

**ELITES AND THE MODERN
STATE IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA
AND SOLOMON ISLANDS**

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the Degree

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List of Abbreviations

ASPI. Australian Strategic Policy Institute

AusAID. Australian Aid Agency

CMC. Churches Medical Council

Dfat. Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

EuropeAid. European Union Aid Agency

FPP. First Past the Post voting system

GDP. Gross Domestic Product

GNI. Gross National Income

LCC. Leadership Code Commission

LNG. Liquefied Natural Gas Project

LPV. Limited Preferential Voting system

MDGs. Millennium Development Goals

MEF. Malaitan Eagle Force

MFAT. New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

MOFA. Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs

MP. Member of Parliament

MTDS. Solomon Island Medium Term Development Strategies

NCRA. National Coalition for Rural Advancement

NGOs. Non Governmental Organisations

OLIPPAC. Organic Law of Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates

PM. Prime Minister

PNG. Papua New Guinea

PNGDF. Papua New Guinea Defence Force

RAMSI. Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands

RCD. Rural Constituency Development Fund

RCPIFAT. Report of the Commonwealth – Pacific Islands Forum Assessment Team

RSIPF. Royal Solomon Islands Police Force

SICA. Solomon Islands Christian Association

SIFGA. Solomon Islands Full Gospel Association

TB. Tuberculosis

UN. United Nations

UNAID. United Nations Aid Agency

UNDP. United Nations Development Program

UNESCAP. United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Abstract

How do religious and political elites in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands see the modern state? This thesis addresses this question. The thesis shows that these two countries do not fit with the ideal structure of the modern state provided here. This is despite the state building efforts of Australia as the two countries largest aid donor.

It shows that there are a number of ways that the state can be seen by elites. Amongst both groups of elites can the state can be seen by some as something for the security and betterment of the population. It can be seen as a structure to oppose by some religious groups. Other religious leaders see the state as a partner for the development of both countries. Political elites can see keeping the state weak as being beneficial to finance its operations. Some leaders see the state as an item of capture.

It finds that though religious leaders have generally good intentions for the state, they are limited in their authority and influence. The thesis also finds that though political elites are much more important than religious elites in shaping the state, their role is limited by and tied to the people. It finds that the two societies are extremely fragmented and competitive with many differing interests. This leads to the state being seen as an item of competition. This competition does not create the conditions that the state as a structure depends on to reach its ideal form. It concludes that for the state to succeed in both countries there needs to be a shift in attitude towards it.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Introducing the Research

How do elites in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Solomon Islands see the state? This is what this thesis discusses. There are three answers to this question: First, the modern state is a complex idea and entity that has come to dominate the world. Second, Australia, which is by far the biggest donor in the region of the Southwest Pacific is spending hundreds of millions in aid each year to strengthen the state in both PNG and Solomon Islands. Third, despite this spending, the state in both countries is limping along.

It is from these factors that this investigation begins. In introducing this research, this chapter will first, clarify who the elite are. By 'elite', this thesis means the elected politicians at a national level and church leaders. This chapter will briefly define elites and show why this category of political actor is relevant. This will show how the political structure of both countries and history make the two groups of elite important actors. It follows that the methodology of this thesis will be discussed.

It is necessary when analysing the modern state to first describe it. Chapter Two will serve this purpose. It will specify the characteristics of the modern state and its history. The chapter will also show how the notion of its role and purpose has changed over time. Chapter Two will further look at how Australia values the state, and at what its aims are for the state in PNG and Solomon Islands. This is critical as Australia is by far the most influential Western state. First, it has a strong historical role in the case of Papua New Guinea as its former colonial ruler. Second, in the case of PNG and the Solomon Islands, it is the major provider of aid. For the period of 2011/2012 Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands received Aus\$482.3 million and Aus\$126.1 million respectively (AusAID, 2011a, 2011b). This makes

it the largest aid donor to PNG and Solomon Islands (Hughes, 2004; AusAID, 2011)¹. Third, Australia was the lead contributor to the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands in 2003 (This will herein be referred to as RAMSI). Fourth, Australia's geographical proximity to the two states makes it an important actor. These factors make the Australian perspective of the state worthy of analysis.

Chapter Three will discuss the position of the state in both territories. It will introduce a selection of measurements to determine how well the state is performing in both countries.

These measurements are security, economic performance and social indicators such as health and well-being. These measures show that, despite Australian efforts, the state is floundering in both countries.

Chapter Four and Five respectively will examine the designs that both religious and political elites have for the state. Chapter Four will cover religious elites and Chapter Five, the political elites. Both chapters will introduce a number of categories about how the state is perceived.

