Chapter 3

Political Governance and the Quest for Human Development

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3.1 Introduction[1]

Building effective state institutions and promoting national unity were among Pacific Island Forum Leaders' top priorities in the post-independence decades of the second half of the twentieth century. The twenty-first century, however, is presenting the challenges of a more globalised world: climate change is foremost among these, as well as the influences of global finance, global commerce and telecommunications, new geo-strategic alignments, and the rising expectations of ever-more educated, youthful and informed populations.

Other issues causing concern across the Pacific region include corruption in public life, the conduct of parliaments, under-representation of women in public life, resource exploitation that trades long-term environmental degradation for only short-term economic gain, and ongoing public-sector challenges in delivering basic public services. Pacific societies have some of the highest rates of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) for any part of the world, and the Human Development Index (HDI) for the Commonwealth Pacific small states (Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu) have deteriorated over the past decade rather than improved (only Fiji has risen in rank in the past five years – see Table 3.1).

This is the context in which leaders of the Pacific states seek, in the coming decades, to advance the well-being of their peoples. The tools at their disposal to accomplish this are the political and legal institutions introduced at the time of independence, as modified in light of experience. There are also many strategic and sectoral plans at national and regional levels; there are the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), agreed on by all countries at the United Nations, which provide a comprehensive set of targets to be achieved by 2030, and there are the resilient Pacific people, who live in some 90 cities and towns, 25,000 villages, and an unrecorded number of informal settlements scattered throughout the islands.

Whereas there is widespread agreement on the critical issues confronting political practices in the Pacific, there is less agreement on possible solutions. Looking ahead to 2050, there are three scenarios for the Commonwealth Pacific small states individually and possibly for the region as a whole. The first is one in which very few changes are made to the way countries are being governed, and future progress of these societies continues along the same pathways as at present. A second, bleaker, scenario foresees a deterioration in the quality of political governance, with consequent declines in

Table 3.1 Overview of Commonwealth Pacific small states

	Population (2015)[1]	Independence	United Nations Membership	HDI 2010[2]	HDI 2014[3]
Fiji	868,198	1970	1970	100	90
Kiribati	110,280	1979	1999	122	137
Nauru	11,006	1968	1999	n/a	n/a
PNG	7,476,504	1975	1975	153	158
Samoa	185,440	1962	1976	99	105
Solomon Is	624,667	1978	1978	142	156
Tonga	104,851	1970	1999	90	100
Tuvalu	11,445	1978	2000	n/a	n/a
Vanuatu	277,572	1980	1981	125	134

[1] http://www.spc.int/prism/population-mid-year-2010-projections
[2, 3] Human Development Reports (http://report.hdr.undp.org/)
Source: SPC, UNDP Human Development Reports

human security, and a hardening of the condition of people's lives. A third scenario, which is to be preferred, envisages transformations in political governance, which result in more rapid human development as a consequence of greater focus at both national and regional level on creating public value and delivering public goods.

This chapter reviews the key challenges that the Commonwealth Pacific small states currently face in the structure and operation of their governance institutions, and provides a range of options for action. The presumption is made that the primary goal of political governance is to identify a system of decision-making and resource allocation that results in advancement of individual and community well-being.

3.2 Context

3.2.1 Politics and governance

Politics generally refers to the manner in which state power is acquired and exercised. However, political activities only take place in order to secure desired outcomes, or 'ends'. Political governance, therefore, is concerned about how leaders use political, legal and other institutions of state to advance their society's growth and development. It expects, as Article 1 of the Commonwealth (Latimer House) Principles on the three branches of government makes clear, distinct yet complementary roles for the parliament, executive, and legislature, as

> *guarantors in their respective spheres of the rule of law, the promotion and protection of fundamental human rights and the entrenchment of good governance based on the highest standards of honesty, probity and accountability.*
>
> (Commonwealth Secretariat 2004)

Leaders are expected to maintain such constitutional principles by holding democratic elections at regular intervals, resolving disputes and reducing prospects for future conflict, fostering economic growth, promoting equity and justice, protecting

the vulnerable in society, and upholding fundamental rights and freedoms. Such good governance requires proper functioning of parliaments, courts, government departments and other agencies, and respecting the roles of media, civil society, academia, traditional leaders, and the private sector.

The populations of the Commonwealth Pacific small states, also classified as small island developing states (SIDS), range from approximately 11,000 (Nauru) to 7.5 million (PNG), and added together amount to some 11 million people (Table 3.1). These countries have been independent for time spans ranging between 37 years (Vanuatu, since 1980) and 55 years (Samoa, since 1962). All are members of the United Nations, with Tuvalu joining as recently as 2000.

The majority of the Commonwealth Pacific small states base their political and legal systems on Westminster[2]: members of parliament hold office as elected representatives of their constituents, who vote at intervals of three and in some cases up to five years; the parliament elects as prime minister the member of parliament (MP) whose party, or alliance of parties and MPs, commands the confidence of a majority in the house; and the prime minister heads a cabinet whose members act as the political heads of the government's various departments but all of whom remain answerable to parliament. Justice is provided by an independent judiciary.

This overview of Westminster, however, simplifies a much more complex situation, such as debate about the extent to which Westminster's approach to democracy has 'taken root' in Pacific cultures, and the extent to which it remains a 'foreign flower' (Larmour 2005). For example, Tonga maintains a constitutional monarchy (Table 3.2), and Samoa's chiefly system is integrated into the political system. Fiji has made several attempts to adapt Westminster to its multiracial society in a manner that is acceptable to all parties.

Table 3.2 Constitutional and electoral systems

	Constitutional system	Parliamentary seats	Parliamentary term	Electoral system	Women in Parliament[1]
Fiji	Parliamentary	50	4	List PR	8 (2014)
Kiribati	Hybrid	46	4	TRS	3 (2015)
Nauru	Hybrid	19	3	Modified BC	1 (2016)
PNG	Parliamentary	111	5	LPAV	3 (2012)
Samoa	Parliamentary	50	5	FPTP	5 (2016)
Solomon Is	Parliamentary	50	4	FPTP	1 (2014)
Tonga	Monarchy	26	4	FPTP	0 (2014)
Tuvalu	Parliamentary	15	4	FPTP	1 (2015)
Vanuatu	Parliamentary	52	4	SNTV	0 (2016)

[1]'Women in national parliaments', Inter-Parliamentary Union, http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm, accessed 5 October 2016

Note: List PR – proportional representation; TRS – two round system; Modified BC – Dowdall system (a modified Borda-count system); LPAV – limited preferential alternative vote; FPTP – First past the post (simple majority); SNTV – Single non-transferrable vote (for details see the ACE Electoral Knowledge Network, http://aceproject.org/).

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union

The Commonwealth Pacific small states use a variety of electoral systems to choose their MPs (Table 3.2). Four rely on 'first past the post' (FPTP), in which the winner is simply the candidate who receives the highest number of votes. The other five countries use versions of the majority or proportionality systems. The distinction between these systems is that the highest number of votes obtained by the winner under a FPTP contest – particularly when there are multiple candidates – may amount to far less than 50 per cent, meaning that more voters in that electorate voted for other candidates than the winner. In preferential and proportional representation systems, voters mark multiple candidates, or parties, in order of preference. The winning candidate must obtain 51 per cent or more of votes, if not through first preferences then through adding those votes they obtained from voters' second preferences, and so on. Elections in Commonwealth Pacific small states are often observed by a Commonwealth Observer team.

Most Commonwealth Pacific parliaments continue to reflect their Westminster influences, although all are now unicameral (Fiji had an upper house prior to constitutional reform in 2013) (Levine and Roberts 2005). While a majority continue to recognise the British monarch as their own head of state, Vanuatu has opted for a president elected by an electoral college of National MPs and the Presidents of the Regional Councils, and Samoa for a head of state elected by the legislative assembly (*Fono*). In Kiribati, the president is both head of state and head of government.

The media is relatively free to operate in the Pacific region, although media freedom cannot be taken for granted. The World Press Freedom Index for 2016 ranked just two Pacific island countries: Papua New Guinea at 55 (below Niger, Haiti, and Argentina) and Fiji at 80 (just below Italy, Benin, and Guinea Bissau) (RSF 2016b). In the case of Fiji, the Index notes that violating the Media Industry Development Authority (MIDA) is punishable by up to two years in prison (RSF 2016a). In Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, political leaders have taken legal action in efforts to suppress information and viewpoints proliferating on blogsites and social media (Freedom House 2017). Across the region, the issue of political and business influence on mass media has been an ongoing concern (Papoutsaki and Harris 2008).

Much contemporary discussion of political governance in the Pacific focuses on the ability of political figures to obtain and retain executive power. Indeed, executive instability is often taken as an indicator of state failure (Rich, Hambly *et al.* 2006). In some countries, parliaments have sought to pass laws regulating party organisation and restraining the ability of their members to change allegiance midterm in an effort to create the stability needed by government to prosecute its political programme. However, the outcome has not been effective. For example, the Political Parties Integrity Bill passed in Solomon Islands in May 2014 was by June 2015 under review by the Sogovare Government on the basis that fundamental political behaviour had not improved. In the case of Papua New Guinea, Okole suggests that the Organic Law on the Integrity of PNG Political Parties and Candidates, legislated in 2001 and ruled unconstitutional in 2010, was only poorly implemented at best (Okole 2012).

Where party allegiances are weak and the desire to capture executive power is strong, the constant threat of no-confidence motions can paralyse a government. To

give one instance from Vanuatu, the government of Edward Natapei removed by a no-confidence motion by Sato Kilman in December 2010 had faced an additional six confidence votes in the previous two years – an environment hardly conducive to confident policy implementation. Although Vanuatu convened a 'dialogue on political reform'[3] in 2015 to learn from the experiences of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, lasting solutions to the problem have not yet been found, and may lie elsewhere than in the financial and legal consolidation of political parties. There are questions as to whether constraining the alliances of members of parties is itself a democratic solution to this problem of democracy, and courts have so far found such measures to be unconstitutional. There are also questions about the relationship between the introduced system of government and traditional authority (Lawson 1997), and there are concerns about the effectiveness of political governance at sub-national level (Hassall and Tipu 2008 and Scott 2009). Most importantly, there are serious concerns about the lack of participation by women and youth in the political life of Pacific island countries (PIFS 2006). Underpinning all of these issues, plus many more, is a concern for the ability of current political structures to provide good governance, to steward resources with integrity and toward strong development outcomes, and to make progress with human development.

3.3 Key issues and challenges

3.3.1 National level

The range of challenges faced by the Commonwealth Pacific small states is immense: the legacy of race-based political representation in Fiji and the quest for 'post-coup (re)constitutionalism'; the resurgence of custom and revitalisation of cultural norms and 'traditional authority'; dilemmas concerning centralised versus more federalist systems in PNG and Solomon Islands; the form of constitutional monarchy in the face of pro-democracy sentiments in Tonga; the quest for constitutional accommodation and compromise in Bougainville[4]; and decisions concerning regional co-operation in the context of growing multilevel governance. Beyond matters of national constitutionalism is the issue of regional integration, and the extent to which the small states should now move toward deeper integration (such as within the Pacific Islands Forum[5]) to ensure enhanced regional co-operation and governance.

