary Warfare soldiers who provided the muscle behind the May 2000 takeover of Parliament.

The lack of comparative consideration of just what has happened in Fiji or the rest of the South Pacific is stunning. For the country where militarism is most prominent, one might expect the roll call of deceased and injured to run into scores, or even hundreds. While a complete list of those so affected in the aftermath

of the mutiny is hard to come by, the death toll in the entire periods of military rule, from 1987 onwards seems likely to be less than 20.

From May 2000 and for two months, many MPs were held in captivity, chaos reigned in the Parliament buildings and across the country. And the death toll? Climbed? No—even though soldiers against the takeover strained at the leash, demanding that they be allowed to go in and rescue the hostages, discipline was maintained and fewer than five people died. The much-maligned RFMF conducted a copybook exercise in how to deal with a hostage situation.

Since the events of late 2000, however it has been done, by sidelining dissident officers or encouraging them to emigrate, the senior ranks of the RFMF have remained solidly behind the government. Would Field prefer an outbreak of civil war, with soldier pitted against soldier, and the events of the mutiny replayed on a broader, longer canvas? For this is what a comparative lens would show: for all the offensiveness of the takeover in Fiji, so far— and no thanks to those in official and other circles who have urged soldiers to break ranks with the commander and his supporters—the military have not provided an instance of civil war which would make Fiji like other 'frontline' states.

For anyone who wants an incident packed read, with just enough anecdotes, action-packed events provided and described by a journalist who likes to place himself at the centre of the action, *Swimming with Sharks* is an interesting book. But don't look for detailed, documented analysis: expect and receive a lightweight account of what has sometimes occurred in some places over the last few decades.

Buy this as you would a travel magazine in paperback form.

Note

1. See for explanations published years apart, Tanis, J. (2005). Nagovisi villages as a window on Bougainville in 1988, in Regan, A. J., and Griffin, H. M. (Eds.), *Bougainville Before the Conflict* (pp. 462-463). Canberra: Pandanus Books; Thompson, H.M., and MacWilliam, S. (1992). *The Political Economy of Papua New Guinea*, especially chapters 1 and 3. Manila and Wollongong: Journal of Contemporary Asia Press.
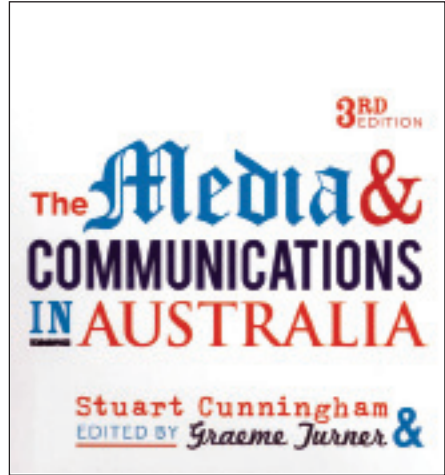
*DR LEE DUFFIELD lectures
in journalism at the Queensland
University of Technology.*

New edition leaves scope for 'human factor' research

The Media and Communications in Australia, edited by Stuart Cunningham and Graeme Turner (3rd edition). Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2010, 362 pp. ISBN 978-1 74237-064-4.

THE CUNNINGHAM and Turner reader, once again, has a core of 11 informational chapters updating us on developments in and around mass media, set in a jacket of other chapters describing selected theories of media or media research. At the back there are some 'cultural studies' essays about aspects of prominent media fare over recent years: sports, celebrities, media treatments of the 2005 Cronulla 'riot' are brought out once again.

This year's edition lives up to the series reputation for delivering a useful overview of current developments in media across a broad range, providing a good field of facts and references. The most recent information, for instance, on numbers of television viewers, or the latest action by music companies against illegal downloads, will be there. It is essential material for study in this field, which is not really gathered together elsewhere in one place, and it demonstrates the industry knowledge of the editors and contributors.

The Introductory chapter for this edition contains a concise and quotable treatment of issues that have been emerging, and sums up many discussions that have been going on. It looks at an historical move from dealing with media of scarce channels to media of abundance, and then the digitisation and diversification of forms of mass media, bringing

accentuated unpredictability, arriving at a question for the present moment: what is the media today?

This Introduction also tells of a split in direction in the media studies field between two sets of interests sometimes known as 'R' and 'C'— easing up on reviewing ideas about the *representation o*f natural phenomena in the mass media; moving to more *communication* studies, i.e. evidence-based work that engages with preoccupations of the media business like policy development and regulation.

It is suggested in the book that communication studies might call in work from more established disciplines—law, the arts, business, even history—noting that as yet there is no comprehensive history of Australian television. Cunningham demonstrates progress with policy work in a reference chapter identifying the regulators and the issues, affirming that communications studies must 'consult policy papers, and even regulatory and legislative documentation, as well as academic work'.

He says also, the welter of documentation 'won't mean much if you haven't really tried to understand where policy sits within debates about power, change, representation and identity that undergird our discipline'.

So, back to 'R', social theories of media providing context, and reasons for the book: 'Our answers proceed from a set of views about the role media should play … There can be no disinterested position on the media: their social and political function is so central, so profound,' the editors aver. The composition of the book 'implies an activist relation to the field, either through the critique of media and communications policy, or through an interrogation of the performance of the media against their responsibilities to the public interest'.

The critical standpoint is explained in this edition with a chapter called 'theoretical traditions' (John Sinclair), paraphrasing prominent international contributors to past debates over media in society, loosely set up for us as European (including British) Marxism versus an American empiricism. Sinclair's chapter also offers a kind of theory of colonisation of Australian scholarship in media studies: continental Europeans would pass on their ideas to British, who might bring them out to the Antipodes—much like the time-lag with Paris fashion collections in the 1950s; ladies here could be two years out of style. A glance at publication dates suggests though that 'Down Under' contributors to the debate were in the general game and writing more or less contemporaneously, not

so much copying-out well after the event. Sinclair cannot categorise and does not quite know what to make of the pragmatic, problem-centred earlier Australian media scholarship of the 1960s onward, mentioning some, omitting others, e.g. scholars from law or politics finding out information to explain the machinations around clearing of the VHF band for FM radio.

The overview of theories provided in the above chapter is supplemented by two others: a run-down on practices followed in representation studies and textual analysis, in the particular theoretical tradition favoured by this book (Kate Bowles); and a treatment of research on audiences (Sue Turnbull), mentioning industry attempts at monitoring audiences through ratings systems, qualitative and quantitative studies of audiences, and the concepts of passive and active audiences—and reflecting a widespread dissatisfaction with the amount of knowledge, or lack of it, about media users which all this has produced. Still more original data gathering from surveys and the like would help, as opposed to the use of research that draws on outside sources like published official statistics.