Chapter Six will provide findings made in this research. It will explain the role of the general populace in politics and shaping the state. It will show what this means for the state as an entity and how it applies to the theory discussed in Chapter Two. Similarly, what Australia can expect as a result of its efforts at state building. Chapter Seven will be a summarising conclusion to the research. It is from here that this thesis begins first, by discussing the elite.

¹ This is in comparison to other donors such as the European Union who in its 10th economic development fund (edf) has allocated €142.3 million to PNG and €16.5 million to Solomon Islands (Europeaid, 2012). The US currently only gives aid for targeted programs aimed at HIV/aids and climate change and equates to a total of US\$36.22 million (UNAIDS, 2011). In the Solomon Islands the US has only contributed small amounts in disaster relief aid and towards climate change adaptation (U.S. Department of State, 2011). New Zealand for the period of 2011/2012 has allocated NZ\$34.1 million to PNG and NZ\$46 million to Solomon Islands (MFAT: PNG, 2012; MFAT: Solomon Islands, 2012). Japanese statistics are difficult to dissect, however, Japan was the third largest bilateral donor to PNG in 2008 (MOFA, 2009). Japan's contribution has been less than other states in Solomon Islands (Trading Economics, 2012).

1.2 Defining the Elite

The elite theory adopted here has to be fleshed out. This entails discussing the origins of elite theory and its relevance to both PNG and Solomon Islands. T. B. Bottomore wrote that “the word ‘*élite*’ was used in the seventeenth century to describe commodities of particular excellence; and the usage was later extended to refer to superior social groups, such as crack military units or the higher ranks of the nobility” (1964, p. 7). While applying the term to social groups in the early nineteenth century, Bottomore noted it “did not become widely used in social and political writing until late in the nineteenth century in Europe, or until the 1930s in Britain and America, when it was diffused through the sociological theories of elites” (1964, p. 7). John Higley claims that, “Elite theory’s origins lie most clearly in the writings of Gaetano Mosca (1858-1941), Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923), Robert Michels (1876-1936), and Max Weber (1864-1920)” (2010, p. 161). While it is not necessary to comment in detail on the scholars, it shows that elite theory was an important concept in social thinking.

For many scholars the basis for an elite theory is self evident in the social ordering of humans. Bottomore cites Mosca who writes:

“Among the constant facts and tendencies that are to be found in all political organisms, one is so obvious that it is apparent to the most casual eye. In all societies – from societies that are very meagrely developed and have barely attained the drawings of civilization, down to the most advanced and powerful societies – two classes of people appear – a class that rules and a class that is ruled” (Mosca as cited in Bottomore, 1964, p. 9).

The existence of elites is seen as normal product of any political and social organisation. Especially this is because, as Higley notes, “the absence in any large collectivity of a robust common interest” (2010, p. 162). Pareto goes further dividing the elite “into two: (a) a

governing *elite*: (b) a non-governing *elite*” (Pareto as cited in Bottomore, 1964, p. 8). Higley defines the elite broadly writing:

“Elites may be defined as *persons who, by virtue of their strategic locations in large or otherwise pivotal organizations and movements, are able to affect political outcomes regularly and substantially*. Put differently, elites are persons with the *organized capacity* to make real political trouble without being promptly repressed” (2010, p. 163).

This then encompasses a wide array of actors within a society (Higley, 2010). This can include Church leaders, business leaders, staff in NGOs, and military leaders. For early theorists, elites threatened the chances of representative democracy (Higley, 2010). Perhaps as Higley notes, “An elite-dominated democracy is the most which is possible” (2010, p. 161). Higley summarises these early scholars to show, “According to Mosca and Michels, democracies can never be more than competitions between elites who greatly narrow voters’ choices and grossly distort their interests” (2010, p. 161). This might seem cynical, yet it is not a surprise given that modern states contain large populations with diverse interests. The avoidance of elites would entail installing an Athenian style democracy with full citizen participation, something that is not practical in most if not all states (Further, citizen was a narrowly defined term for a particular class of people in Athens, something not compatible with modern notions of democracy). This brief discussion on elite theory provides a framework in looking at the role of elites in shaping the state in the two countries. As has been stated earlier, the focus in this chapter is on the political elites at an executive level and the religious elites of both countries. The narrowness of this focus is because of very complex fragmented nature of the societies which have many differing centres of authority and power. Under a broadly descriptive term such as ‘elite’ there are many classes in both countries. Therefore, in an effort to keep this thesis clear and straightforward, the aim is to look at the two largest and influential centres of power in shaping the state; the political elites and the

religious ones.² The focus is not on the nature of being elite, but the ideas that the two elite groups being examined have about the concept of the state.