The 'goals of good governance' gained prominence through the 2001 World Summit on Sustainable Development's (WSSD) 'Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development'. The WSSD Plan of Implementation for instance, stated that achieving sustainable development in small island developing states requires

> *sound environmental, social and economic policies, democratic institutions responsive to the needs of the people, the rule of law, anticorruption measures, gender equality and an enabling environment for investment*

domestically, plus a

> *dynamic and enabling international economic environment supportive of international cooperation, particularly in the areas of finance, technology transfer,*

> *debt and trade, and full and effective participation of developing countries in global decision-making.*

The report continues:

> *Good governance is essential for sustainable development. Sound economic policies, solid democratic institutions responsive to the needs of the people and improved infrastructure are the basis for sustained economic growth, poverty eradication, and employment creation. Freedom, peace and security, domestic stability, respect for human rights, including the right to development, and the rule of law, gender equality, market-oriented policies, and an overall commitment to just and democratic societies are also essential and mutually reinforcing.*
>
> (WSSD 2002, Plan of Implementation, Paragraph 20)

These values featured again in the 2004 vision for the Pacific Plan:

> *Leaders believe the Pacific region can, should and will be a region of peace, harmony, security and economic prosperity, so that all its people can lead free and worthwhile lives. We treasure the diversity of the Pacific and seek a future in which its cultures, traditions and religious beliefs are valued, honoured and developed. We seek a Pacific region that is respected for the quality of its governance, the sustainable management of its resources, the full observance of democratic values, and for its defence and promotion of human rights. We seek partnerships with our neighbours and beyond to develop our knowledge, to improve our communications and to ensure a sustainable economic existence for all.*
>
> (Chan 2004)

The UNDP's 2014 Human Development Report for the Pacific region asserts that:

> *poverty (hardship), vulnerability, inequality and exclusion are on the rise in many PICs, and that the most vulnerable people are likely to be women, youth, the disabled and the elderly, as well as those living in the outer islands and rural areas. Dealing with the challenge of reversing this rising tide of vulnerability and exclusion while also providing safety nets and social protection for those at risk will require Pacific governments to adopt new policy approaches and make some difficult choices.*
>
> (United Nations Development Programme 2014)

These are the challenges of societies in such rapid transition that governments are struggling to keep up. With the shift, for instance, from subsistence to cash economies, rural communities – both agrarian and coastal – are no longer meeting their food requirements, nor are they absorbing the next generation into traditional economic roles. Governments have been slow to adjust policy settings to the realities of this emerging Pacific; and this failure to address the needs of outer islands and remote provinces fuels both discontent and urban drift, inflates unemployment, increases food insecurity, provokes emigration – and in some places has the potential to threaten national cohesion. The fact that most Commonwealth Pacific small states have fallen down the HDI, rather than

risen up it, indicates that their governments are not delivering development that matters.

Stability in government should not be conflated with effectiveness, and the sign of an agile and responsive government may be institutional, legal and policy change, rather than stasis.[6] The cultivation, for instance, of local government capacity, and the decentralisation of service delivery and possibly other responsibilities, might be destabilising at first but empowering in the longer term. The adoption of more encompassing regional approaches to policy-making may also follow this trajectory.

For the low-lying countries, sea level rise is an existential threat which must be at the top of each government's agenda. Whereas mitigation is primarily the concern of the industrial economies of the North, adaptation is the concern for all Pacific Leaders, and implies much more than accessing global funds for disbursement to community groups. Adaptation implies active policy and programmes, for instance in agriculture, infrastructure, early warning systems and disaster preparedness, and much more (Lewis-Bynoe 2014).

Addressing poor health and education outcomes must also remain high on policy agendas at national and regional levels. Although these affect men and women alike, the goal of equal rights protection for women is crucial if they are to make their full contribution to the life of society.

Most recently, the challenges of governing have been set out in the Forum Leaders' *Framework for Pacific Regionalism* (PIFS 2015),[7] and in the *SIDS Action Platform*, a list of 18 policy imperatives generated at the Third International Conference on SIDS held in Apia, Samoa, in 2014.[8] These, in turn, are encompassed in the 17 SDGs that make up the *2030 Agenda For Sustainable Development* agreed at the UN in September 2015.[9] Whereas these declarations focus on policy challenges more than on institutional design, and the effective functioning of political institutions at the national level is presumed, both give considerable emphasis to the cultivation of multi-stakeholder partnerships.

In the context of these global and regional frameworks, the following key challenges of political governance facing the Commonwealth Pacific small states can be identified: (1) establishing stable and representative government; (2) strengthening distinct roles for the legislature and the executive; (3) strengthening the impartial role of the public sector; (4) cultivating information-based societies and evidence-based policy-making; and (5) developing multilevel governance so as to increase government capacity at regional, provincial and local levels, and in both urban and rural settings. All such issues, on the other hand, must be viewed in the Pacific context, where strong communities have always provided the foundation for collective action. Political institutions should be strengthened in ways that allow for collaboration with civil society rather than in place of it.

Establishing stable and representative institutions

The first stage in delivering good governance is the establishment of effective institutions – institutions which are both representative (i.e. accountable and

transparent) and effective (i.e. agile and responsive). The current institutions, and the allocation of rights and powers to the individual, the communication, and the state, were set out in the independence constitutions.

Constitutions and constitutional dialogue

Foremost among these institutions is parliament. In an age of 'executive dominance' it is easy to forget that the executive branch of government in the Westminster tradition receives its mandate from the people's representatives assembled in parliament. Prominent features of practice in parliaments of the Commonwealth Pacific small states are their under-resourcing (which results in lack of staff support, including for non-government MPs), lack of understanding of the scrutiny function of the House (particularly by parliamentary committees), which leads to lack of capacity to scrutinise bills and reports; the lack of strong party affiliations; and the lack of legislative activity by individual MPs (such as private members' bills).

Now that the Commonwealth Pacific small states are four to six decades post-independence, there is need for more, and more effective, deliberation, domestically, about the constitutional systems and their prospects for delivering improved governance. Constitutions are frameworks agreed by society concerning how political power is to be legitimated and distributed. To the extent that any facet of them proves ineffective, alternatives must be sought out and adopted. Constitutional dialogue can be scheduled periodically and need not only occur during crises, or as part of post-conflict peace-building. It has often been suggested that introduced political and legal institutions are not appropriate to the Pacific context and therefore do not provide an effective framework of incentives.[10] If this is the case and is contributing to poor governance results in some instances, the development of institutions that better reflect the existing hybrid or transitional status of the social organisation of Pacific states should be explored. Elsewhere, new scholarship is examining styles of parliamentary deliberation and decision-making (Steiner *et al.* 2004), and methods of 'dialogic communication' are being advocated in conflict resolution literature (Angeby 2005), and there have been, in fact, a number of calls for, or experiments with, 'governments of national unity' (as attempted by the Fiji 1997 Constitution) in the Pacific.

In some countries, a shift from a parliamentary to presidential system may be considered, or even a hybrid of the two systems, as has been accomplished in Kiribati. If there is going to be a significant shift in constituent behaviour, there has to be a tangible change to the base – access to good education, healthcare, roads, and infrastructure to facilitate trade and commerce – for without these basic features, choice of system of government may not be crucially important to voters. In the longer term, change to political governance in the Pacific is inevitable. External expectations about engagement with global economic and political institutions will expand. Are adversarial systems of decision-making the most suitable model for Pacific Parliaments? Are more deliberative and consociational models available?

In the post-independence period (i.e. from Samoan independence in 1962) constitutional exercises in the Commonwealth Pacific small states have ranged from

the commissioning of experts (Fiji), to parliamentary exercises (Nauru, Solomon Islands), and more broad-based constituent assemblies – such as in Kiribati. To an increasing extent, constitutional reform in Pacific states has been associated not merely with revision of political and legal review, but with the resolution of deep-seated conflict. Thus, constitutional reform in PNG (concerning Bougainville), Solomon Islands, Tonga, and even Fiji, has been an essential aspect of efforts to not only resolve entrenched political conflicts but to move into a post-conflict period of peace-building.

Political and constitutional reform has occurred quite slowly in Tonga, Solomon Islands, Fiji, Vanuatu, and elsewhere.[11] The only country to have proceeded with genuine constitutional experimentation is PNG – where a willingness to attempt constitutional innovation has been driven by acknowledged ineffective institutional design and consequent unsustainable social and political conflicts. This general reserve about renewing the design and operation of state institutions may contribute to a grass-roots perception in the region that constitutional systems and the institutions they establish for government remain 'foreign'. There is much discussion, for instance, about the operation of the Westminster model as transplanted in the Pacific but few alternatives have been explored. There is ongoing need, also, for consideration of the value that traditional leaders bring to contemporary governance. While those holding chiefly rank through descent or individual effort do not have the same roles as elected leaders, their contributions as custodians of traditional values, as advisors and conciliators, can be a unifying force in rapidly changing societies.

General elections

General elections have invariably been held in Commonwealth Pacific small states as scheduled, and electoral administrators are linked by an effective professional development network, (Pacific Islands, Australia and New Zealand Electoral Administrators – PIANZEA), with Commonwealth Pacific member states being members of the Commonwealth Electoral Network (CEN). The CEN and PIANZEA recently organised a regional event in Fiji for the heads of all the election management bodies in the Pacific.[12] Rates of participation in general elections are exceptionally high, with as many as 97 per cent of registered voters turning out to vote in Nauru in 2013, 90 per cent doing so in Solomon Islands in 2014, and 84 per cent in Fiji the same year.[13] The region has recorded very few instances of electoral fraud instigated by officials, although courts have ruled on illegal practices of candidates and constituents. This maintenance of effective electoral politics in Commonwealth Pacific small states has provided the constitutional legitimacy required by those who exercise public power. The quality of that leadership, on the other hand, the political legitimacy, is determined through the discernment of the electorate and by the capabilities of individual members in carrying out their multiple parliamentary responsibilities.

Choice of electoral system has been contentious in some countries, notably where race, ethnicity or status is a factor in politics. In Samoa, the independence Constitution (1962) restricted the right to vote as well as the right to contest to those holding chiefly (matai) rank. However, in 1990, the right to vote was expanded to

all citizens aged 21 and over. In Fiji, where the British brought indentured labourers from India to work the sugar fields during the colonial era, communal seats existed alongside open seats before and after independence, in a formula that guaranteed indigenous Fijians a parliamentary majority. One of the country's ongoing challenges is determining the balance between recognition of indigenous rights and acceptance of elected leadership on non-racial lines. Fiji has experienced four coups triggered by these questions – two in 1987, and others in 2000 and 2006 – and the 2013 constitution establishes an electoral system free of racial categories (Citizens Constitutional Forum 2013).

The strength of party affiliations

As noted, governance relates not only to institutions and processes of state, but to the manner in which the 'voices of the people' and interest groups are mediated, adjudicated and eventually translated into policies. Since independence, the main vehicle for interest group articulation has been the political party. However, although political parties attract much media and constituent attention, their formal processes are often surprisingly casual, and their ideological/policy platforms are often similarly fluid, making the decision by an MP to switch party allegiance more one of pragmatism than principle.[14] The continuity of parties in Samoa, Tonga and Fiji are the exception to this, although in the latter two instances at least, continuity is premised on race or class-defined political interests (such as access to land and various forms of state recognition and assistance) (Corbett 2015).