Next, following the 'theories', or 'approaches' section of the book as it is named, comes the block of 11 chapters referred to above. These are close to the home-grown tradition of media research providing informational updates and analyses on the current situation, in regard to: newspapers, telecommunications, radio, television, magazines, advertising or popular music. A chapter on the Internet, online and mobile communications and culture, by Gerard Goggin, covers essentials. Larissa Hjorth, on games, foreshadows 'Game 2.0', especially with greater game mobility, penetrating much more into ways thinking and relating, 'moving onto centre stage as a dominant form of creative and social media …' Watch for how it turns out, in a later edition. (A further chapter, at the back of the book, by Jean Burgess and John Banks, on user created content and social networks, deserves mention here as one that can be used as a comprehensive, informational story-so-far in its field).

Potentially important points are raised in the chapter on public relations (Turner), which gives a light treatment of definitions and asserts that the expansion of the PR industry, along with contracting media jobs numbers, is killing off professional journalistic investigation. This would warrant more study. Media students reading the text might notice from sources like daily newspapers an actual trend to more systematically researched disclosures, often as not targeting governments, especially on

short-term, localised topics. Possible explanations for this, if true, may include that journalists and their informants are producing harder material through enhanced computer based research, i.e. better discovery or communications tools and productivity.

Mention is made by the authors of various disciplines contributing in the media zone, though the backing-off of universities from fields like history, government, social psychology and other "social sciences" has reduced the chances of this , and through omission must create gaps in the field of knowledge. Consider how it would be if at this time we had more in the way of histories, social psychology, studies of political decision-making on media, sociology of media industries, or conceivably extensions of the general communication theory and modelling commenced by Harold Lasswell and others. There is scope for more specifically targeted, evidence-based work on crucial topics, like the anatomy, functions and societal roles of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

The Media and Communications in Australia displays work from a wide range of disciplines yet ends up under-representing human factors which must be at the heart of mass media. Who are these citizen journalists; what are they like? As the authors say, the literature to date has not proved a democratising trend there. How are aficionados of online games developing in their lives; why are they forever at it, and how do their 'staycations' (vacations at home) affect health and happiness? Such concerns may turn out to be important for society. Is it possible to obtain more study of creative acts that make media, for instance to include outcomes of practice-led research from creative arts? There is a place for the 'human' in humanities, in research on media.

Whereas the authors of this text place their discipline 'at the boundaries between humanities and the social sciences', an invasion of the field from those neighbouring quarters would be promising. To this reviewer it is more of a problem still for the structure of the book that the methodology and content of the central chapters, and the privileging of certain theoretical approaches (be they European communists or the tradition of empirical micro-studies in the US), don't fit together well. For students of the media in Australia, will reciting 'activist' translations from French *dada* be much help for putting a conceptual frame around problems of media, like those dealt with through most of this book? Yet we also have the option to follow the authors' advice, that 'of course, not everyone will want to read every part of this book'.

DR HEATHER DEVERE is with the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, Otago University.

'Flickers of peace' enter the media ethics agenda

Peace Journalism: War and Conflict Resolution, edited by Richard Lance Keeble, John Tulloch and Florian Zollman. New York: Peter Lang, 2010, 373 pp. ISBN 978-1-4331-0725-2 (hardcover); ISBN 978-1-4331-0726-9 (paperback).

THERE IS now ample evidence that the role of the media in conflict is important, and that reporting of the causes of war and activities during war has a major influence on life and death issues. Therefore a book that collects together a wide range of different perspectives on the concept of 'peace journalism' as opposed to traditional 'war journalism' is very timely.

The book draws on the work of academics, international writers, journalists, theorists and campaigners. Edited by two professors and a PhD student at the Journalism School of the University of Lincoln in the UK, the introduction is by John Pilger and the afterword by Jeffery Klaehn. Commentary on the reporting of conflicts includes Afghanistan, the Balkans, Cyprus, India, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Kosovo, Palestine, Rwanda, and Sri Lanka. Examples of peace journalism and 'new media' is provided from Britain, the Philippines, Sweden and from indigenous groups, including Inuit groups from Alaska, Canada, Greenland and Russia, Ainui in Japan, Maya people of Guatemala and Māori in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

There are three main sections in which 20 chapters are collected under headings of 'Peace journalism:

new theoretical positions', 'Peace (or conflict sensitive) journalism: theory and practice in the international context' and 'Peace journalism's critique: transforming the mainstream'.

Peace journalism is not simply about promoting peace or 'good news'. The entries in this book represent some of the varied debates on the notion of peace journalism. Keeble, Tulloch and Zollman refer to Galtung's seminal theoretical study of the 1970s where he distinguished between 'war/violence journalism' and 'peace/conflict journalism' on the basis of the mode of coverage in the mainstream media (p. 2). Lynch and McGoldrick's 2005 book *Peace Journalism* is identified as 'one of the most important'. They suggest that peace journalism includes the use of the insights of conflict resolution and transformation; re-examining the ethics of journalistic intervention; building an awareness of non-violence; revealing areas of common ground; treating 'as equally newsworthy the suffering, fears and grievances of all parties'; avoiding the use of disempowering language; and treating 'allegations made by all parties in a conflict equally seriously' (Keeble et al., p. 3). In a further chapter, Keeble advocates peace journalism as radical political practice.

Lynch and McGoldrick also appear as authors in this volume. In their joint chapter, they report on work being carried out to identify a 'global standard for reporting conflict and peace' and argue that peace journalism can make a contribution with fairness and accuracy and by minimising psychological harm (p. 92). Lynch argues that peace journalists need to work within the media domain to expose war and violence propaganda and ensure that there is a 'plenitude of cues and clues for readers and audiences to form their own negotiated or oppositional readings' (p. 81). Boyd-Barrett argues that journalists also need to 'recover' agency to address the problems with the propaganda model identified by Herman and Chomsky in *Manufacturing Consent* (1988). He demonstrates that journalists have not been simply unwitting collaborators, but some have been consciously spreading misinformation and deliberately framing events in complicity with government elites.

The chapters in this volume fall into two broad categories—those giving examples of non-peace reporting, and those giving examples of peace journalism. The book ends with a proposal by Aslam for conflict-resolution training for journalists. This along with Lynch and McGoldrick's discussion of global standards of peace and conflict reporting would be very useful as a starting point for both journalism training and peace and conflict

studies programmes at universities and other tertiary institutes aimed at incorporating the concept of peace journalism.

Other guidance for such programmes can be gleaned from Rai's report on the history of the publication of *Peace News* from 1936. Offering some useful 'cautionary tales', Rai also describes how 'citizen journalism has meant activist journalism' (p. 211). He argues that *Peace News* has practised many of Lynch and McGoldrick's injunctions for peace journalism, but unlike their model, has sometimes 'found it appropriate, and indeed necessary, to "assign blame", and to identify (and criticize) the hidden objectives that lie behind the rhetoric of "unintended consequences"'. Patindol provides a helpful account of 'building a peace journalists' network from the ground'. She also engages with the Lynch and McGoldrick model and proposes some adaptations to deal with the fact that 'peace is a dangerous word in a dangerous world' (p.198) and to counter popular misconceptions about peace journalism, that include renaming it 'conflict-sensitive journalism'.