1.3 The Role of Elites in PNG and Solomon Islands

1.3.1 Political Elite

Political elites are at the core of the politics in the two Melanesian societies. They are at the core as PNG and Solomon Islands are extremely fractious in their groupings. In fact it could be seen as a paradox of the one thing held in common by both areas is that there is not much held in common. Jonathon Schwass notes that, “Melanesian people have a shared characteristic of living in and identifying with small communities” (2008, p. 4). It is this that affects their external relations with others. According to Bernard Narakobi as cited in Schwass, “In Melanesia there was never strong influence or leadership throughout a wide region. There was no dominant person or tribe. Those things were not part of history or tradition” (2008, p. 4). Schwass writes further, “Narakobi says the people of the sub-region were aware of settlements beyond their own, but had no sense of kinship or community with them” (2008, p. 4). It is this characteristic that spawns other Melanesian phenomena such as tribal warfare that were endemic (and still is in the case of PNG) to Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. It also explains the incidence of the high number of differing languages spoken in the two countries (An excess of 86 in the Solomon’s and over 800 in Papua New Guinea).

This historical social structure in many aspects explains the plight of the state in both countries, especially when recognising the way in which the state was applied to both territories³. This aside however, it also explains how the two states operate in the functioning

² One could have counted financial elites as a group to analyse yet many of those prominent in business are themselves politicians and/or church leaders.

³ This will be discussed further in the following chapters.

of their internal politics. A key feature of this is a lack of popular consensus amongst the people. When a society is so community minded and focused it becomes hard for its members to look outside of their own community. Schwass focuses on the opinion of Narakobi, who explains, “In a democratic country at least MPs have responsibility for widely defined electorate communities and this, too, sits uneasily with Melanesians, Narakobi says. The notion that decisions affecting local resources can be made by people who do not come from the immediate area is particularly unpopular” (2008, p. 4). This has on the national level led to calls for decentralization and discussions on how it would be achieved (O’Neill and Tuck, 2006).

One of the most contentious issues in Melanesian politics is land ownership and the use of resources. The Minister for Justice and Attorney General, Sir Arnold Amet, released figures of the amount of compensation paid out by the Papua New Guinean state. Of the total paid out over the last decade, K456, 401,732.43, a total of K34, 452,958.04 (8 per cent) was paid out for land disputes (Post-Courier, July 25, 2011).

Narakobi’s point about widely defined electorates is valid. If one looks at the political structure of both PNG and Solomon Islands, the reader will see how many problems arise. PNG is divided into 20 provincial electorates, and 89 open electorate seats (Gelu, 2009, p. 181). This is amongst a population of roughly 6.7 million (Dfat, 2012)⁴ spread across a rather large land mass. Much of this population is in rural areas and without much contact with the county’s capital.

The Solomon Islands have 50 electorate seats covering an area consisting of over 900 islands and a population of 540, 000 (Dfat, 2012). Given the traditional focus of the people on their immediate community, it is easy to see how this could be a problem in the wider political context. Indeed, an examination of PNG and Solomon Islands politics would provide ample

⁴ Figures vary greatly from source to source, so exact figures are hard to ascertain and are open to dispute.

evidence of this. Both countries run their governments on the British Westminster system (Corrin, 2009; Gelu, 2009). In this system as is the case in many other Western democratic governance systems, the focus is on political parties. It is supposedly the case with both PNG and Solomon Islands, however, reality somewhat differs.

Jennifer Corrin when writing about the Solomon Islands' political system notes, "this concept has not translated well into the local context, where the identity of the individual candidate is more important than the party for which they stand" (2009, p. 215-216). Tarcisius Tara Kabutaulaka explains further the effect of the electoral system. He writes that, "the first – past – the post electoral system adopted by Solomon Islands often fails to produce candidates that receive a majority of the votes cast in an election, raising the question of whether the government that is ultimately elected by parliament reflects the choice of a majority of the public" (2008, p. 97). This is a valid point as ultimately it is those who are elected to parliament who choose who constitutes the winning coalition and vote in the Prime Minister (Corrin, 2009).

Politics is much the same in Papua New Guinea. Alphonse Gelu writes, "Party organisation is weak; parties play a small role in determining election outcomes, and fail to adequately represent or articulate sectional interests" (2009, p. 184). Politics is focused on the individual and less about party policy. Political parties are seemingly a thing of convenience; a means to run for office and provide some superficial legitimacy in a system supposedly geared around political parties. This can be seen in the assessment of Gelu on the 2002 general elections and the general state of politics in PNG. Gelu notes, "The Papua New Guinea experience is that, beside these main parties, many other small parties contest the elections, often disappearing soon afterwards. The 2002 elections were contested by 43 parties, a record (thus far) in the country's political history. Of these, 'only' 22 were able to win seats" (2009, p. 184). As a

result, most governments are based on broad coalitions of elected politicians as opposed to any real parliamentary majority held by a political party.