As stated by Fraenkel (2008, p. 44):

> *'Party politics', to the extent that it exists, is frequently viewed with disdain, and charged with aggravating social tensions that run counter to Pacific traditions of consensus and compromise. Fluidity of parliamentary alignments, and the readiness of MPs to 'cross the floor', ensure a frequent turnover of governments, particularly in western Melanesia but also in Nauru and Kiribati. The Pacific island states have consequently eminently passed Samuel Huntington's 'two turnover' test of democratic consolidation. Indeed, they have done so to such a degree that the primary concern is endemic instability rather than the absence of regime change…*

Fraenkel (2008, p. 48) points out that in the case of PNG:

> *More than half of all MPs lost their seats at most elections after independence, with incumbent turnover reaching an all-time high of 75 per cent at the 2002 polls.*

And that in the case of Samoa:

> *After independence, Samoa adopted a plurality-based system involving a mixture of single-member and block-voting two-member constituencies. The country initially witnessed high levels of MP turnover and no-party-based contests as in many parts of Melanesia.*
>
> (Fraenkel 2008, p. 55. See also International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) 2010)

Regarding Vanuatu, Morgan (2008) states:

> *no strategies have been able to counter the tendency for national elections to result in a high turnover of candidates. In the 2004 national elections, for example, 23 of the 52 Members of Parliament were not returned.*

Notwithstanding these cases, and given the high turnover rate of MPs in Parliaments, particularly in Melanesia,[15] MPs would prefer to sit with government than with opposition so as to have their talents used and potentially rewarded, rather than wasted on oppositional roles that offer few resources and minimal opportunities for engagement with legislation or grand policy. On this point Fraenkel (2013, p. 25) explains:

> *Absence of major ideological cleavages or political parties with a substantial extra-parliamentary membership can give Pacific parliamentarians considerable freedom for manoeuvre. Occupying a ministerial portfolio not only provides a salary and status that is often impossible for a local to equal in the private sector, it also provides access to state funds and state leverage over foreign controlled resource extractive industries. Particularly in Melanesia, MPs have been known to engage in spectacular changes in affinity as they cross the floor to join government, often justifying this by claiming – probably accurately – that they were not elected to parliament in order to remain in the opposition…*

Parliamentary support

Diversion of attention to the activities, platforms and personalities of political parties overshadows the role of parliament as the peoples' main instrument of democratic accountability. Nine Pacific Parliaments undertook 'Legislative Needs Assessments' (LNA) with UNDP assistance, and several subsequently entered into parliamentary strengthening projects (e.g. Solomon Islands, Samoa, PNG), or conducted induction programs for each new Parliament.[16] However, LNAs did not assess the skills or training needs of MPs, and were focused on the institution as a whole rather than the performance of individuals within the institutional setting of Parliament and constituency.[17] The low educational levels of MPs have on occasion prompted calls to restrict candidacy to those who hold tertiary qualifications, but the research of Corbett and Wood (2013) suggests, at least in the case of Solomon Islands, that the educational accomplishments of MPs have increased since independence, and are above the country's averages. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association has assisted the Commonwealth Pacific Parliaments with induction programmes for new members, and for parliamentary staff.

For a long period most Pacific parliaments lacked office space and administrative resources for individual Members – a situation remedied in recent years in the Samoan and Solomon Islands contexts by the construction of new buildings in their parliamentary precincts, but an ongoing concern for Tonga and Tuvalu. As yet none of the parliaments in the Commonwealth Pacific small states provide MPs with email addresses, so that even those who have access to the internet are using private email addresses, which are not necessarily known to their constituents. This lack of access

to MPs via a constituency office or email creates a communications gap between MP and their constituents.

Parliamentary chambers also have barely sufficient seating for the interested public[18], although most ensure that parliamentary debates are broadcast, and that proceedings are transcribed. Part of the challenge is providing Pacific Parliaments with adequate funding. Most lack an independent funding allocation, and rely on the government of the day to release sufficient resources. These constraints on Parliamentary operations strengthen the hand of the executive, which chooses the timing of sessions, of the introduction of bills, and of the tabling and consideration of reports.

The number of members also has a bearing on the effective operation of Parliament. With growth in regional and international engagements, MPs are often required to represent their government, parliament, or party overseas, and such commitments can have an impact on parliamentary debates or committee work (extensive international travel by Ministers and MPs can draw public scrutiny and criticism, but so can failure to attend important meetings at which Pacific viewpoints, and votes, are necessary).

Effective committee systems

Whereas the public and media often focus on the theatrics of Parliamentary question time, much of any Parliament's substantive work occurs in its committees, which review bills, examine departmental reports, and conduct inquiries across all sectors (Hassall 2011). The Public Accounts Committee, in particular, plays an essential role in oversight of public expenditure (Rambe 2008). Such activities depend, however, not only on having sufficient legal powers, funding, and administrative support, but MP interest and capability. For a number of years the Public Accounts Committees of the i-Kiribati and Nauruan parliaments, for instance, were completely inactive, despite the availability of legal capacity (Pelizzo 2010). In Solomon Islands, parliamentary committees were strengthened under the Institutional Strengthening Programme provided by UNDP (*Solomon Star* 2015), but still lack adequate financing to conduct their work. The Samoan LNA was not alone in identifying a need for more parliamentary staff. Most MPs are members of one or more committees, and committee secretariats find it a challenge to co-ordinate committee schedules. However, there remains scope for creativity in the functioning of parliamentary committees. For instance, they can be empowered to co-opt specialists should a particular area of expertise not be represented in the parliament, as is allowed in the Standing Orders of the Tongan and Solomon Islands Parliaments. Organisations available to assist with the development of committee functioning include the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and UNDP.

Achieving gender equity

Although women hold traditional leadership positions in some Pacific island cultures, contemporary public life is predominantly patriarchal, and the lack of equitable representation of women in legislatures across the Pacific islands (Table 3.2) remains a serious challenge. The number of women in Pacific parliaments rose from 26 in 2013 to 34 in 2016, a proportion of 6.1 per cent of all seats, against the

global average of 22.6 per cent (PacWIP 2017). Vanuatu passed legislation in 2013 providing reserved seats for women in municipal, but not national, elections. Samoa's revised electoral law of 2013 ensures that a minimum of 10 per cent of all seats are held by women, by adding the 'next highest polling' women, should this number not be met through the initial vote (Baker 2014). Four women were elected to the current parliament in their own right, and a fifth was added via this 'special measure' (PACWIP 2017). Solomon Islands has legislation requiring parties to field female candidates, rather than mandating a quota in the parliament. The idea of temporary special measures was rejected in PNG (Baker 2014). Zetlin (2014) has examined cultural, economic and institutional explanations for the absence of women in Pacific parliaments before simply concluding that 'there are women ready to accept the challenge of political office'.

Advancing the status of women has been one of the region's most significant social policy challenges. In some cases the choices are difficult, particularly for those communities in which providing equal rights for women conflicts with traditional values. This changed value, however, should be seen in a broader perspective: it is only one of a great number of technical and social transformations experienced in the region in the last 50 years, and is advocated as a means of ensuring ever-greater social and economic progress. Through access to education and opportunity, Pacific women now occupy an impressive range of senior positions as Departmental Secretaries, Deputy Secretaries, and as members of the diplomatic corps, which would not have been the case before. There have been several regional and national initiatives, including by Pacific Islands Forum Leaders, to support the achievement of gender equality, including improving the representation of women in parliament.

Corruption

Corruption in public office is a major concern in the Pacific islands (Larmour 2005; Barcham 2007; Ayius and May 2007). Accordingly, it has been the focus of attention by regional organisations, development partners, and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (Ivarature 2006). From 2001 to 2004, Transparency International commissioned National Integrity Systems Assessments for 14 Pacific island countries (TINZ 2016), which shed light on current practices as well as on the institutional reforms that can assist in minimising corrupt practices. Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index for 2011 ranked Samoa as the 'least corrupt' of the Pacific states (with a rank of 69th), followed by Vanuatu (77th), Tonga (95th), Solomon Islands (120th), and PNG (154th) (TINZ 2015). Although some have sought to argue for a different definition of corruption more relevant to Pacific cultures (where 'gift-giving' is an accepted practice), this argument has not been accepted by Pacific island courts, besides which, most Commonwealth Pacific small states participate in the Asian Development Bank (ADB)/ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Anti-Corruption initiative, and have signed the UN's Convention Against Corruption, which sets out clear and broadly applicable definitions (ADB and OECD 2006). The challenge of corruption, furthermore, goes beyond cultural definitions and practices: it requires capacity to prosecute, and strong public support for integrity in government (ADB and OECD 2016; Walton 2016).

Strengthening the distinct roles of the legislature, executive and judiciary

Strengthening the role of the legislature

In the past decade Pacific parliaments have met on average 30 to 60 days per year, in two to four meetings. For example, the Fiji Parliament averaged 51 sitting days per year between 1998 and 2006, notwithstanding the impact of the coup of May 2000, while the PNG parliament averaged 43 sitting days per year between 2003 and 2009 (Hassall 2012). When those holding executive power are dominant, parliament tends to serve as a rubber stamp for passage of necessary legislation, and approval of budgets and money supply. In Samoa, the executive's domination of parliament flows from the inability of non-government parties to meet legally defined thresholds for recognition as 'the opposition' (International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) 2010). In Vanuatu, executive dominance comes not from party strength but from its power to determine sitting dates (Hassall, 2007). In such cases additional parliamentary time is viewed as an unnecessary threat to the government's stability (since any break in political accords could result in tabling of no-confidence votes). Adherence to a minimal parliamentary calendar constrains the amount of parliamentary business that can be completed, and leaves little time for legislative reform, or for consideration of committee reports.[19] There is also the issue of patronage, as governments seek to bolster their hold on executive power by maximising the number of cabinet ministers, associate ministers, ministers without portfolio, and committee chairs.

Safeguarding judicial independence and integrity

Judicial independence has been a significant issue in the Pacific in recent years. In Fiji, judges departed or were removed following the 2006 military coup. In PNG, at a time of intense political conflict in 2012, criminal charges were brought against the Chief Justice, but later dismissed. In 2014, Nauru dismissed its chief magistrate and cancelled the visa of its Chief Justice. The Tongan government abolished its Judicial Service Commission in 2010 – although it was re-established in 2014.

In addition to the issue of judicial independence is that of judicial capacity, as numerous Pacific jurisdictions continue to rely on contracting expatriate judges to fill their benches, including in Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu. The Chief Justices in Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Tonga and Tuvalu are expatriates. This continued reliance on technical assistance can be due to governments making insufficient resources available to fund judicial appointments, or to low levels of remuneration which make a judicial career unattractive, or because there are insufficient numbers of qualified candidates for judicial appointment.

Strengthening the impartial role of the public sector

Implicit in the Westminster framework is the idea that 'policy' addresses the public interest and the cultivation of public goods, rather than the narrower political interests of those in power. This complex mediation of political and public interests is at the heart of the minister-permanent secretary interface, and whereas the Westminster tradition developed ways to protect the bureaucrat's status as provider

of 'free and frank' advice to political leaders, such protections are not necessarily present in Commonwealth Pacific small states, leaving their public sectors vulnerable to clientelism and various forms of patronage (Duncan and Hassall 2010).

In Westminster systems of government, public servants answer to an executive (Prime Minister and Cabinet) elected by the legislature. Although the rule of law theoretically applies to all, those who make the law are sometimes the most difficult to restrain. Although cabinet manuals have been developed in many countries to clarify the respective roles, responsibilities, and privileges, of ministers and public servants, there still remain instances in Commonwealth Pacific small states in which restraining the political branch remains a challenge.