As an example of 'peace journalism in practice', Zollmann gives an account of the work of American independent journalist, Dahr Jamail, on the US/Coalition-occupation of Iraq (p. 147). Zollman argues that Jamail's journalistic approach resembles that of John Pilger and Robert Fisk and he quotes Jamail as saying that he 'wanted to report on where the silence was' (p. 143). Another practice-oriented project is the report by Prinzing on the German 'Peace Counts' that aims to 'discover role models for peacemaking around the world and to give them a high level of exposure by producing features and photographic essays.' (p. 257). This project is not neutral but 'promotes the professionalisation of journalists as advocates for peace' (p. 257). Other examples of developments in the reporting of conflict issues are given by Valerie Alia. Her chapter reports on the 'internationalisation of Indigenous media audiencehood (sic) and media production', the collaborative project that is 'forging … new ways of preventing, mediating, and resolving conflicts' that she calls 'The New Media Nation' (p. 121).

The remaining chapters demonstrate issues that need to be addressed in conflict reporting where peace journalism could have a vital role. A chapter by Jacobson reports on the work of the Swedish group Kvinna till Kvinna (women for women) demonstrating a gender imbalance in global news media coverage with women featuring in only 15 percent of conflict

reporting. In addition, it was found that women were ridiculed, blamed and shamed by the media. Jacobson argues that 'despite an obvious overlap between peace journalism and feminist perspectives on news media' there was 'no articulated gender perspective in the peace journalism model' (p. 113). She reports on efforts being made by Kvinna till Kvinna to address this gap. Marginalisation of pacifists and conscientious objectors in the media during World War II is examined by Tulloch in his chapter. The British *Daily Mirror* identified with serving men and women and 'a loud trumpeting of human rights in leader columns, intertwined with jeering sarcasm in the letter page' Tulloch suggests, was probably the 'best deal' that peace groups were likely to get (p. 285).

Studies of contemporary US, Canadian and British media come to similar conclusions. An economic theory of journalism is applied to an analysis of US coverage of the conflict in Iraq by Russ-Mohl who argues that wars have been 'mediatised' and are subject to a predictable 'issue attention cycle' of upturn, turnaround and downturn (p. 329). Government spin and efforts to control the media are increasing, while resources to finance investigative journalism are diminishing. Winter uses examples from the Canadian media to illustrate the sort of control of thinking foreseen by Orwell in his futuristic novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, where 'war' became interpreted as 'peace'. He claims that, 'like their American counterparts, the mainstream Canadian media have adopted the role of stenographers to power, and cheerleaders for the war team' (p. 299). Similarly, Edwards quotes the American historian Howard Zinn who noted that 'The truth is so often the reverse of what has been told us by our culture that we cannot turn our heads far enough around to see it' (p. 301). Edwards uses examples from British media coverage of mass killings in Iraq, Kosovo, and the Congo, to argue that the 'unthinkable' has been 'normalised' and that 'the corporate media system does not in fact operate as an independent watchdog... it functions as a propaganda system for power' (p. 304).

The use of military radio in the Balkans and Afghanistan ostensibly to give a voice to the people and mediate peace is another example of peace discourse being subverted. As Maltby points out in her chapter, 'these processes need further critical evaluation if we are to better understand the use of influencing activities in modern peace building operations' (p. 236). The use by the media of

images of conflict also needs to be better understood, in order to justify capturing images of atrocities, argues Rughana in his chapter that emerged from a photographic essay 'Remembering Khairlanji'. He reflects on ethical concerns about not doing further damage to the dignity of people who have been violated.

Dente Ross and Alankus examine the media discourse surrounding the 'Cyprus problem' in both Cypriot and international news content in 2008. They conclude that 'despite multiple, rich opportunities for the adoption of a more open and inclusive coverage, more representation of chances for reconciliation and greater imaginings of a joint future, the press—both inside and outside Cyprus—did little to contribute to a constructive foundation for peace building on the island.' (p. 242).

Is there hope from new media and social networks? Matheson and Allen present four case studies where social networks as well as networks enabled over cell phones, have acted to bear witness to war and conflict and are able to intersect with professional and mass media. Despite concerns over accuracy, Matheson and Allen argue that the opening up of distinctive forms of communication cannot be ignored by journalists, and that there is 'some cause for optimism that the re-distribution of communicative power fostered by digital technologies will contribute to a broadening of global public spheres' (p. 188).
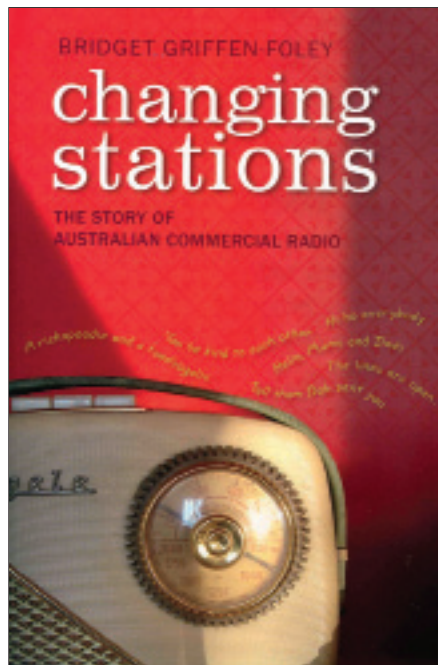
There is also a 'glimmer of hope' according to Christians, evident in public 'consternation over brutal crimes and savage wars' that validates the ethical principle of non-violence 'grounded in the sacredness of human life' (p. 15). In addition, he observes 'flickers of peace' emerging on our media ethics agenda. Yes, this is the time for change.

DR MICHAEL MEADOWS is professor of journalism at Griffith University, Nathan.

Invaluable history amid cultural struggles

Changing stations: The story of Australian commercial radio, by Bridget Griffen-Foley. Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009, 529 pp. ISBN 978-086840-918-4 (pbk).

RADIO broadcasting started in Australia on 13 November 1923 when Sydney station 2BS (later to become 2BL) hit the airwaves. Within 12 months, government and industry had agreed to split management of Australian radio into two broad categories—A-class and B-class licences. The first category would be supported initially by listeners' subscriptions until they were nationalised in 1928. Barely four years later, it came under the control of the newly-established Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC). The B-class stations morphed into the commercial radio industry, creating a hybrid of the UK's tightly-regulated government model and the USA's virtually unregulated market-driven approach.