This has in the past resulted in PNG being plagued by political instability. This was for the most part until the enactment of the Organic Law of Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates (OLIPPAC). This was legislation that was meant to put a stop to votes of no confidence and MPs crossing the floor (Fraenkel, Regan & Hegarty, 2008; Gelu, 2009).

These key components have led to some stability in the political system. One of these components is as Gelu writes, “that those members of Parliament who voted for the Prime Minister cannot vote against the Prime Minister in votes of no confidence, the passage of national budget, or votes on constitutional amendments” (2009, p. 181). Before this legislation was enacted no government had seen out a full term of office until the 2002-2007 Michael Somare government.

There however, remains loop holes within OLIPPAC which meant that Somare’s government lost a vote of no confidence in mid 2011 after Somare stood down to receive medical treatment. This was essentially because the office of Prime Minister was declared vacant in a parliamentary vote. Somare’s deputy was acting Prime Minister at the time and since he was not appointed by Parliament it provided an opportunity for disgruntled fellow National Alliance members to cross the floor in a vote of no confidence and depose both Sam Abal and Somare from power⁵.

The Solomon Islands remains an exemplar of politics where individual politicians help form the government, yet move fluidly between the roles of being part of the ruling coalition and being part of the opposition. A factor that has seen the NCRA coalition led by Danny Phillip survive what could be said to be one of the most bizarre displays of fluid politics in Solomon Islands history, only for Phillip to be toppled some months later after the actions of one of his

⁵ See Appendix One for a description of these events.

coalition members launching a swift political coup late in 2011⁶. Much like PNG, if not more pronounced, political parties in the Solomon Islands are weak with an emphasis on the individual.

This is not the sole reason for focussing on political leaders in shaping the state. A further justification for this is the very nature of the results that democratic elections produce. This derives from the high number of candidates that run for office. In the 2002 elections, the number of candidates running for office had swelled to 2875, a figure that exceeded the 1997 total by 17 per cent (Gelu, 2009). Discounting for the actual breakdown of who ran where, this works out to be 26.37 candidates for every one of the 109 seats. If one was to divide the population amongst all the candidates evenly, each candidate would receive 2330.43 votes⁷. This is of course would not be the exact outcome for a variety of reasons. It highlights though, the kinds of results that emerge.

According to the Report of the Commonwealth – Pacific Islands Forum Assessment Team (RCPIFAT), “In 1997, a majority of elected members scored less than 20 per cent of votes, declining to less than 15 per cent of votes in 2002” (2007, p. 5). Probably most telling in this is the thoughts of Anthony Siaguru as cited by Donald Denoon which follows:

“[Therefore] in the last election, in 1997, one – seventh of seats won by candidates with 8 or 9 per cent and less of the votes cast... [and] some constituencies had over 60 candidates... If choice is the criterion, we’re absolutely overwhelmed by democracy. [One winner] represents 11 per cent of the electorate. Eighty – nine per cent are not represented... [So that people have become] more and more divided” (2005, p. 173-174).

The Solomon Islands run much the same in the process and outcomes of the country’s elections. Given that collectively, if we take the findings of the RCPIFAT (an average of no

⁶ See Appendix Two for a description of these events.

⁷ This needs to be clarified that the number includes even those not eligible to vote.

more than 15 per cent of votes for a majority), then only a small number of people are being adequately represented in parliament. The fact that governments are made up of haphazard coalitions means that democracy is rather indirect and the peoples opinion in this regard may not hold much influence when politicians formulate policy. This places an important emphasis on the role of leaders. Certainly, it is a role that leaders know they have. Gelu cites Sean Dorney who explains, “To understand the peculiarities of PNG’s post-independence politics it is important to know how the politicians see their role. Parliamentarians in PNG regard themselves more as leaders of their people than as their representatives” (2009, p. 182).

This ties in well with elite theories based on the notion of diverse interests resulting in a small bunch of elite who shape the direction and policies of their respective states (Higley, 2010). It follows too, given a discussion on the nature of both countries political systems and workings that elite theories on the role of leaders is particularly relevant. Governments are not formed per se on the will of the people but on the political deal breaking of elected officials (This is not to imply that this system is any less elite driven than in ways to that of the Australian or New Zealand party systems, but it arguably does take away a lot of the citizens voice in many ways⁸). Further, the small margins by which politicians are elected into parliament heighten the status of elite control. The basis then for the focus on national leaders is due to the results of elections. Election results are an accurate indicator for just how fractured the community is. Democracy in this sense has sowed many seeds in destabilising the state⁹.

⁸ It could be argued that in a stable political system with a relatively stable party system that voters know the likely outcome of what their vote will achieve. That is they know roughly who will work together and who won’t in the formation of a government. This despite the fact that the choosing of candidates is out of their hands and undertaken by the elite. Paradoxically this makes the Melanesian system in ways less elite driven.