In Vanuatu, for instance, all Directors General were required to resign their posts in 2012 when the government implemented new legislation establishing 'performance-based' contracts for their positions. In other countries also, the importation of some elements of the 'New Public Management (NPM)' model which were intended to improve bureaucratic responsiveness to incentives, have had the unintended consequence of politicising the public service (O'Donnell and Turner 2005; Amosa 2008). While the merits of performance-based contracting are known, they also raise questions about the manner in which performance is assessed, by whom, and against what criteria. Failure to establish impartial means of performance assessment would render such senior public servants extremely vulnerable to the desires of their incumbent Minister.

A closely associated challenge is ensuring that public servants use their powers responsibly. In efforts to address this, in 2003, Pacific Leaders endorsed nine 'Forum Principles of Good Leadership' (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat [n.d.]), which have received little attention but are worth revisiting:

1. Respect for Law and System of Government
2. Respect for Cultural Values, Customs and Traditions
3. Respect for Freedom of Religion
4. Respect for People on whose behalf Leaders Exercise Power
5. Respect for Members of the Public
6. Economy and Efficiency
7. Diligence
8. National Peace and Security
9. Respect for Office

The results of a baseline survey commissioned by the Pacific Islands Forum in 2008 (PIFS 2009) to check on compliance with these standards provides a detailed account of the extent to which these standards are being met. The report's summary conclusions were that changes of government in the region occurred peacefully (apart from Fiji, which had recently experienced a military coup), and that the great majority of court decisions in the region were complied with. The report noted, on

the other hand, a number of instances in which instructions given by the executive were not lawfully constructed, and quite a number of instances in which corruption had been detected but not successfully prosecuted. It was common across the region for offices of the Auditor-General and the Ombudsman to be insufficiently resourced to carry out their responsibilities. More concerning was the report's finding that the use of public resources for personal benefit was widespread, despite 'numerous instructions, strongly worded directives and circulars, and government gazettes being issued to rein in the abuse of government property, facilities and time.'

An additional set of standards, the 2003 'Forum Principles of Accountability' (PIFS 2000), developed with assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and of a more technical nature, provide the basis for a biennial stocktake of the implementation of leadership codes and principles of accountability presented to meetings of the Pacific Islands Forum Economic Ministers:

1. Budget processes, including multi-year frameworks, to ensure Parliament/Congress is sufficiently informed to understand the longer-term implications of appropriation decisions.
2. The accounts of governments, state-owned enterprises and statutory corporations to be promptly and fully audited.
3. Loan agreements or guarantees entered into by governments to be presented to Parliament/Congress.
4. All government and public sector contracts to be openly advertised, competitively awarded, administered and publicly reported.
5. Contravention of financial regulations to be promptly disciplined.
6. Public Accounts/Expenditure Committees of Parliament/Congress to be empowered to require disclosure.
7. Auditor-General and Ombudsman to be provided with adequate fiscal resources and independent reporting rights to Parliament/Congress.
8. Central bank with statutory responsibility for non-partisan monitoring and advice, and regular and independent publication of informative reports.

It can be noted here that the Pacific Islands Centre for Public Administration and the Commonwealth Ombudsman have entered into a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to develop administrative guidelines to improve accountability of public office holders, such as on conflicts of interest and good decision-making.

Defining relations between 'central government agencies'

The term 'central government agencies' refers to those agencies at the heart of government, whose decisions and actions affect the performance of all line agencies. The agencies regarded as 'central' differs across the Commonwealth Pacific small states. For instance, whereas the Departments of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Finance, and the Public Service Commission (PSC) are usually automatically included, some countries also include National Planning, or even the Police.

The legal and constitutional foundations of central agencies cannot be taken for granted. One may presume, for instance, that the Public Service Commission, on the basis of its title, stands independent of the executive branch, only to find that in reality it lacks administrative and financial autonomy. In countries that have both a Public Service Commission and a department of Personnel Management, or a Department of Public Services, the roles of and relationships between these bodies may benefit from clarification. Transparency in the method of appointment of central agency leadership is also important, since these positions at the head of the public service are in direct contact with the political leaders of the day. Methods of dismissal should be similarly transparent, so that reasons for head-of-agency turnover are easily understood by the public.

Because policy direction on all such issues is delegated by political leaders to government departments and agencies, cultivation of public-sector capacity is central to effective political governance of the Pacific states in the coming decades. Some sense of the current situation in the Commonwealth Pacific small states is found in summary statements by the Pacific Islands Centre for Public Administration,[20] and in the Forum Compact peer review assessments.[21] The Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation has also assisted some of the Commonwealth Pacific small states. The ability of central government agencies individually and collectively to set and impose taxes; to collect other revenues; to forecast growth; to train, monitor and cultivate the public service; to deliver essential services either directly or through outsourcing; to co-ordinate international relations and obligations; to co-ordinate with subnational government bodies; to revise policy where necessary; and to monitor, evaluate and report on programme impacts – these are just some of the essential roles to be elaborated in the years ahead.

Central agencies in Commonwealth Pacific small states have noted the need for capacity-building, and numerous public-sector networks and projects are already engaged, including the ADB, Commonwealth Secretariat, Australia and New Zealand School of Government, Australian Aid, Australian Public Service Commission, Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management, UN Public Administration Network and other UN-related projects, plus the Suva-based Pacific Islands Centre for Public Administration. There are, additionally, a range of professional networks that have central agencies in scope, such as the Commonwealth Pacific Forum of Central Agencies, Pacific Public Service Commissioners Conference, Pacific Islands Law Officers' Network and other professional financial and auditing associations. While all such activities have their benefits, their effectiveness requires more evaluation, with reports more readily made available to the public.

Governing constituency development funds

The issue of executive dominance extends beyond the legislative chamber. In Solomon Islands and PNG, MPs are provided with discretion over 'electoral development funds'. Initially established to support MP visits to their constituencies and to allow for small grants for constituent-led projects, the scope of some constituency schemes has expanded substantially, such that MPs oversee resources

rivalling those available to line agencies. Barker (2016) reports that, in the case of PNG:

> *PNG Constituency Development Funds became the major project funding for the districts … The Districts, and services there, became increasingly neglected over the decades since Independence, but in recent years the allocations under Constituency grants have grown (firstly with the allocations to trust funds from 'windfall' high revenue in 2007–8) and more recently, until 2016, rising to K10 and then K15 million per District (regardless whether a district population is, say, 50,000 or 200,000 people).*

Such provision of significant funds to MPs creates a number of problems (Ketan 2007). The first is the risk of mismanagement or misappropriation, for which a number of MPs have faced prosecution. A second risk is the lack of coherent service delivery at the local level, as MPs implement projects without consultation with the appropriate line agencies. Most importantly, from the point of view of the adequate functioning of parliaments, MPs' preoccupation with capital projects diverts their attention from their responsibilities as legislators, and compromises their role in oversight of the executive branch of government. MP control of public funds also affects the mindset of voters, who focus on the tangible results the MP can bring to their locality (in the form of water tanks, roads etc.), rather than focusing on the development of the country as a whole, and it affects the morale of public servants, whose efforts (and resources) to plan systematically in a particular sector such as health, education, or agriculture, are affected by the often piecemeal approaches to distribution taken by MPs.

In PNG, District Service Improvement Programme (DSIP) funds are disbursed through the Department of Implementation and Rural Development (DIRD) (Ketan 2007). Although DIRD conducted a review of DISP expenditure in 2010, the results were never made public, reinforcing the public's perception – amid anecdotal evidence and media coverage – that the funds were not being used to effectively promote the public interest. An Auditor-General's Report (Auditor-General's Office of Papua New Guinea 2014) on the DSIP for 2012/2013 found that there had been 'limited value from the DSIP funds granted when measured against the original investment criteria', and there was 'pervasive breakdown in the DSIP governance framework across the Districts'. The report recommended substantial amendments to the framework for administering and governing its funding, improvements to the education and assistance for those administering it at the district level, better accountability, and application of penalties for non-compliance.

Although lack of transparency in disbursement of electoral funds is a widespread concern, there are also examples of good practice. In Solomon Islands, the late Fred Fono, former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Rural Development and Indigenous Affairs, during his term between 2007 and 2010, established a committee in his constituency to decide on the allocation of funds, and made the results of expenditure a matter of public record (Fono 2007). A former MP, Alfred Sasako, suggested 'online profiling' of MPs to improve transparency and accountability by monitoring the extent to which they deliver on the promises (Sasako 2012). In

Vanuatu, MPs are legally required to report to Parliament on their use of constituency funds but few do so in practice.

In Tonga, during parliamentary sessions between May and November, MPs visit their constituencies using four return airfares allocated to them in the Standing Orders – except for Ministers, who had separate entitlements with their portfolios, and Tongatapu members, who have the Legislature on their island. MPs are accompanied on constituency visits by legislative staff who talk about the role of parliament and how the public can participate in lawmaking through parliamentary committee processes. Notwithstanding such travel facility, there is widespread concern about MPs promising help to their constituencies but having little ability to initiate action. A case in point was MPs' response to the 2009 Tsunami, which hit the Tongan island of Niuatoputapu and destroyed no fewer than 79 houses. Despite appeals from these affected homeowners, government was slow to provide assistance and initial MP responses were of little practical value. MPs are one-part Ombudsman and must learn to direct constituent concerns to the relevant government department rather than try to solve them directly.

Improving the quality of public policy

Political leadership exists not for its own sake but to set the direction for public policy and its implementation within a country. Policy processes in Commonwealth Pacific small states tend to include extensive involvement by donors, consultants and development partners, and while all such contributions have played their part, political and public-sector leaders must carry responsibility for ownership of policy through to effective implementation, not only within individual sectors, but from a 'whole-of-government' perspective and in the direction of medium- and long-term plans.

The ways in which public policy processes can be improved, identified at the 4th Commonwealth Pacific Forum of Central Government Agencies held in Samoa in 2015, included:

- Enhanced analytical capacity at each stage of the policy cycle, but particularly in the identification of policy priorities, the design of policies and the monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation.
- Improved quality of data collection processes.
- Improved procedures for ensuring that policy evaluations inform future policy design (Commonwealth Secretariat 2015).

Samoa, for example, has focused on a range of institutional strengthening programmes in an effort to boost public-sector performance, and in 2012, introduced a Public Service Day to acknowledge the significance of public servants and to present awards for public service excellence.

Of course, policy must pursue clear purposes and direction. To this end, the majority of Commonwealth Pacific small states have in place national development plans, including long-term strategies, such as Papua New Guinea's Vision 2050, which was launched in 2009. Nauru has in place a National Sustainable Development Strategy

2005–2025, Solomon Islands has a National Development Strategy 2011–2020, and Vanuatu has its National Sustainable Development Plan for 2016–2030, while Tonga released its Strategic Development Framework 2015–2025. Fiji, Kiribati and Samoa have in place medium-term national development plans. However, some countries have a better record at implementing their plans than do others.

Responding to the Sustainable Development Goals

There are important challenges for governments in each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 16 (see Box 3.1), in particular, challenges governments to ensure that their policies and programmes, and the institutions that oversee their implementation, reach new levels of performance. Although many governments will no doubt claim that they are already doing their utmost to produce outcomes that are fair to all, the articulation of targets for this goal will require greater attention to standard setting, and to close monitoring of performance and results. Each government needs to have an appropriate oversight mechanism for the SDGs, built on existing platforms that were constructed to respond to the Millennium Development Goals, preferably using a 'whole-of-government' approach rather than one that assigns this task to an individual unit within one or other Ministry or Department. The SDGs create an opportunity for governance to improve at all levels.