This rather cursory description of the birth of Australian radio and the role played by the commercial sector in no way reflects the detailed historical analysis of commercial radio in Australia in this fine book by arguably Australia's leading media historian, Bridget Griffen-Foley. A stalwart of the current movement to document Australia's of media history, Griffen-Foley has produced what surely is the definitive history of Australian commercial radio. Divided sensibly into two parts—The Industry and

The Programmes—the book charts a course through the maelstrom of government policymaking and some-time political opportunism to provide crucial context to this fascinating narrative. Griffen-Foley reminds us of a general absence of attention paid to the commercial radio sector by media scholars and provides strong evidence of the significance of this oversight.

I venture to suggest that all of us would find it impossible to recall a life without commercial radio. Often relegated to the 'low brow' end of the cultural spectrum, Griffen-Foley makes a strong case for the important role commercial radio has played in imagining modern Australia.

While the first section of the book focusing on the battles over regulation of the initially scarce spectrum is informative, it is the second and largest part of the book dealing with programmes and the characters that brought them to life which really shines. It is in the innumerable stories that Griffen-Foley has woven cleverly into her narrative that the real cultural worth of commercial radio is apparent. Examples range from the enormously popular radio clubs in the mid 1920s headed by such characters as 'Uncle Frank' and 'Mamma Lena', through what she terms 'the golden age of entertainment' in the 1930s, 40s and 50s, to commercial radio's stranglehold on the 'dial-in democracy' of talkback from the late 1960s.

As expected from a scholar of Griffen-Foley's stature, each of the 12 substantive chapters is meticulously supported by up to one hundred footnotes along with three useful appendices covering the regulatory timeline, a list of the current 261 commercial radio licences in Australia, and a sample of programming from Sydney radio 1938-2008.

My only quibble with this history is the scant attention paid to the now burgeoning community radio sector—at last count with around 350 licences. Perhaps I am betraying my bias here but I found the absence of acknowledgement of the contribution of community radio notable, especially as it is community radio rather than the ABC that has challenged commercial radio in various spheres in the past two or three decades. As the commercial radio sector has increasingly retreated from serving its regional and remote audiences—largely for commercial reasons—it has been community radio with a watered-down form of advertising, which has stepped into the breach. Significant audiences are moving away from commercial (and ABC) radio to the community sector. Australia now has the highest per- capita listenership for community radio globally—a major

impetus for this change is commercial radio's perceived inability to engage with the nature of Australian cultural diversity. Although Griffen-Foley presents strong evidence throughout the book of the commercial sector's ability to manage this in earlier times, perhaps it is in the last two or three decades that the changing nature of Australian culture—along with technological revolution—has revealed an industry now struggling with its sense of identity. Regardless, Griffen-Foley has made an invaluable contribution to our knowledge and understanding of this crucial dimension of Australian broadcasting history.

DR MICHAEL BROMLEY is professor of journalism at the University of Queensland, Brisbane.

Moving on from the 'coups and quakes' mode

After the Tsunami: Crisis Communication in Finland and Sweden, edited by Ullamaija Kivikuru and Lars Nord. Gothenberg: Nordicom, University of Gothenberg, Sweden, 2009, 219 pp. ISBN 978-91-89471-85-6.

POTENTIAL turning-points in the rapid development of journalism around the turn of the 21st century have necessarily come thick and fast. Substantial claims can be made for a number of major pivotal moments—the Columbine shootings (blogging), the 7/7 attacks in London (user-generated content) and the Sichuan earthquake or Mumbai bombings (social networks). Coverage of the Indian Ocean tsunami marked a temporal central point in a dynamic decade (1999-2009), and exhibited to varying degrees all of the characteristics of the changing landscape of journalism.

On the one hand, the scale and extent of the event prompted saturation and global 24/7 media coverage, while, on the other hand, individuals and groups of ordinary citizens used the so-called new media to overcome the limitations of orthodox journalistic performance, just as journalists and news organisations wrestled with their functional capacity. This collection of essays is primarily focused, as the sub-title of the volume indicates, on crisis communication in two specific countries; but it is inherent in the nature of the events of December 2004 that they defy such reductionism. Sweden and Finland provide a starting-point, rather than an

end-point, for the analyses simply because although they were 'geographically non-impacted countries' (that is, the tsunami did not occur in either), the consequence for both were huge.

The tsunami represented the largest peace-time disaster in Finland's history, and, measured in the deaths of Swedes, was equivalent to the 1994 Estonian ferry disaster. Finland and Sweden, then, stand as proxies for the global and transnational nature of both the event and its mediation. No doubt those chapters which focus on the specificities of political communication, rhetorical strategies, crisis management and journalism in Finland and Sweden have much to say which is relevant beyond the geographical and cultural boundaries of those particular countries. However, it is the chapters which directly address the wider contexts of mediation and journalism which have greatest immediate relevance.

To some extent, as most of the authors point out, the nature of the Indian Ocean tsunami shaped its mediation. The simple scale and scope of the tsunami (13 countries hit, 286,000 deaths, or ten times the toll of 9/11), its political (Asian) and economic (tourism) salience, its amenability to domestication (victims from many nations), the availability of utilitarian technologies (digital image capture and transmission) and the investment in non-stop global media (CNN, BBC and many others) combined to produce both a global media event and transnational mediation. Yet these were perhaps trigger-points which activated journalisms already transforming in response to altered socio-cultural conditions.

Mervi Pantti considers the evidence of 'cosmopolitan sensibilities' in the coverage of the Finnish press (p. 83). She argues that mediation tapped into a public willingness, arising in part out of the experiences of travel, to support humanitarian aid on the basis of a feeling of a shared human condition which elided differences of Other (pp. 95-7). Similarly, Letukas, Olofsson and Barnshaw, in examining the creation of social solidarity, point out that one of the traits of the media coverage of the disaster was the collapsing of many nationalities into a single global humanity (p. 113).

What concerns these authors, and Hellman and Riegert, who contribute a chapter comparing the coverage of CNN and the Swedish TV4, is the genuineness of these responses. Pantti reminds us that humanitarian aid is most often a zero-sum game: as the media drew attention to the tsunami, it drew it away from other equally needy causes (p. 84). Letukas, Olofsson and Barnshaw make the point that

social and cultural proximity is most often constructed on a narrow, nativist basis (p. 112), and Hellman and Reigert argue that 24/7 transnational news-making, with its high dependence on speedy, episodic, ambiguous, image-driven coverage, may actually militate against establishing proximity (p. 145).

The sheer volume of journalistic coverage may veil its nature. As the editors suggest in their introduction, a widespread dissatisfaction with 'traditional news journalism', which may only be enhanced by its ubiquity, is driving many users both to alternative platforms and sources and to alternative modes of creation (pp. 10-11). Moreover, the absence of even the most incidental of elements (such as digitally-generated images of the earthquake in Pakistan) appears to very easily undermine the idea of human solidarity.