⁹ This will be discussed further in Chapters Five and Six.

1.3.2 Religious Elite

Religious elites are examined here because (aside from the government) the various churches are arguably the largest and most well coordinated groups that exist within these two countries. The important role that religion has played in both countries means it is prudent to examine the religious elite's role. Though not always obvious when one looks at a country assessment or news report on both countries, Christianity plays a huge role in both countries¹⁰. The word of the Bible and that of God is enshrined in both countries constitutions. This provides some legitimacy to the state despite the weakness of both, given the fact that most people in both countries profess to be Christians¹¹. This allows for some sometimes bizarre interpretations on politics as a result.

This influence is evidenced by Iutisone Salevo who writes, "In a positive sense, this sourcing of the state in divine authority gives state rule authority and legitimacy. Unfortunately, that construction – taken to the extreme – takes the state out of its' earthly moorings, away from the people, and converts it into a supra-mundane entity imposed from above" (2005, p. 157). This grounding of the state in divine authority in Solomon Islands and PNG holds quite some legitimacy and will be examined further.

Religion plays a large part in the two countries for another reason: that of history. In many cases, the first contact various differing groups within the islands had with Europeans were with missionaries. These missionaries preceded Colonial government for some time.

Especially in the case of Solomon Islands: Colonial governance came quite late and very reluctantly. This meant that various churches were established there performing many of the

¹⁰ Many news stories would tell of two countries rife with un-Christian like violence and paganism. Most external news stories encountered in the process of this research involved articles on incidences of sorcery related killings. Yet interestingly this was only a small fraction of incidences reported by local news media.

¹¹ Chapter Four provides figures for the breakdown of numbers regarding religious faith.

services that a generalised government performs, well before the colonial government was established (Kent, 1972).

Although this came at a high price (many a missionary was killed by locals or driven out in the process of establishing the Christian faith), eventually these evangelists established themselves successfully. They brought upon themselves a fair amount of legitimacy and authority within the areas of their establishment. This was in the most part because they provided the locals with something unlike other early groups of Europeans (Traders, whalers and miners were also early arrivals and were rather more exploitative than giving) (Kent, 1972; Nelson, 2006). Though traders did bring gifts and weapons, the churches brought with them healthcare and education. Even when colonial government was established, the church continued to be a major provider of these services, as initially the colonial administration was not interested in such things (Kent, 1972).

Though this feature of administration changed as the years went by and the governance structures were consolidated and moved into the hands of local people, the realities of the situation in both countries means that there the churches maintain a prominent role. There are many holes in the two states effectiveness as will be argued in following chapters. The churches are often the only ones who are trying to fill in these holes. A particular reason for the churches continuing to be so entrenched in Solomon Islands is that with the increased centralisation of the Solomon Island government there was a retraction of government from many areas. Most notably Area Councils, the former third tier of Government were as Debra McDougall notes, “Abolished in 1996/7 reforms” (2008, p. 15). This led to the situation where as McDougall argues that, “Christian churches are the only modern bureaucratic organizations in the Solomon’s today that have deep and broad roots in rural areas” (2008, p. 16). An article in the Post-Courier states that, “The churches provide 50 percent of medical services, 80 percent of nurse training, and 100 per cent of community health workers training

in the country” (Post-Courier, May 26, 2011). This on first appearances seems an awfully large number and somewhat suspect in its claim given that it came from church sources. When put into the context of official government information this proves to be mostly true (PNG Vision 2050, 2009).

This role of providing services that are usually the realm of the state is acknowledged by the states agents. In instances this is encouraged by the state. In the case of PNG it is the state that often calls upon the churches to perform a strong role within the state’s borders. The particular paper is the Vision 2050 document. It was drafted by the Papua New Guinean government as a means to highlight particular development goals. In it, under the heading of Spiritual, Cultural and Community Development, section 1.17.10.1 reads, “Increase the role of churches in the provision of basic health services from the current 46 percent;” (2009, p. 10). It goes further, outlining its goals in education with sections 1.17.10.2, “Increase the role of churches in the provision of basic education services from the current 50 percent;” (2009, p. 10). 1.17.10.3 reads, “Increase the role of churches in vocational schools from the current 30 percent;” (2009, p. 10) and section 1.17.10.4 which states, “Increase the role of churches in vocational schools from the current 41 percent;” (2009, p. 10). This is preceded in the introduction of the document by Prime Minister Michael Somare, who writes,

“I wish to pay special tribute to the churches who have played a major role in the development of our nation. Much of the burden of providing health and education to our people has been carried by these organisations. I now call upon them to again partner us the people, because their expertise and assistance will be required for us to deliver the aspirations of the Papua New Guinea Vision 2050” (2009, p. xi).