Cultivating information-based societies and evidence-based policy-making

E-government

Building up telecommunications will play a major role in the future of governance. The emergence of e-government has changed the ways in which governments regard and handle data. Prior to the connectivity that is now provided by the internet, government departments maintained paper-based records, or – where records were computerised – developed standalone information systems. Information and communication technologies have revolutionised not only information processing, but expectations about its use within government, and with citizens and other stakeholders. Successful deployment of the new technologies requires infrastructure, financing, legislation, law reform, and training – all of which require leadership and co-ordination. Political governance thus now embraces the practices of e-government, e-public service, and e-democracy (Lee 2014, p.16). these new tools increase the potential for policy setting to be evidence-based, and for the impact of policy to be evaluated in ways that lead to further improvement (Cullen and Hassall 2017).

Access to information/freedom of information

Although the internet has facilitated the spread of information about public affairs in Commonwealth Pacific small states, governments have been slow to legislate for access to information and freedom of information. To some extent this is a legacy of colonial-era law in Commonwealth jurisdictions by which public servants had to abide by Official Information Acts. However, as development partners including UNDP have pointed out in workshops with Pacific island officials, freedom of information promotes democratic governance, facilitates public-sector efficiency, supports decentralisation, supports participatory development, fosters economic

Box 3.1 Sustainable Development Goal 16

Goal

'Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels'

Targets

16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere

16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children

16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all

16.4 By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime

16.5 Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms

16.6 Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels

16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels

16.8 Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance

16.9 By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration

16.10 Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements

16.a Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime

16.b Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development

Source: United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

development, exposes corruption, and improves media reporting (Rodrigues and Valemei 2008). Access to accurate data allows for learning and for realistic planning, and generates trust. Where official information is not freely available, social media has become the public's dominant source of information about government activity. Pacific societies are educated enough but are not able to make their voice heard. There

is a need for more initiatives aimed at civil education that encourage discussion of the notion of the politically responsible citizen, and which normalise the idea of being part of the debate, of being an active citizen, and of challenging the ideas of 'big men'.

Press freedom

In looking at political communication in the Pacific island context, unique cultural characteristics must be borne in mind. Although mass media (radio, television and newspapers) are vital means of communication, they are not uniformly available across the Pacific,[22] and traditional patterns remain important. In Vanuatu, for instance, much discussion takes place informally in the 'kava bar' during late afternoon and indeed each Pacific society has its traditional site of dialogue and debate, where sensitive views or pieces of information are traded in a social context. According to a report on Vanuatu's media in 2013 (Tacchi *et al.* 2013):

> *Freedom of expression is guaranteed in the constitution, but there is no specific protection for freedom of media. Threats against journalists by government officials are fairly common in Vanuatu. Journalists in the public broadcaster practice self-censorship to avoid confrontation with government. However, while they don't usually investigate corruption or sensitive government stories, they will report the findings of investigative stories run by commercial news outlets. A National Media Policy and a Freedom of Information policy and legislation are currently being developed by Transparency International Vanuatu, the Media Association of Vanuatu and other stakeholders, with support from United National Development Programme (UNDP) to address this situation.*

In Fiji, media restrictions in place from the time of the December 2006 coup have been gradually removed, with bans on specific foreign reporters entering the country lifted in October 2016. Although official censorship ended in 2012, with the lifting of the 2009 Public Emergency Regulations, and a new constitution promulgated in 2013, a new institution, the Media Industry Development Authority (MIDA), was established in 2010 with power to impose penalties on media items deemed to be against the 'public interest or public order'.

Leaders in a number of countries have expressed concerns about how social media is being used, as unmediated websites also carry 'mudslinging', and many unsubstantiated statements, allegations, and refutations. In PNG, in 2012, bloggers were accused by police of breaking the law by criticising government – although of course no charges were laid as no laws had been broken. During considerable political instability in 2011–12, bloggers shared information on Facebook and Twitter, but such reports got no traction until they were picked up by a trusted source and fact-checked. There was thus an element of self-moderation or correction, with others responding on such sites as *Yume Toktok Stret* and *Sharp Talk* to correct misinformation. In the Solomon Islands, government has expressed concern over the content of such blogsites as Forum Solomon Islands International, whose administrators are seeking to raise public awareness of policy issues in lawful ways.

In 2015 and 2016, the Government of Nauru was accused of denying access to foreign journalists seeking entry to the country to report on asylum seekers, and of

restricting access to the internet within the country. A 2015 report (Ewart 2015) from Kiribati suggests that the editor of radio Kiribati was dismissed for a report on the introduction of the death penalty.

In reviewing the status of media freedom in the Pacific in 2011, Perottet and Robie found that formal censorship only existed in Fiji (as noted above), and laws covering libel only existed in Fiji and Samoa. This same survey found, however, that none of the Commonwealth Pacific small states as yet had freedom of information legislation (Perottet and Robie 2011, p. 154).

National monitoring capability

Basing policy decisions on accurate data is becoming increasingly important for governments. However, whereas new technologies are making data capture ever easier, decisions as to what data to capture, using what technologies, by which agencies, and for what purposes, remain a challenge. Obviously, primary data about population, income, and expenditure (particularly public-sector expenditure), are at the heart of data collection, but monitoring now needs to also cover the environment, the economy, agriculture, health, education, security, tourism, land ownership and land use, and myriad other sectors. The ability of Commonwealth Pacific small states to collect and report official statistics in these diverse fields is improving, but remains a challenge.

Despite the presence of a Bureau of Statistics in most Commonwealth Pacific small states, and support for statistical capacity provided by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC),[23] several Commonwealth Pacific small states remained unable to systemically report data for the eight Millennium Development Goals. On the other hand, monitoring capability improved through activities under the 2009 Cairns Forum Compact on Strengthening Development Co-ordination, which in turn was a response to the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. However, if efforts to improve national monitoring capability are not scaled up, the Commonwealth Pacific small states will face similar challenges in monitoring progress of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

In addition to government-led monitoring of development outcomes at the national level, regional and global agencies produce a host of ad hoc or periodically produced indices of: climate and environment, e-government readiness, human development, labour, peace and stability, and all aspects of health. Performance is constantly measured by the ADB, the IMF and the World Bank, among others. Civil society organisations, including the Pacific Islands Association of NGOs (PIANGO), the Pacific Conference of Churches, Caritas and Oxfam, regularly publish reports on critical policy issues, and universities outside the Commonwealth Pacific small states have programmes focused on Pacific islands, including the Australian National University, Auckland University, the University of Canterbury, and the Victoria University of Wellington. There are even European Societies focused on Pacific island studies (Holtz, Kowasch *et al.* 2015).

Public opinion can also serve as a gauge in monitoring development outcomes, but it is difficult to gauge 'public opinion' in Pacific island societies. In addition to the

uneven distribution of mass media, and the diverse geographic and social disposition, is the fact that few surveys are conducted on a systematic basis. In Solomon Islands, the Regional Assistance Mission in the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) conducted several surveys to assess the public response to its presence in the country and its efforts in post-conflict rehabilitation and (Anu Enterprises 2007), in 2016, the Public Service Commission produced a survey of public perceptions of government performance. In Fiji, Tebutt polls are produced, and an opinion poll conducted by the Lowy Institute in 2011 received considerable media attention and scrutiny.[24] In Tonga, a polling exercise was criticised by some MPs who it did not depict favourably, but was used by other candidates and campaign managers to assist their electoral strategies.

Civil society

Civil society has a role to play in promoting accountability, freedom of expression, and improved government performance. Although the idea and practice of civil society is consolidating across the Pacific, it remains too weak in some places to have significant impact on the policy choices of political leaders. It only exists, for instance, in urban areas, and is quite reliant on social media to convey its messages. There is a need to put incentives in place to have leaders act in the national interest and not restrict their actions to matters of local interest. There is also, in many places, a real desire to shift relationships away from patronage politics. Candidates do not want to continue spending their personal savings on campaign costs, and MPs do not appreciate being petitioned by constituents on an almost daily basis for cash support. There are instances of MPs providing essential services from their private funds for fear of losing electoral support; unfortunately, if such forms of patronage politics become more common, electoral contests may become possible only for the wealthiest in society, in contrast to the egalitarian ethos embedded in democratic ideals and theory. For these reasons and others, civil society has an essential role to play as an advocate for democracy, and as a watchdog against patronage politics.

Developing government capacity at provincial and local levels, in both urban and rural settings

Although national-level institutions have been the focus of development assistance, maturation of political institutions at subnational level is equally important. In addition, while 50 per cent of the Pacific's total population is regarded as 'urban', this figure is only 13 per cent in the case of PNG. Therefore, as urbanisation increases and demand for urban infrastructure grows, the quality of local governance becomes all the more crucial, and as Table 3.3 shows, the numbers of both urban and rural local authorities, some elected and others appointed by traditional means, are substantial, and growing. In addition to approximately 25,000 villages spread across the nine Commonwealth Pacific small states, there are approximately 7,000 elected and appointed local government councillors (including around 6,000 in PNG) (CLGF [n.d.]). All of these staff require some training, as these local government bodies take on more responsibility for service provision, and for some level of financial administration. Local government throughout the Pacific is at present significantly

Table 3.3 Subnational institutions

	Villages	Rural local authorities	Urban local authorities	Provinces or Island councils	Towns	Cities
Fiji	2,100	17		14	11	2
Kiribati	181	n/a		23	3	0
Nauru	n/a	n/a	14	n/a		0
PNG	15,824	317	31	22	63	3
Samoa	330	n/a		n/a	0	0
Solomon Is	4,484			9	12	1
Tonga	170				0	0
Tuvalu	17			8	0	0
Vanuatu	1,751		3	6	2	0

Source: CLGF 2015[25]

underfunded and the fiscal aspects of intergovernmental relations will have to be examined.

While urbanisation has increasingly affected village life from the mid-twentieth century, approximately 50 per cent of Pacific islanders continue to live in villages rather than towns. The 'village' has traditionally constituted the basic unit of social and economic life in Pacific island societies. Yet in some Commonwealth Pacific small states, the validity of the institution is contested, on the premise that the 'village' is merely a traditional social unit – or in some cases an institution devised during the colonial era as an administrative convenience. The rapid rate of migration from rural to urban areas and from villages to urban settlements requires close consideration of what Pacific villages are experiencing at present and are likely to experience in future years. Media reports suggest serious intergenerational issues, with a younger generation no longer recognising the traditions, laws and norms of an older generation, or the leaders who seek their enforcement. There are issues of land use, livelihoods, and access to markets.

In addition, the idea that villages are 'traditional' and cities and towns 'modern' needs to be removed, so that the benefits of local government can reach both urban and rural populations. Urban authorities currently have disproportionate access to government services, although both urban and rural populations require local government. An important aspect of overcoming disparities in the government of urban and rural areas will be clearer articulation of the roles of traditional leaders, who for the most part operate in parallel to local government authorities. It is important to find models for the village of the future, and to identify ways in which people can remain in their village, should they wish, and to still make a decent living or make return visits to the village without permanently residing in squatter settlements or in peri-urban areas.