These studies usefully map much of the contemporary condition of journalism but ultimately they are broadly inconclusive. What emerges is a picture of journalism caught in the vice of socio-cultural change (cosmopolitanism, 'we media') and media manoeuvring for self-preservation (transnational, 24/7 news), both jaws of which still have to negotiate a residual nativism. It will be instructive to compare in due course the mediation of the tsunami with that of the earthquake in Haiti in 2009, which was similar in scale but perhaps significantly different in many other crucial respects.
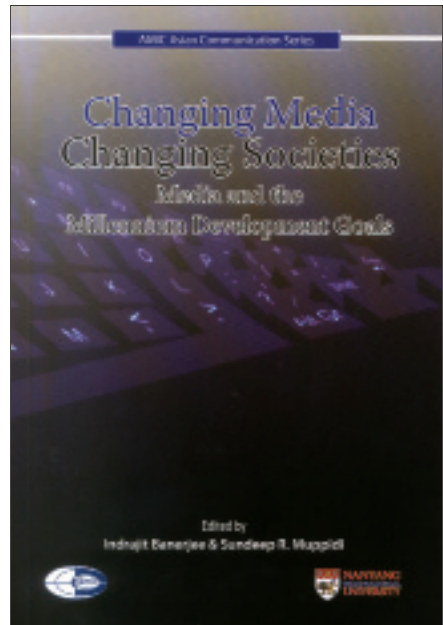
This might provide a more reliable test of whether journalism has moved on—finally—from its 'coups and earthquakes' mode.

USHA SUNDAR HARRIS is a lecturer in international communication at Macquarie University, Sydney.

Diversity, but gaps in how media can achieve MDGs

Changing Media, Changing Societies, Media and the Millennium Development Goals, edited by Indrajit Banerjee and Sundeep R. Muppidi. Singapore: Asian Media Information and Communication Centre (AMIC), 2009, 219pp. ISBN 978-981-4136-13-6.

IN 1948, communication was recognised as a fundamental human right when the General Assembly of the United Nations included freedom of opinion and expression in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights among other rights such as the right to life, liberty, education, assembly and privacy etc. Half a century later there are still millions of people in the world who do not enjoy some of the basic rights to life including rights to food, shelter and education, while paradoxically there has been an exponential growth in communication technology. The United Nation's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are meant to be the light in the darkness for millions of people who are surviving on less than $2 per day. MDGs are a set of eight goals, to be achieved by 2015, which directly address the world's biggest development challenges (see www.un.org/millenniumgoals) with media seen as an integral partner in this challenge.

The 2008 AMIC conference theme, *Changing Media, Changing Societies, Media and the Millennium Development Goals,* also the title of this publication, highlighted the role of media in this development process,

as the editors, Banerjee and Muppidi, point out:

> In our globalised world, the media is more than just a watchdog. Around the world, in every society, they play important roles including creating awareness, disseminating the relevant messages at various stages of the development process, providing channels of communication between various stakeholders, and ensuring transparency in this global effort of the UN to achieve its millennium development goals (p. 3).

A collection of 12 conference papers have been edited into three sections. Sadly the first two of the three chapters, which are meant to underpin the themes in this book, engage largely with media practices in developed nations. Andrew Tausig's engaging discussion of the symbiotic relationship between government and media in democratic societies, using the analogy of partners on the dance floor, makes a perfunctory mention of under privileged groups as one of the parties in this crowded dance floor vying for media attention (p.14). Although Alan Knight presents an overview of changing journalism practices as a direct result of internet development in the Asia-Pacific region, much of this article dwells on issues pertaining to the Australian public broadcaster,

the ABC. Thus it is Felix Librero's third chapter in this thematic section which addresses more directly the significant issues that this publication sets out to present. Librero sees education 'as the mother of all development issues...and the common denominator of the eight millennium development goals set by the United Nations' (p. 37). Focusing on transnational education he argues that as a development message this sector would benefit students globally with a two way flow of knowledge from the developed to the developing world and vice versa.

> ... a two way flow of knowledge not only from the developed to the developng but vice versa. He further states, 'By offering our counterparts from the developed world an opportunity to learn from us, we are promoting not only world understanding, but the tenets of education for all ...' (p. 45).

One of the most important articles in relation to media and MDGs in the collection is Trevor Cullen's 'Reporting HIV and HIV Communication Theories'. By reviewing the findings and recommendations of three surveys on media reporting of HIV undertaken in the US, Southern Africa and PNG, Cullen identifies that 'one of the major problems was the narrow framing of the disease' (p. 155). He turns to the

emerging Social Change Communication theory (as opposed to Behaviour Change communication theory) as a way to rethink the coverage of HIV in media:

> It is based on a belief that behaviour change is dependent on social change and is a long-term process [...]. The implications of this theory, if adopted by editors and journalists, would widen the predominant framing of HIV stories from primarily a focus on health to one that covers related issues such as gender equality, domestic violence, inadequate access to treatment, poor health facilities, complex sexual networking and challenge governments on their policies towards treatment, human right and overall strategies (p.153)

Another insightful article is '*Bandillo Ng Palawan:* The Philippines Last Frontier of Environmental Journalism' by Calma *et al*. It discusses the constraints and challenges of environmental journalism in the Philippines through a case study of community-based newspaper *Bandillo Ng Palawan*. The authors raise a raft of concerns in relation to environmental reporting including the fear of libel suits, harassments and self-interest within a community media context, and its deleterious impact upon environmental sustainability as addressed in MDG 7.

Section two has various country-specific case studies as follows: Roy's analysis of 'policy and regulatory changes in the Indian radio landscape'(p.48); Patching and Pearson's revealing look at the 'spin' techniques used in government media relations with a focus on Australia; Shoesmith and Mahmud's appraisal of a communication course in Bangladesh which is informed by a media savvy generation of students and underpinned by a broad liberal arts education; Papoutsaki and Strickland's research of Diaspora media within Pacific communities in New Zealand.

Section Three covers a multitude of issues which include Cabañes' research of cultural identity issues within the Filipino migrant community in Singapore; Chib et al on social campaigns focusing on disabled athletes and the study by Wijaya et al. into the impact of journalism education on professional practices in Asian countries.