The state in both countries has accorded religious elites a high status making them a powerful force within both states and worthy of analysis.

1.4 Research Method

Ideally, when undertaking project such as this, empirical evidence of just what the two groups of elite see the shape of the state being in both countries would be ideal. This would take the form of evidence based on interviews. Circumstances however, such as time and the finances required in interviewing 109 MPs in PNG, the 50 MPs in Solomon Islands and the various religious leaders of both countries would make this unfeasible as a Masters thesis. Similarly, in undertaking such a project, words spoken may not convey the truth. Given often what has been written about politicians in both countries, it would be foolish to take words spoken at face value. And this in itself would become an exercise in qualitative research as opposed to being truly empirical.

With these limitations in mind, the use of qualitative analysis for this undertaking has been chosen. Nicholas Walliman explains that, “This type of research is based on data expressed mostly in the form of words – descriptions, accounts, opinions, feelings etc. – rather than on numbers. This type of data is common whenever people are the focus of the study, particularly in social groups or as individuals” (2010, p. 130). This type of research also provides for flexibility when undertaking data collection on subjects where hard quantitative evidence such as numbers may not exist (Saldana, 2011, Walliman, 2010). Walliman notes, “Although it has been the aim of many researchers to make qualitative analysis as systematic and as ‘scientific’ as possible, there is still an element of ‘art’ in dealing with qualitative data” (2010, p. 131). He follows, “in order to convince others of your conclusions, there must be a good argument to support them” (2010, p. 131).

Flexibility is important in regards to this thesis when dealing with a subject such as the modern state. That is the state being on some levels an ethereal thing; it is hard to provide just what constitutes as ‘scientific’ evidence. At best we can provide evidence that the state is in

disarray normatively speaking, and it is normatively that we have to speak of elite designs on the shape of the state.

The approaches by which I will gather evidence on intentions will be broad based and use aspects of interrogative insertion. Walliman explains that, “This method consists of devising and inserting implied questions into a text for which the text provides the answers. In this way, you can uncover the logic (or lack of it) of the discourse and the direction and emphasis of the argument as made by the author” (2010, p. 139). With this method the question being asked is, what do elites see the state as being? It will involve the analysis of scholarly articles on the politics (Both secular and religious) of both countries. Additionally, the analysis of the policies of both groups will be undertaken using newspaper articles. Utilising the basic coding system of picking up on intentions regarding the state, this will result in a broad yet comprehensive assessment of just what elites want the state to be. Of course limitations exist in doing this. And when undertaking such analysis one needs to be careful in reading too much into a situation or article. Issues regarding the legitimacy of such sources can also arise. In the case of both countries, as will be discussed further, leaders often say one thing yet do the other – following on the old adage of ‘actions speak louder than words’. This is why a large range of sources is used as a means of ‘grounding’ data. With careful consideration though, and such methods, a scholarly assessment can be undertaken.

1.5 Time Period of Research

It should be noted that the time period of assessment being undertaken is focused (not exclusively in the case of beginnings as much events in the time period are influenced by that of beforehand.) between 2000 and the start of January 2012¹². The reason why this is so, is to

¹² There is some flexibility in regards to the latter date. These sources are from the first two weeks of January and have only been used as they provide quite important evidence that is related to earlier events discussed. Further, though the research covers the early 2000s, much of the research is focused around the later stages of the time period.

protect this work from the continual fluidity of Melanesian politics. The Solomon Islands alone in the last two years has seen three changes of power. PNG is experiencing possibly its most serious political crisis in its history. By placing this time limit, a stable base can be used to conduct an adequate analysis.

This time period was also chosen as it was around the period that Solomon Islands began its serious decline towards civil war. More so, the time in which Australia had begun a serious re-engagement with both countries in building the functions and capacities of both states (ASPI, 2003; Dinnen, 2004; McDougall, 2006; Patience, 2005; Watson, 2005).

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the focus of the research of this thesis. It outlined what the thesis was going to look at and briefly outlined what each chapter would cover. This chapter outlined that the focus was to be on religious and political elites. It showed who elites are by formulating a simple elite theory based around the writings of T.B. Bottomore. It further, showed the importance of elites in theory. The chapter then placed elites in the context of PNG and Solomon Islands showing why they were relevant. This is because of the role both groups have within the two societies and in the case of political elites; the way the electoral system works means that they are not particularly representative of the people.

Following this, an explanation of methodology has been discussed for pursuing this research. A broadly qualitative approach is being undertaken using an analysis of a wide range of sources to accurately paint a picture of elite designs on the state. Lastly the parameters of a time period have been explained as a means to protect this research from the fluidity of Melanesian politics and also because that particular time period saw extensive efforts by Australia to build the capacity of both states. It is from this point that it is necessary to provide a description of the modern state.