Much recent scholarship and policy articulation has focused on the important issue of urbanisation, and on the development of national systems of government.[26] UN Habitat, for instance, has undertaken a project 'Managing the Transition from the Village to the City in the South Pacific'. In addition, the challenges of local governance have been examined at a series of Pacific Urban Forums convened since 2003 by a

consortium including UN Habitat, the Commonwealth Local Government Forum's Pacific Project, the ADB and others, together with buy-in from national departments responsible for local government. Since 2003, five countries have developed urbanisation policies (PNG, Samoa, Fiji, Tonga and Solomon Islands) covering such challenges as population and employment; housing, informal settlements and social issues; governance and institutions; environment and climate change; rural—urban linkages, transport and infrastructure; land availability; security, law and order; and gender and HIV/AIDS.[27]

However, the implications of the distinction between urban and rural constituency deserve fuller consideration. Although all communities at local level desire the same services – such as clean water, health and education services, roads and other infrastructure – the condition of these services often differs dramatically depending on whether the context is rural or urban, and whether it is regulated by modern law or by custom. By definition, the village is generally under customary leadership, and not formally regulated.[28]

There is a role for local government in advancing human rights and for promoting equal rights for women. Whether established constitutionally or through legislation, local authorities have the same responsibilities as do national authorities for guaranteeing, at local level, freedom of speech and the elimination of all gender-based discrimination.

3.3.2 Regional level

Locating sovereignty

In an era of globalisation, the notion of what it is to be an 'independent' or 'dependant' state or nation has changed. The issue is no longer that of 'independent' versus 'dependent' status so much as the degree of self-determination exercised when making the choice. There are growing expectations, too, of participation by citizens in the spaces created for and by 'civil society', and thus there is a need to explore what changes, if any, this expanded role may make to traditional institutions and procedures of government.

The Morauta Report referred to a 'substantial pooling of sovereignty' (Pacific Plan Review 2013, p.14), and the subsequent the Framework for Pacific Regionalism states that potential regional initiatives 'should maintain the degree of effective sovereignty held by national governments (countries, not regional bodies, should decide priorities)' (Pacific Islands Forum 2015, p. 10). This use of the expression 'degree of effective sovereignty' – presuming it has been chosen deliberately – creates the opportunity for discussion of more nuanced approaches to the allocation and use of sovereign power by small states. The notion that nations have 'full sovereignty' in the sense of total control over their destinies, has given way in the modern era to international treaties and development assistance – and particularly in the context of small states whose economies are unable to provide all the infrastructure, goods and services required by their citizens – to more realistic expectations (Mendez and Germann 2016).

Table 3.4 Key actors and programmes in the Pacific

	Government/intergovernmental Agencies	Civil society	Programmes
GLOBAL	UN and its Agencies (UNDP, WHO, FAO, UNFPA, UN Habitat, UN Women, UNICEF, etc.), World Trade Organization, World Bank and IMF (Pacific Regional Infrastructure Facility, Pacific Financial Action Task Force), European Union (African, Caribbean and Pacific)	Amnesty International, Greenpeace, World Social Forum, Transparency International, Oxfam, Faith-Based Organisations, International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, Commonwealth Local Government Forum	SDGs, Samoa Pathway, Paris Principles, Treaties, Paris Agreement, Human Rights, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
ASIA-PACIFIC	ADB, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Australia Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand Department Foreign Affairs and Trade		Country programmes
PACIFIC REGIONAL CROP Agencies	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Secretariat of the Pacific Community, University of the South Pacific, Pacific Islands Development Programme, South Pacific Tourism Organization, Pacific Power Association, Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Association, Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme	PIANGO, Faith-Based Organisations, Pacific Network on Globalisation	Framework for Pacific Regionalism, Regional Sector Plans, Working Groups
PACIFIC REGIONAL Other	PASO, Pacific Islands Law Officers Network, PIPSO, Commonwealth Pacific Forum of Central Agencies, Pacific Public Service Commissioners Conference, Parties to the Nauru Agreement, PASAI		Country programmes
NATIONAL Sovereign states	Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu	National Peak Civil Society bodies	National Development Strategies, National Sector Plans
NATIONAL Non-sovereign states	American Samoa, Cook Islands, French Polynesia, Guam, New Caledonia, Niue, Northern Mariana Islands, Tokelau, Timor-Leste, Wallis & Futuna	Peak Civil Society bodies	National Development Strategies, National Sector Plans
SUBNATIONAL	Cities, towns, provincial governments, villages, settlements	Local NGOs	Pacific Urban Agenda

Source: Author's compilation

Regional governance

Political governance at the regional level is defined as the establishment and operation of supranational entities for the collective benefit of the participating states and peoples. Regional co-operation in the Pacific commenced after World War II with the establishment of such bodies as the South Pacific Commission. Since the formation of the Pacific Islands Forum in 1971, and the gradual coalescence of intergovernmental agencies into the Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP), the region has become one of multilevel governance, multiple-stakeholders, abundant regional, national and sectoral plans, and significant monitoring and evaluation by national governments, international development partners and agencies. This complex field of state and non-state global, regional and subregional actors seeking to influence governance in the Pacific islands is depicted in Table 3.4.

Whereas the state and non-state actors identified in Table 3.4 have developed working relationships among themselves, these relations are fluid rather than permanent, and organisations themselves are subject to change. For example, in 2013, Fiji sponsored the establishment of the Pacific Islands Development Forum, an initiative that raises the possibility that additional organisations will continue to emerge in the future, and opening, also, questions about the method by which the regional architecture is legitimated (Tavola 2015).

Nevertheless, concepts of Pacific regionalism and subregionalism are surprisingly long-standing.[29] Significantly, in 2004, Forum Leaders set out the following vision for the region (Pacific Plan Review 2013):

> *Leaders believe the Pacific region can, should and will be a region of peace, harmony, security and economic prosperity, so that all its people can lead free and worthwhile lives. We treasure the diversity of the Pacific and seek a future in which its cultures, traditions and religious beliefs are valued, honoured and developed. We seek a Pacific region that is respected for the quality of its governance, the sustainable management of its resources, the full observance of democratic values, and for its defence and promotion of human rights. We seek partnerships with our neighbours and beyond to develop our knowledge, to improve our communications and to ensure a sustainable economic existence for all.*

Forum Leaders gave effect to this vision through the Pacific Plan for Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Integration which was endorsed in 2005. After almost ten years of implementation of the Plan and rather muted results, the Pacific Plan was reviewed by a team led by former PNG Prime Minister Sir Mekere Morauta in 2013. In their report, over 36 recommendations were made envisioning 'a bigger, better, deeper process of regionalism', which require acknowledgement of 'difficult issues such as sharing sovereignty and the recognition of regional priorities that may not always equate to national priorities'.[30]

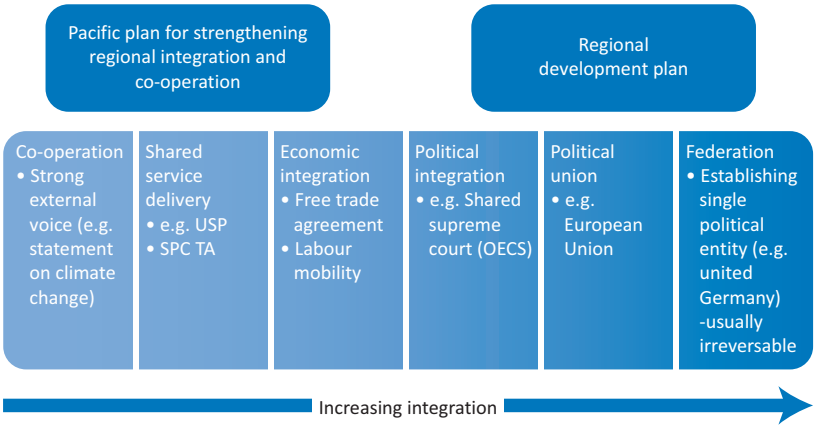
The key point made by the Morauta Report (Pacific Plan Review 2013) is that Pacific regionalism has mostly comprised co-operation, which is much less than shared governance. This point was also made by the ADB in 2005 at the time of the launch of the Pacific Plan, where the ADB argued that in the Pacific context: 'regional

co-operation is insufficient to cope with many of the region's challenges – despite this being a preferred method of regionalism in the Forum', and that 'given the Pacific's unique characteristics, only by moving to "deeper" forms of regionalism – increased regional provision of services and regional market integration – will the Forum create the necessary pool of benefits needed to make regional institutions sustainable and beneficial to its members.'

There is also evidence to suggest this. For example, a recent study for the Forum Economic Ministers' Meeting listed 55 networks convened periodically by the Forum, its Committees and Working Groups, other CROP agencies, and Forum dialogue partners (Pacific Consultant Group 2014). Whereas the challenges of co-ordinating so many meetings, preparatory papers, draft resolutions and outcome statements is familiar to those close to regional processes in the Pacific, information sharing and establishing non-binding consensus positions is at the soft end of regionalism. Decisions to compact overlapping meetings can improve efficiency but do not constitute a model of subsidiarity. In addition, Pacific Islands Forum countries have worked together to ensure regional security through the Biketawa Declaration, which was agreed to at the 31st Summit of Pacific Islands Forum Leaders in October 2000, following the coup in Fiji and ethnic tension in the Solomon Islands in that year. But this Declaration establishing a framework for co-ordinating response to regional crises, which was subsequently used to assist Solomon Islands (since 2003), Nauru (2004–2009) and Tonga (2006), amounts to less than a security treaty and requires an invitation from the country at risk. It does not secure the interests of the Pacific states whether individually or collectively should the concerned parties not co-operate.

To address the challenges to shared governance, the Morauta Report proposed a 'Path for Pacific Integration', commencing with co-operation, then stages of shared service delivery, economic integration, political integration, and ultimately political union and federation (Figure 3.1). Consideration of such a path – or

Figure 3.1 2013 Pacific Plan Review - Path for Pacific Integration



Source: Pacific Plan Review 2013

at a minimum, of the creation of a political space for leaders to identify and pursue collective action – requires close political, constitutional, economic and social consideration, as well as agreement on the decision process and timelines. The report was careful to note that the path had not yet been consented to by the Pacific Islands Forum members, but strongly suggested that remaining at the co-operation stage was an inadequate response to the region's longer-term needs.

Following consideration of the Morauta Report, in 2014, the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders endorsed a new Framework for Pacific Regionalism to achieve their vision set out in 2004. Within this Framework, they endorsed a Specialist Sub-Committee on Regionalism to identify and assess 'priority initiatives to advance Pacific regionalism', alongside the advice of regional meetings and Pacific member states, on priorities to advance Pacific regionalism. However, the Morauta Report stressed the need for faster consideration of options for Pacific regionalism. There is also a need to agree on timelines for decision, without which political dialogue will draft, public interest will wane, and the potential for cleavage will emerge. Therefore, the success of the Framework for Pacific Regionalism process will very much depend on how Pacific countries address five broader issues concerning the future regional architecture: (1) sovereignty; (2) regional governance; (3) pooled services; (4) funding; and (5) accountability.

What is missing from this discussion are clear statements from individual Pacific island countries outlining what they do and do not want from regional co-operation.

Although the countries and territories of the Pacific region have jointly established a number of regional organisations over the past century, it is more accurate to refer to regional co-operation than to regional governance. Whereas 'governance' implies some institutional basis for decision-making and action, the forms of co-operation that typify interstate collaboration in the region, in such matters as technical assistance and information sharing, are more properly described as 'soft multilateralism'. This includes the provisions of the Biketawa Declaration (2000), which – notwithstanding the fact that they have provided the basis for regional security strengthening operations in the Solomon Islands and Nauru – is yet another instance of co-operation rather than obligation. The Declaration did not, for instance, assist the Pacific countries in resolving the political conflict that culminated in Fiji's fourth (2006) coup. The Treaty establishing the Pacific Islands Forum, signed by all parties in 2005, is yet to come into force since some parties are yet to ratify it.