The editors have identified a diversity of topics from the many papers presented at the 2008 AMIC conference in Manila to illustrate the role of media and media education in dealing with the challenges of development. However much is left to the reader's own critical faculties to draw the connections between the issues discussed and the role of media in achieving the MDGs.
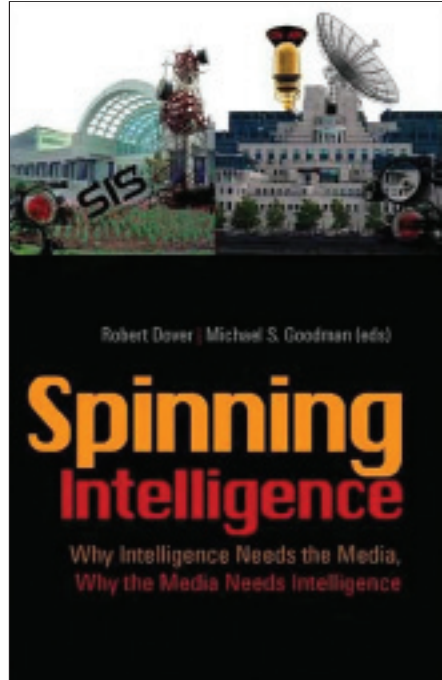
SELWYN MANNING is co-editor of Scoop and acting editor of Pacific Scoop.

A challenge to the spook agencies' media spin

Spinning Intelligence: Why Intelligence Needs the Media, Why the Media Needs Intelligence, by Robert Dover and Michael S. Goodman (eds). London, United Kingdom: C. Hurst & Co, 2009, 263 pp. ISBN 978-1-85065-993-8 (hbk), 978-1-85065-994-5 (pbk).

A CURSORY glance at how intelligence agencies operate may suggest such entities contain themselves and the information they acquire within sealed silos, observing the outside world from a statutory-protected vantage-point while refusing any reciprocal attention from the public whose interests they serve.

For those observing the function of these agencies from outside their mystique is often intensified due to an ignorance of security intelligence agencies, including the methods they use to acquire information, and suspicion about their motivations and the purpose of their resulting analysis.

The book *Spinning Intelligence* investigates this culture, the relationship that exists between security intelligence agencies and other institutions, and lays bare a solidly researched account that is as readable as it is a resource. The book explores whether intelligence agencies operate within a culture of accountability, giving special attention to the most powerful agencies in our post-millennium world.

A common test within the book considers how intelligence agencies and the media, or the Fourth Estate,

are interrelated. It argues that while there is a symbiotic relationship between intelligence agencies and the media, this relationship often leaves the media in want of citable information. Consequently, the Fourth Estate is left subservient to those who hold, control, and manipulate classified official information.

Spinning Intelligence draws on the work of academics specialising in media studies, political science, and intelligence and security analysis. It structures its chapters in a subject-aligned logic that is deep in academic discourse while presenting the writers' thinking in an accessible and reader-friendly style.

It opens with an exploration of the relationship between globalisation and intelligence and cites research, focusing most significantly on the United States of America and the United Kingdom, as a foundation for its central argument: that intelligence agencies and the media do not lead separate existences but rather have an inter-dependent, and, at times, symbiotic relationship (p. 13).

For those interested in examining how intelligence agencies and the media inter-relate in the Pacific region, *Spinning Intelligence* is a valuable contribution that assists in identifying difference. Clearly, unlike their northern hemisphere counterparts,

convention suggests South Pacific states are reticent to acknowledge they conduct an intelligence gathering role beyond their domestic borders. To do so would risk stressing inter-state relationships. However, it would be naïve to assume intelligence gathering does not go on. There is evidence that where crisis and insecurity occurs, such as in the months leading up to December 2006 when Fiji's elected government was under threat of being removed from office by its military, Australia and New Zealand's diplomatic posts were required to pass back to their executive governments information that assisted with foreign policy development. Both Australia's and New Zealand's prime ministers of the time had their operational staff report back on security and stability aspects of Fiji's military/governmental estrangement and to analyse what impact Fiji's instability would have on the personal security of the two prime ministers while attending the 2006 Pacific Islands Forum in Nadi. Also, at the 2006 Pacific Islands Forum, New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade staff attended and recorded press conferences held between the Fourth Estate and Pacific state leaders.

However, in the South Pacific, there remains an information vacuum which, if filled would assist in

understanding the relationship between security intelligence agencies and the Fourth Estate from both a domestic and outward-looking context. Again, in this regard *Spinning Intelligence* is valuable in demonstrating what is common practice in the northern hemisphere, and therefore provides a framework and methodology of how to test the function of disseminating intelligence information in the Pacific region.

In *Spinning Intelligence,* the writers take an historical approach to developing an understanding of how access to classified information (routinely identified as material high in the public, national, and international security interest) is affected by levels of political risk and security sensitivities (p.15).

The writers examine how today's democracies approach official information, how they classify it, how sensitivities over the classification of information intensify as cultures feel they are threatened, and become more security-conscious and risk-averse. They cite the post-Cold War period as an example of a time when classifications were relaxed, when, in the 1990s, the culture of security intelligence agencies shifted to embrace a more open-access policy to formerly classified top secret information. The writers also observe how, after the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City on 11 September 2001, the open access culture reverted back to a guarded high-security condition (p. 27).

The book analyses how the attacks heralded in a new high security era that led the USA's Central Intelligence Agency and the UK's MI6 and MI5 to resort to clandestine surveillance of their own citizenry. It analyses how in the United States the George W. Bush administration employed draconian measures to protect classified information from becoming public, even when the information was high in the public interest. The writers argue that such methods included changes to state secret legislation in order to mask government methods of information gathering. This tougher legislation was used to intimidate journalists and officials including by prosecuting investigative journalists and their sources when re-classified secret information was brought to the public's attention, even when it was revealed in the public interest (p. 30).

Examples are given of how high-profile journalists were charged. James Risen of *The New York Times* was one of those indicted. In his reports, Risen had revealed how the US government's National Security Agency was intercepting, without

warrant, international phone calls that originated or terminated in the United States (p. 30). Professional journalist organisations believed the strategy was designed by the state apparatus to intimidate journalists and deter their confidential sources from revealing information that was deemed too sensitive for public consumption (p. 31).

Spinning Intelligence also identifies how modern democracies, within a globalised intelligence context, are interconnected through alliance networks controlled by superpowers influenced by geopolitical events. It identifies where individual states are permitted access to levels of intelligence information and sharing, as determined by their respective classification level and importance to the overall alliance.

Spinning Intelligence is an important book in the security-intelligence sub-genre that evaluates the power imbalances between state executives and the Fourth Estate. The book lays bare how even in times of threat and war, intelligence organisations need the media so as to create a public culture that empowers a state to counter a perceived threat or enemy. In chapter 6, entitled 'All The Secrets That Are Fit To Print', writers Steve Hewitt and Scott Lucas investigate a contemporary history of how the Fourth Estate is manipulated by security

agencies. Their account is a revelation that ought to compel all professional journalists to focus on how they, as representatives of the Fourth Estate and therefore the public, can remedy the imbalance and again challenge and critique these most powerful and important institutions.

Noted

DR EVANGELIA PAPOUTSAKI is reviews editor of Pacific Journalism Review.