2.0 The Modern State

2.1 Introduction

The current period of human existence is dominated by the modern state. It is an institution that has shaped the world as we know it today. For many of us it is the means of our identity as human beings, and the provider of certain entitlements. To a large extent the modern state has set the parameters in how we interact with others from different lands: To be more exact it has led to the creation of international relations.

This however, has not always been so. As Christopher Pierson notes:

“The state is not an eternal and unchanging element in human affairs. For the most of its history, humanity got by (whether more happily or not) without a state. For all its universality in our own times, the state is a contingent (and comparatively recent) historical development” (1996, p. 35).

Indeed, Michael Mann (1986) as cited in Pierson “argues that something less than one per cent of humanity’s history has been lived out under even the most primitive of state forms” (1996, p. 39). Pierson goes further, citing Charles Tilly, who “dates the earliest ‘traditional states at around 6000 – 8000 BC. The earliest modern states emerged not much more than 300 years ago” (1996, p. 39). It may be then that states as we know them are modern phenomena; therefore, there is a need to define just what the modern state is.

This chapter seeks first to provide a framework for what constitutes as the modern state and shows its evolution towards the entity we are familiar with today. It shows how the state has become the widely implemented structure that it is. This is problematic in that the state is not reflecting the characteristics defined here in many countries throughout the world. For the purpose of this thesis, this chapter then examines the efforts of Australia in state building in PNG and Solomon Islands.

2.2 Defining the Modern State

Looking at the current literature reveals conflicting and differing views on the nature of the modern state. The modern state though, is commonly said to have some defining features. These are often said to consist of well defined territorial boundaries over which a particular state has clear jurisdictional authority. This follows the arguments of Max Weber. Weber writes, “Ultimately, one can define the modern state only in terms of the specific means peculiar to it, as to every political situation, namely, the use of physical force” (as cited in Pierson 1996, p. 7). He further characterises it noting:

{The modern state} possesses an administrative and legal order subject to change by legislation, to which the organised activities of the administrative staff, which are also controlled by regulations, are orientated. This system of orders claims binding authority, not only over members of the state, the citizens, most of whom have obtained membership by birth, but also to a very large extent over all action taking place in the area of its jurisdiction. It is thus a compulsory organisation with a territorial basis. Furthermore, today, the use of force is regarded as legitimate only so far as it is either permitted by the state or prescribed by it...The claim of the modern state to monopolise the use of force is as essential to it as its character of compulsory jurisdiction and continuous operation”(as cited in Pierson, 1996, p. 7-8).

This is known as a scientific definition of the state. The focus is upon power and the need of such an agent. Societies are made up of differing peoples between whom there is much variance, and, between whom disputes can arise. Furthermore, rogue elements within society exist that often commit acts that many are averse to. Acts such as violence become a threat to the society. These factors present a need for a power structure to exist to protect people from themselves and others. If we are to look back through human history we can see that even before the existence of the modern state there has always been a need for this authority and rules. It has though, been provided in some form or another throughout history; be it clan

groups, kingdoms or empires, etc. Hence this characteristic is hardly unique. It may be more so that the unique characteristic of the modern state following this argument is the scale of which this is achieved. Some states, such as China and India, have populations of over one billion, over which they have relative authority and jurisdiction.

For authority and control to exist, there must be clear and strong structures for it to be maintained. In this purpose Weber's argument may be seen as useful. Charles Tilly characterises a Weberian state as "a distinct organisation that controls the principal concentrated means of coercion within a well – defined territory, and in some respects exercises priority over all other organisations operating within the same territory" (1990, p. 130-131). This differs from Weber's account with less emphasis put upon the authority of the state, allowing for the fact that there is often competition within a state for the use of power. The limitation to scientific accounts of the state in a modern context is it does not allow for states that have no real control over their territory. This is despite many of these states still being recognised internationally as states. Additionally, it does not sufficiently characterise the difference between the modern structure and organisation that we know today from those structures of the last 6000 years (Tilly, 1990; Pierson, 1996). Nor do these accounts allow for the perplexing meta-physical element of the state in that it seemingly exists regardless of change of government or no government at all as for example, Somalia to a practical extent. For the purposes of this thesis I turn to Christopher Morris who provides a more detailed description of the characteristics of the modern state in its forms and structures.

In his book, "Essays on the Modern State", Christopher Morris provides five broad outlines for what constitutes the modern state (1998). He lists them as:

1. Continuity in time and space. The institutions of the state endure over time, surviving changes in leadership, and governing a definite and distinct territory.
2. Transcendence. The state constitutes a unitary public order distinct from and superior to, both ruled and rulers, one capable of agency.