CROP is similarly a co-operative arrangement, established in 1988 to improve co-operation, co-ordination and collaboration among intergovernmental regional organisations in the region. Its current members are the Forum Secretariat (as chair), the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA); Pacific Islands Development Programme (PIDP); Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC); Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP); South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO); University of the South Pacific (USP); Pacific Power Association (PPA); and Pacific Aviation Safety Office (PASO).

The value of this form of collaboration is not in doubt. The questions to be asked, however, are whether it is sufficient to meet the needs of the member countries in

the coming decades, and whether there are additional areas of governance that could benefit from organisations at the regional level. There are, for instance, regional organisations for law officers (Pacific Islands Law Officers' Network), the Oceania Customs Organisation, and the Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police Secretariat, among others.

The process of deepening integration among the Pacific island countries requires greater clarification of consultation and decision-making processes, commitment of resources, milestones and time frames.

Although regional agencies already provide policy advice to the Pacific countries in all sectors, there is a need to establish a mechanism that generates studies on options for the future architecture of Pacific regionalism. Such studies have already been produced, but not in a longitudinal way. There is a need to establish a mechanism that generates 'foresight' studies, especially concerning the implications of globalisation for the Pacific region. There is also a need for the ongoing production of policy options for pooled services, including services by independent state agencies such as Ombudsman, Auditor-General and Public Prosecutor. There is a need for the independent assessment of the effectiveness of regional agencies and international development assistance.

Adjacent to these issues are the practices of 'subregionalism'. Subregional groupings include the Melanesian Spearhead Group (PNG, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front and Fiji), the Micronesian Chief Executives' Summit (Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands and Palau), the Polynesian Leaders' Group (Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Cook Islands, Niue, American Samoa, French Polynesia, Tokelau), and the Smaller Island States (Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Niue, Tuvalu, Republic of Marshall Islands, Nauru and Palau). These subregional groups facilitate co-operation on issues of particular shared concern. The Micronesian Chief Executives' Summit, for instance, which first met in 2003, has a focus on Recycling, Invasive Species, Energy, Telecommunications, Tourism, Transportation Committee, Workforce Development, Health Committee; and Sustainability.[31] The Melanesian Spearhead Group, whose Secretariat was formally established in 2008, has a focus on subregional trade, investment and economic development, and on strengthening political ties in the subregional.

Pooled services

The concept of 'pooled services' is that countries may collaborate in the joint delivery of services which they are not able to deliver on their own. Not all of the Pacific island countries, for instance, have the resources to establish adequate cancer or diabetes treatment, and exploration is underway to determine how they could co-operate. It is evident, similarly, that the smaller states lack aspects of educational, technological, legal and financial capability, so that they struggle, for instance, with auditing of government agencies, and with prosecuting instances of sophisticated fraud, to the extent that a joint regional office of audit, or of public prosecution, might be beneficial. For example, the Pacific Association of Supreme Audit Institutions (PASAI) has commenced 'co-operative audits'.[32]

However, delivery of pooled services by Pacific island countries has not spread beyond shared ownership of the University of the South Pacific. Efforts to share an airline and shipping line did not continue, and a more recent effort to establish joint purchasing of petroleum has similarly failed. A recent study of 20 Pacific regional pooling initiatives found approximately half to be successful, that no two pooled services looked the same, and that regional pooling initiatives were more attractive to donors than to national political leaders (Dornan and Cain 2014, pp. 555, 557). This finding implies that further consideration is required within individual Pacific island countries about which services they could deliver more efficiently and effectively through collaboration, and how best to proceed.

Although there has been some analysis of the benefits of introducing a regional currency (Jayaraman and Choong 2009), options could also be explored for the establishment of regional Ombudsman, courts, Audit, Public Prosecutor, and statistics. Consideration should also be given to the development of an ongoing forum for consideration of constitutional and institutional reform ideas suitable for economic and political integration in the Pacific context. The Pacific Forum's current programme of soliciting 'regional public policy submissions' is a useful entry point for identifying issues of common concern to all Pacific island countries.

Funding

Current data suggest that metropolitan countries put more finance into Pacific regional organisations than member countries do; the implication being that unless Pacific island countries demonstrate their commitment to regional arrangements through the provision of greater resources, Pacific regionalism will continue to be an aspiration driven from beyond the region rather than from within it. In 2016, Forum Leaders tasked the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat to undertake an analysis of the governance and financing of Pacific regionalism, with a view to determining how Pacific countries can collectively ensure the appropriate financing of a regional agenda. Importantly, the analysis will explore options to enhance the governance of regional financing through regional organisations, from whatever source.

Accountability

There is also the question of accountability. In the Pacific region's democratic future, who should regional intergovernmental organisations be responsible to? Are their programmes accountable in any way to Pacific islander constituencies? But questions concerning the Pacific's future regional governance extend beyond consideration of the existing framework, to whether additional governance functions should be considered. Should there be, for instance, a regional court of appeal? Or a regional human rights commission? Or regional Ombudsman, or Auditor-General? Will the decisions to be taken about the region require legitimacy through a regional parliament or some other form of representation? Future approaches to regionalism may or may not include revision of sovereign relations. But whichever path the Pacific nations choose, their decision will benefit from consideration of other regionalisms, whether European, Caribbean, Asian or African (Ridolfi 2007; Yihdego 2011; Lewis 2006; Bishop, Girvan *et al.* 2011; Borzel 2012).

If funding of regional initiatives is an unaddressed challenge, establishing accountably for regional governance may be even more difficult. At the national level, potential mechanisms for accountability range from political – such as through elections – to administrative and legal. Of the three, only administrative accountability currently exists for regional projects. The Forum Principles of Good Leadership establish a duty for leaders to ensure that their people have ready 'access to the administrative laws governing access to government benefits, the applications of taxes, duties, and charges, etc.' and that 'executive discretion is at a minimum'. But there is no regionally elected body, and there is no regional law, enforceable through a regional court. Employees of CROP agencies are accountable for their results to their immediate superiors and ultimately to their advisory boards, but they are not regional public servants accountable to a regional equivalent of a regional public service commission or public service department. The lines of accountability of existing Pacific regional organisations need to be explained more clearly to the interested public. The mandates, activities and results of CROP working groups should be more easily and systematically made available to the public.

3.4 Pacific islands political governance: looking to 2050

The key governance indicators for the Pacific present a conundrum: on the one hand, development assistance statistics suggest that the region receives the largest amount of assistance, per capita, of any part of the world. Indicators for economic growth and for human development, on the other hand, show only modest increases in well-being. That so much human and material support is entering the Pacific region for so little outcome must eventually cause policy-makers and political leaders to re-examine their frameworks and to become receptive to new approaches.

Looking to 2050, the future path of Commonwealth Pacific small states and the region as a whole depends on choices made by its peoples and their leaders. Will they all 'sail together' or will a few among them advance more quickly by catching a stronger breeze?

3.4.1 No change

One possible scenario for Commonwealth Pacific small states, and for the region, is 'business as usual', sometimes called 'status quo', or stasis. In this scenario, governance neither significantly declines in coming years, nor does it significantly improve. This outcome will be achieved if these Pacific nations continue with the political culture as currently practised. Elections will continue to be held as scheduled, but due to the instability of political coalitions, parliaments will continue to sit less often than is required to undertake adequate oversight of the executive. Legislative programmes will respond principally to international requests for compliance (such as reforms to security, finance, biosecurity requirements). Health and education budgets will remain stable, and enhanced services will be established through donor support. Such a country will continue to rely on development assistance, and at the regional level will, engage in low-level co-operation only. Ongoing lack of social services on outer islands will continue to fuel urban drift, and urban authorities will continue

to struggle with the provision of urban infrastructure. Those living in villages and informal settlements will continue to be neglected. National governments will continue to call on CROP agencies for policy advice and look to foreign partners for material support. The CROP agencies, for their part, will continue to focus on programmes that promote collaboration and capacity-building. Some attention will be given to compliance with the Sustainable Development Goals, and Samoa Pathway, as well as initiatives born out of the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, so long as external resources are provided. Climate change will affect coastal communities and internal migration issues will create tensions. Human development will increase, but more slowly than on the continents of Asia and Africa and leave such Pacific countries with 'less developed country' status. The Pacific countries will continue to send representatives to global conferences with an emphasis on identifying financial and other benefits for 'less developed countries'.

3.4.2 Deterioration

A second possible outcome in the coming years, one which few would want to consider, is deterioration in the quality of political governance that leads to state failure, or 'regime' failure.[33] Solomon Islands came close to such a condition in the early 2000s, as did Bougainville during its separatist struggle with the mainland. Failure will always be an option if a people and their governments do not remain vigilant. In such a scenario, the antagonisms that are embedded in opposing political parties increase, and those who hold executive power begin to stifle democratic processes in order to retain their authority. Elite interests capture executive power, and focus on exploitation of rents. Unsustainable natural resource exploitation depletes future revenue potential and speeds up environmental degradation. The role of parliament is minimised and public-sector leadership is politicised. The institutions of accountability, such as Ombudsman, Public Accounts Committee and Auditor-General are suppressed. Poor governance leads to a fall in government revenues, and this leads to a loss of investor confidence. Media and civil society are intimidated. Material and human capital begins to take flight, and development agencies ease up their commitment to longer-term projects. Neglect of social services leads to decline in human development outcomes, rise in social unrest and calls for separatism. The younger generations send ever-decreasing remittances. Adverse weather events threaten food security and degrade physical infrastructure, including transport and communications networks. The climate of uncertainty begins to keep tourists away. Leaders continue to participate in global meetings, but mostly to justify their circumstances rather than to engage in global policy dialogue. The state or states experiencing this upheaval begin to consume the time and resources of the regional agencies and the Pacific Leaders, which in turn draws resources from region-building activities.

3.4.3 Transformation

The third potential outcome, which serves as a higher aspiration for the Pacific islands region, is that of transformation. Transformation refers to the harnessing of sufficient political will to overcome the region's systemic challenges. In general terms, it means

grounding all policies on values of social justice and sustainability, and ensuring that the apparatus of government serves all citizens equally, and to high standards. Public values of transparency, accountability and social inclusion are articulated. A country or group of countries seeking such transformation aspires to being smart, and sustainable. Being 'smart' implies applying information and communication technologies to the production of information societies; knowledge societies. Being 'sustainable' implies adapting the cost of government to the resources available. In a transforming society, the quality of education facilities is enhanced at all levels from primary to tertiary, and the curriculum is oriented toward the context of the learner. Such a transformation would require much more openness in government decision-making, and in discussion of results and outcomes. It requires what is now referred to as 'agility', or the ability of government to change rapidly in response to new ideas and approaches. This will include a shift to more inclusive consultative processes, and more multilevel partnerships that bring together regional, national and local actors both within and outside government. This also implies openness to periodic constitutional review. Transforming counties will respond adequately to opportunities provided by the SDGs and SIDS agendas, which includes 'owning' development activities and results. The need for more open information sharing and consultation will drive the expansion of e-government services, and online transactions will benefit citizens and business, as well as the many branches of government. Representatives will attend global meetings to learn of best practices and to share the Pacific's experience. Pacific regionalism will build on the lessons of regional organisations in other parts of the world: far from being 'one-size-fits-all', it will allow countries to opt in to shared services and decision-making in sectors in which joint services more adequately meet their citizen's needs and expectations.