Getting media up to speed on Melanesian land issues

In Defence of Melanesian Customary Land, edited by Tim Anderson and Gary Lee. Sydney: AID/WATCH, 2010, pp. 44. ISBN:978-0-646532-37-0. *Defending Melanesian Land*, directed by Tim Anderson. Short film: Sausi – Village cooperation. DVD, AID/Watch: Sydney

UNDERSTANDING Melanesian customary land is challenging for foreign journalists. Issues of land tenure when they make it to the news in the region are mostly linked to resources, foreign investment and economic development. Journalists tend to fall victim to their own misunderstandings about land ownership in this part of the Pacific, often aggravated by misinformation produced by investment groups and their 'think tanks' which pursue 'their own economic agendas under the guise of modernist policy' (p. 2).
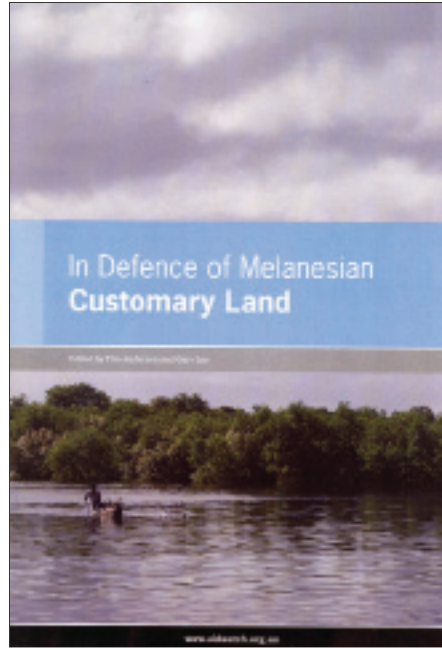
This publication, with its accompanying video produced by AID/WATCH, seeks to address some of these misunderstandings and correct some of the misinformation promoted by these investment groups, whose aim to acquire cheap land creates lobbying groups that pressure island governments to introduce new legislation that undermines indigenous rights.

It is not surprising then to see policy papers produced by such a 'think tank', the Sydney-based Centre for Independent Studies, claiming the 'communal ownership of land is the primary reason for deprivation in rural Pacific communities' (p. 2).

Unfortunately, regional media tend to pick up this rhetoric which claims that indigenous forms of ownership are damaging to economic development. These claims contribute to the general public's misunderstanding of how people can own land without being able to sell it, not appreciating that families using their own customary lands in combined subsistence-cash crop operations can often generate more value that those with paid jobs. Journalists themselves tend to be unaware of the socio-economic and cultural aspects involved in issues around land tenure leases, conversion and reform programmes, the productive value of customary land and the social security features of traditional land tenure systems. These issues, among others, are the focus of this valuable publication aimed at journalists, researchers and those involved in policy formation, such as AusAID.

This highly informative publication is organised on seven chapters around case studies, mostly drawn from Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu but with overall references to Melanesia. Steven Sukot from PNG talks about the wrong emphasis on customary land reform as it is promoted by the Papua New Guinea government with backing from some donors, which uses 'development' as the bait for land conversion, despite recent

Defending
Melanesian Land

short film: Sausi – village cooperation

www.aidwatch.org.au

reports showing the clear value of this system to PNG. Tim Anderson's historical comparison of issues of land registration, land markets and livelihoods in PNG and other former colonies poses several questions, such as 'why should customary land owners not see land registration and its associated promises as a step towards the dispossession of indigenous peoples, the purpose for which it was explicitly designed in the colonial period'? (p.19)

Ralph Regenvanu looks at the traditional economy as a form of resilience in Vanuatu and highlights

the importance of 'counting' its contribution to the country's well being by calling for the development of alternatives to the Western GDP indicators that are more appropriate in the Melanesian context. He is also arguing that we need to shift the focus for development onto food security and says that maintaining customary land tenure is the basis for a sustainable food supply. (p.33).

The accompanying DVD further enhances the value of this publication. It brings alive the voices of Melanesian activists explaining their views on the importance of indigenous land to their people, and the reasons for he formation of the regional Melanesian Indigenous Land Defence Alliance. The DVD also includes a short film in Melanesian Pidgin demonstrating how a community, by coming together succeeds in rejecting the temptation for quick cash presented by oil palm development schemes. More of these successful examples need to be shared.—*Dr Evangelia Papoutsaki is associate professor in communication studies at Unitec.*

BEING THE FIRST
Storis Blong Oloketa Mere
Lo Solomon Aelan

Tribute to Solomon Is women

THIS BOOK profiles the stories of 14 outstanding women, revealing their intimate moments, their struggles and the highs they have faced during their lives. Solomon Islands women make up around 49 percent of the country's population. Traditionally, these women are

multi-taskers—as food producers, home keepers, child-bearers and child educators they are largely invisible in the media.

Here we see them in a new light. We enter a world of firsts—one where they hold positions of power and leadership in the public service. The 14 profiles include seven Permanent Secretaries, four Under-Secretaries, a Member of Parliament, a Public Service Commissioner and the Clerk to Parliament. They each reveal interesting stories of their upbringing, the challenges along the way and the support they received from mentors, family and, in practically all profiles, their faith in God.

And then they give inspirational advice to young women wanting to follow similar paths. However, as is most often the case with these types of stories, the rise of these women has come at a cost. It usually comes hand in hand with sexism, cultural conflict and challenges to their beliefs and value systems.

It is disappointing to see that in spite of these inspirational stories it seems no women were elected to Parliament in the August 2010 national election. The featured women's first person accounts reveal a lot about them. The histories share a similar pattern, in that many grew up poor but they did not let that stop them. The question line is formulaic.
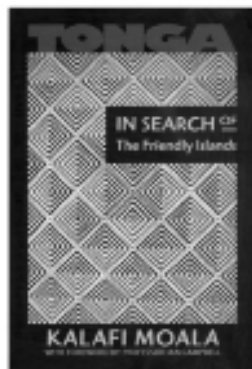
In my experience, I have found Pacific women (especially older Pacific women) don't like talking about themselves. It is not the 'done thing'—your actions already speak volumes and thereforethere is no need to publicly tell your life story. Using a pattern of formulaic questions to interview the women in this book has enabled them to talk about their lives somewhat freely.

Professor Marilyn Waring of the Institute of Public Policy at AUT University co-edited the manuscript with Malaita-born Dr Alice Aruhe'eta Pollard. Suzanne Bent-Gina, deputy director of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands' (RAMSI) Machinery of Government programme helped organise the book project as part of its component on women in government.The production of the book was pretty much an all female affair. The interviews were conducted by the well-respected Catherine Adifaka (the first female Public Service Commissioner in Solomon Islands) and they were transcribed by Cynthia Wickham, a Solomon Islands marine science graduate.

The Pacific Media Centre's Del Abcede designed the book and Isabella Rasch, also from AUT, created the cover montage. – *Sandra Kailahi of Television New Zealand is the author of a book on Pasifika women.*

A moment for self-reflection

WHEN *The Hurt Locker*, a small budgeted film made more on the lines of docudrama than a blockbuster, won the Oscar for the best film in 2010, it might have surprised the world. But for the American audiences it was the ultimate glamorisation of nationalism: the creation of heroes out of ordinary soldiers fighting an unseen enemy called 'terror'. Without giving any political or moral justification of the war, the film was a eulogy to those who die in a 'national cause'.

War Isn't Hell, Its Entertainment treats one of the most debated issues of our times i.e. the relationship between war and media, in a similar manner. The book offers no apology for the existence of such a relationship. Neither does it try to condemn it or separate the two. 'It is much too late for that,' as Schubart admits in her introduction. The 290 pages of the book simply aim to 'investigate and trace their morphing into one another, to locate new developments,

War Isn't Hell,
It's Entertainment

ESSAYS ON VISUAL MEDIA AND THE
REPRESENTATION OF CONFLICT

Edited by Rikke Schubart,
Fabian Virchow, Debra White Stanley
and Tanja Thomas
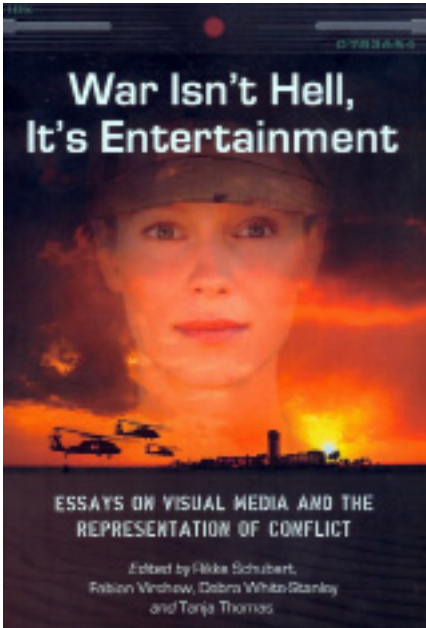
(and) to critically discuss their use and signification' (p. 4).

Yet at the same time, the book evokes a personal response from the reader. It makes anyone who is the active user of the visual media to pause and question their response to war and its exploitation in the visual media. Who doesn't enjoy killing the enemy while playing the war video games? People watch the personal recordings of war on YouTube precisely because they are entertaining. Everyone likes watching the 'war action' movies because of their special effects and we all admire and remember the actors who starred in famous world war films.

But this is all on the pretext that it is only a game or a film—make believe, not reality. But the book attempts to prove that in our world of reality shows and visual effects, even war has become an entertainment.

This book is a collection of essays from scholars in various disciplines including Art and Literature, Media, Cultural and Film Studies, Conflict Studies, History, Military Sociology, American Studies and Political Communication from the universities in Norway, Germany, United Kingdom and the USA. They are grouped into three parts demarcated on the basis of the nature and genre of the visual media.

Part I, 'The Public War Body', explores the nostalgic power of war memorials, the personal snatches of war recordings of soldiers on YouTube and the sportsmen and women who enlist in the army to train.

Part II, 'War and Entertainment' explores the dramatised portrayal of war in television serials and films like *M*A*S*H, Matrix* and *Master and Commander* which play on human emotions of pleasure, fear, excitement and admiration through mediated representation of war.

The last Part III, 'Playing at War' focuses on video electronic games which re-enact war scenarios and ensure personal participation through simulation and virtual reality effects.

Using a variety of methods and theories ranging from qualitative interviews, ethnographic audience studies, content analysis, media studies, film studies and sociological theory, the essays are tied together by the reality that war is used ruthlessly by the visual media for entertainment.

The way out for all who are surrounded by it lies not in understanding 'why it exists' but 'how it works'. *—Rukhsana Aslam is a doctoral candidate at AUT University.*

Call for articles and commentaries:

Media, Investigative Journalism and Technology

Edition editors: Associate Professor David Robie (Pacific Media Centre) and Dr Rosser Johnson (School of Communication Studies, AUT)

Articles are sought for publication in the May 2011 edition of *Pacific Journalism Review*. This themed edition will be linked to the Media, Investigative Journalism and Technology Conference being hosted at AUT University on 3-4 December 2010. The editors will be especially interested in articles or commentaries exploring these themes globally, but especially with an Asia-Pacific "diversity" context.

- Investigative journalism methodologies
- Investigative documentaries
- Media technologies
- Internal media pressures on investigations
- Resource constraints and risks (legal, contacts, isolation)
- Freelance/independent investigations
- Public interest media support networks
- Case study poster presentations
- Other media and democracy topics

Articles on other topics related to media and journalism theory and practice may also be considered. The double blind peer-reviewed journal has four main sections: Research articles, Commentaries, Forum and Reviews.
A style guide is at: www.pjreview.info/style.html

Managing editor: A/Professor David Robie

Email the editors: pjreview@aut.ac.nz

Articles **up to 6000 words**

Commentaries **1500 to 3000 words**

Reviews **up to 1500 words**

(*Noted* **short reviews 300 words)**

Submission deadline: January 31, 2011

Notes for contributors

Pacific Journalism Review, founded at the University of Papua New Guinea in 1994, is a peer-reviewed journal covering media issues and communication in the South Pacific, Asia-Pacific, Australia and New Zealand. It is now published by the Pacific Media Centre, AUT University, and has links with the University of the South Pacific. While one objective is research into Pacific journalism theory and practice, the journal is also expanding its interest into new areas of research and inquiry that reflect the broader impact of contemporary media practice and education.

A particular focus will be on the cultural politics of the media, including the following issues—new media and social movements, indigenous cultures in the age of globalisation, the politics of tourism and development, the role of the media and the formation of national identity and the cultural influence of New Zealand as a branch of the global economy within the Pacific region. It also has a special interest in environmental and development studies in the media and communication—and vernacular media in the region.

Main sections:

• *Research:* Academic research and analysis papers (3000-6000 words)
• *Commentary:* Industry insights, developments and practice (1500-3000 words)
• *Reviews:* Books, films, online developments, multimedia (800-1500 words). *Noted:* 300-350 words.
• *Forum:* Letters, brief commentaries (up to 800 words)

Submission of papers:

Within the editorial scope of the journal, we invite the submission of original papers, commentaries and reviews. Submissions are reviewed by the editor, or editorial committee, Submissions are double blind peer refereed.

Editorial deadline for next issue:

January 31, 2011. Submissions should be emailed to the managing editor, **Associate Professor David Robie**: pjreview@aut.ac.nz
School of Communication Studies
AUT University

Style: Use *APA (American Psychological Association) Style* for author-date system of referencing. See style guide at **www.pjreview.info**