3.5 Recommendations

Faced with the above three scenarios, what are the options for Commonwealth Pacific small states? This chapter has suggested that the building of institutions at national level that characterised the first post-independence decades must now be joined by an effort to not only continue developing capacity at national level, but to develop capacity at subnational, regional and global levels. The subnational level requires greater attention to government of urban and rural communities. The regional level implies continued efforts to seek a model of regional governance suitable to the Pacific context. At global level there will be ever-greater engagement with global policy networks and various international/global institutions. At all these levels, political actors in Pacific island countries must respond to the evolving circumstances of their constituents. Political and public-sector institutions need to strengthen partnerships and collaborative arrangements with civil society organisations and to build networks which can assist with creating equitable, just and safe societies. Pacific people, who may have been treated as *subjects* during the colonial era or as *peasants* and *rural-dwellers* during the early years of independence, now demand and expect treatment as *citizens* who possess rights and genuine development aspirations. So what steps should the Pacific nations take in pursuit of transformation in the years to 2050?

3.5.1 Local governance

Local governance across the Pacific can be strengthened by developing sustainable legal, financial and administrative frameworks for both urban and rural local authorities. This requires reform to laws concerning intergovernmental relations, together with capacity-building.

Where Constituent Development Fund arrangements are in place, steps should be taken to ensure that adequate separation of powers between legislative and executive branches of government is maintained. Ideally, such constituency funds should be reduced over time, so that MPs have sufficient time to focus on their responsibilities in the legislature.

Local government capacity can be built in collaboration with development partners and civil society. National consultation processes should be initiated to discuss the role of local government in implementing the SDGs, and in implementing the New Urban Agenda, agreed at Habitat III.[34]

3.5.2 National governance

National governments across the Pacific can strengthen democratic culture and practice. This includes guaranteeing freedom of speech, which provides the foundation for an active media, vocal citizenry, and committed civil society – all of which provide essential feedback on matters of public interest.

Accountability for the quality of public leadership codes can be strengthened through:

- Extension of leadership codes – where they do not currently exist – to cover MPs as well as public servants.
- Reporting of public-sector performance as measured by the Forum Principles Good of Leadership and Forum Principles of Accountability.
- Eliminating all gender-based forms of discrimination.

National governments across the Pacific can strengthen democratic institutions and practice by the following actions:

- Encourage adherence to Cabinet manuals that establish, by convention, the roles and responsibilities of cabinet, and relations between Ministers and permanent secretaries.
- Strengthen the autonomy and effectiveness of the legislature through such measures as an independently assigned budget.
- Publish an annual parliamentary calendar (work programme) to facilitate planning by MPs, committees, administrative support staff, government departments and agencies, and the public.
- Strengthen the function of legislatures through revision of Standing Orders to specify duration of sessions, and standards for debate, question time, etc.
- Encourage legislatures to develop e-parliament practices on the basis of standards issued by the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

- Ensure the autonomy of the Public Service Commission, which will insulate the public sector from nepotism and politicisation.
- Strengthen relations between the Central Government Agencies to improve co-ordination, efficiency, and policy coherence.
- Undertake a whole-of-government approach to e-government to increase transparency, efficiency, policy coherence and service delivery.
- Participate in the Open Government project, and apply principles of transparency in such areas as government procurement.

While national governments should continue to value the feedback on performance provided by CROP agencies and international development partners, governments should also put more emphasis on developing their own capacity for policy analysis. This will make them stronger partners in national, regional and global policy dialogue arenas.

To demonstrate political commitment to regionalism, national governments should consider establishing ministries for Pacific integration, or at a minimum, establish a dedicated branch for Pacific integration within one of the existing ministries. National parliaments might also consider establishing a parliamentary select committee on Pacific regionalism, or else assign this responsibility to an existing committee.

3.5.3 Regional governance

The process of delivering 'deeper integration' by the Pacific island countries requires greater clarification of consultation and decision-making processes, research, commitment of resources, milestones and time frames. As the lead agency for the articulation of policy, these should be initiated by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. The Pacific island countries should share more widely their analyses of needs and concerns about options for regional governance.

The lines of accountability of existing Pacific regional organisations need to be explained more clearly to the interested public. The mandates, activities and results of CROP working groups should be more easily and systematically made available to the public.

'Subregionalism' is an important aspect of Pacific regionalism. Subregional groupings – including those which already exist – can play constructive roles in identifying the most appropriate areas for co-operation leading to closer integration. Not all Pacific countries need to participate in every regional initiative.

Although regional agencies already provide policy advice to the Pacific countries in all sectors, there is a need to establish a mechanism that generates studies on options for the future architecture of Pacific regionalism. Such studies have already been produced, but not in a longitudinal way. There is a need to establish a mechanism that generates 'foresight' studies, especially concerning the implications of globalisation for the Pacific region. There is also a need for the ongoing production of policy

options for pooled services, including the services of independent state agencies such as Ombudsman, Auditor-General and Public Prosecutor. There is a need for the independent assessment of the effectiveness of regional agencies and international development assistance. Internationally, there are models such as The Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy,[35] a suitable adapted version of which could be tasked with generating options for the future of the Pacific islands.

Whereas the Pacific states already co-operate in some aspects of their engagement in global governance, this engagement requires further consideration and elaboration, so that the interests of all Pacific people are adequately represented in the deliberation and decision-making processes of global policy networks and global institutions.

Notes

1 This chapter benefited from valuable comments from the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (Sione Tekiteki, Alfred Soakai, Timothy Bryar, Anna Naupa and Angela Thomas), the University of the South Pacific (Professor Vijay Naidu) and the Commonwealth Secretariat (Katalaina Sapolu, Marie-Pierre Olivier, Mark Guthrie, Albert Mariner, Tres-Ann Kremer, Resina Katafono, Denny Lewis-Bynoe and Wonderful Hope Khonje).

2 The exceptions being Kiribati and Fiji, which have adopted 'Republican' models with Westminster characteristics.

3 See Parliament of Vanuatu (2015).

4 Autonomous region in PNG.

5 The Pacific Islands Forum consists of the nine Commonwealth Pacific small states plus Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, New Zealand, Niue, Republic of the Marshall Islands and Palau.

6 For the case of Samoa see International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) 2013.

7 Sustainable development that combines economic social, and cultural development in ways that improve livelihoods and well-being and use the environment sustainably; Economic growth that is inclusive and equitable; Strengthened governance, legal, financial, and administrative systems; and Security that ensures stable and safe human, environmental and political conditions for all.

8 See http://www.sids2014.org/samoapathway

9 See http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/

10 Most proposals for systemic change have been made by external observers rather than from within – such as Henderson's query about presidential rather than parliamentary systems (Henderson, 2004a); and Moore's call for a Pacific parliament (Moore, 1982).

11 When establishing the Tongan constitution of 1875, Tupou I ensured that it could not be changed easily, with amendments requiring an additional confirmation two years later before coming into force. Although this provision was removed in 1880 the conservative tendency was entrenched (Powles, 2007).

12 http://www.pianzea.org/

13 In comparison, turnout of voting age population in the United States in 2014 was 33%; 60% in the United Kingdom (2014), and 70% in India (2014) (IDEA 2016).

14 In Tuvalu, few elected MPs develop and present to their constituents a manifesto of what they intend to achieve during their four-year term, and most policies at community level are formulated by the Rural Development Department at the central government. In PNG, the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates Commission has been established to oversee the integrity of political parties.

15 Melanesia refers to Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

16 See http://www.pacific.undp.org/content/pacific/en/home/ourwork/democraticgovernance/overview.htm. Induction programs have been run by UNDP, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the Centre for Democratic Institutions, and other development agencies.

17 MPs do not all play identical roles in Parliament: there are different expectations and demands depending on whether an MP is a minister and member of cabinet, a committee member or committee chair; and MP skills and experience will vary depending on whether they are in their first term or some subsequent term.
18 In Solomon Islands, a new building opened at the National Parliament in September 2012 to provide offices for individual MPs, and the Parliament's Officers (Speaker and Clerk) are working toward 'autonomy' (i.e. an independent fiscal allocation). In Tonga, also, a new complex will include a legislative chamber that includes a gallery for the public.
19 For a number of years, issues of Parliamentary strengthening were addressed at the Forum of Presiding Officers established under the auspices of the Pacific Islands Forum, a body that should be revived.
20 See https://picpa.usp.ac.fj/the-region/
21 See http://www.forumsec.org/pages.cfm/strategic-partnerships-coordination/pacific-principles-on-aid-effectiveness/forum-compact/forum-compact-peer-review-reports.html
22 Vanuatu's radio transmitter did not function during 2004–2008 and most citizens beyond the capital had no access to parliamentary debates. The radio transmitter is fixed, talk-back radio has restarted, and people call in from all around the country.
23 Including the Ten Year Pacific Statistics Strategy (TYPSS) 2011–2020, which covers National Strategies for the Development of Statistics, standards and classifications, Household Income and Expenditure Survey, prices, business statistics, International Merchandise Trade Statistics, agriculture and rural statistics, tourism statistics, demographic health surveys, population and housing census, education statistics, use of administrative databases in sourcing data, civil registration and vital statistics, and dissemination of statistics/information.
24 See, for example, https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/some-facts-about-lowys-fiji-poll
25 Country profiles are available online at: http://www.clgf.org.uk/resource-centre/clgf-publications/country-profiles/
26 Commonwealth Local Government Forum - Pacific Project (2010). Port Vila Declaration on Building Vibrant & Resilient Local Economies & Communities in the Pacific. Port Vila, Commonwealth Local Government Forum.
27 See, for example, http://unhabitat.org/Papua%20New%20Guinea/
28 The exceptions being urban villages, which are traditional villages that have been engulfed by urban sprawl.
29 Henderson points out that 'A Polynesian federation was proposed in 1880 by the then King of Hawaii, who saw himself as the regional leader. The idea was revived in the 1980s, by Cook Island Premier Sir Tom Davis. It was backed by Gaston Flosse, the then President of Polynesia, the King of Tonga (who saw himself as the leader) and some New Zealand Maori leaders. Samoa was not interested, unless it could have the lead role. New Zealand was lukewarm, with the then Prime Minister David Lange unwilling to provide the necessary funding. The idea lapsed when Davis and Flosse lost power.'
30 The report of October 2013 was based on visits to all 18 member or associate-member countries of the Pacific Islands Forum, and interviews with more than 700 stakeholders, together with 70 public submissions, commissioned studies on specific issues, and literature review amounting to 'one of the most substantive consultations about contemporary Pacific issues ever mounted. Pacific Plan Review (2013). Report to Pacific Leaders: Vol. 1. Suva, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, p. 2.
31 See, for example, http://pohnpeimet.fm/chiefexecutivesummit.htm
32 See http://www.pasai.org/
33 This has in the past been referred to as the 'Africanisation' thesis, which holds that states that do not cultivate good governance run the risk of sinking into a state of chaos in the manner experienced in such countries as Sierra Leona, Sudan and Somalia.
34 Habitat III refers to the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, held in Quito, Ecuador, in October 2016.
35 See http://www.wrr.nl/en/home/

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