3. Political organisation. The institutions through which the state acts (e.g. the government, the judiciary, the bureaucracy, the police) are differentiated from other political organisations and associations, are formerly coordinated one with another and are relatively coordinated one with another and are relatively centralised. Relations of authority are hierarchical. Rule is direct and territorial; it is relatively persuasive and penetrates society legally and administratively.
4. Authority. The state is sovereign, that is, the ultimate source of political authority in its territory. Its jurisdiction extends directly to all residents of that territory. In its relations to other public orders, the state is autonomous.
5. Allegiance. The state expects and receives the loyalty of its members and of the permanent inhabitants of its territory, a loyalty that assumes precedence over that formerly owed to family, clan commune, lord, bishop, pope, or emperor. Members of a state are the primary subjects of its laws and have a general obligation to obey by virtue of their membership (1998, p. 288).

This definition will be preferred over Tilly's as it provides a more varied framework to better typify the modern state and the peculiarities of its organisation. It also allows for the purpose of this study to provide an account of what Australia sees the state as being in its efforts in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands.

There are now 193 UN recognised states (UN, 2011)¹³, of these there are various differing forms of political governance, i.e. democracies, theocracies, etc. They however, all follow

¹³ To be a state does not mean being internationally recognised by the UN. This is clear in Article 2.6 of the UN Charter which reads, "The Organization shall ensure that states which are not Members of the United Nations act in accordance with these Principles so far as may be necessary for the maintenance of international peace and security" (1945, p. 1). And in Article 4.1 which states, "Membership in the United Nations is open to all other peace-loving states which accept the obligations contained in the present Charter and, in the judgment of the Organization, are able and willing to carry out these obligations" (1945, p. 2).

along the framework provided by Morris in some way. They all have in some form governance structures, judicial structures, bureaucracies, armies, police forces and public services to varying degrees. This uniformity can be argued to stem from the fact that the modern state originated in Europe and gradually came to be the most dominant form of political organisation. Understanding this history also gives us a better idea of what the state is and has become.

2.3 The Development of the Modern State

To understand better what the modern state is and how it is different to past structures, an understanding of its development is necessary. Morris writes that the modern state “is a fairly recent development, at least if one thinks of the four to six centuries of modernity as a relatively short time” (1998, p. 3). He notes further that “They emerge in Europe in early modern times and take their now familiar form in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries” (1998, p. 17). This however, was a process that had begun much earlier in history.

The state as we know it just a result of the various processes of the past 1000 years if we are to agree with Charles Tilly. In his book, “Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990 – 1990”, Tilly charts the history of Europe and the consolidation of the ‘nation state’¹⁴ as the dominant political organisation in the world. Tilly argues that the process of state formation was largely one based around warfare and exchange of capital (Tilly, 1990). Europe before the period of AD 990 was extremely fragmented and had no structure resembling that of the modern state. As time then went on beyond this point, so the political organisation of Europe began to change. A mixture of empires, kingdoms and city states all emerged as centres of power. They were far though, from being the centralised bodies of power that we know of

¹⁴ Tilly explains, “The term national state, regrettably, does not mean *nation* – state, a state whose people share a strong linguistic, religious, and symbolic identity” (1990, p. 2). Instead he characterises it as “states governing multiple contiguous regions and their cities by means of centralised, differentiated, and autonomous structures” (1990, p. 2). In regards to this it can be argued that by Tilly’s definition the nation state he talks of is somewhat in most respects compatible with the term modern state that Morris talks of.

today. Medieval European societies were complex. Identities were many and very rarely unified. They were based often on class or the likes, such as peasantry or nobility, etc, not on that of territorial identity of which the modern state and citizenship today is based on.

Religion played a part in being another source of authority that could rival others in terms of winning allegiances (Morris, 1998; Spruyt, 1994; Strayer, 1982; Tilly, 1990).

Kings and rulers of territories during this period relied heavily on their nobility to help finance and support the rulers' agenda; usually being warfare. This was through the means of money or providing mercenaries. This severely limited the amount of actual power that these rulers had over their territory. For a ruler to risk offending the nobility in many instances was to risk isolating oneself and threatening their hold on power and in some instances their life. Tilly highlights the example of Poland and Hungary in that though they were both large kingdoms by European standards at the time they were constantly hampered by their powerful nobility. On what Tilly terms 'coercion – intensive' modes of governance (Those based on securing their power and control through coercive means¹⁵) he writes:

“At the very extreme of the mode, however, armed landlords wielded so much power that no one of them could establish durable control over the rest; for several centuries, the Polish and Hungarian nobilities actually elected their own kings, and struck them down when they strove too hard for supreme power” (1990, p. 30).

He adds further, “the Polish state lived in a coercion – rich, capital – poor environment, and actually faced a decline in the concentrations of both as great nobles seized their shares of coercion and capital” (1990, p. 59).

This is just one example of how contested the process of state formation was. This lack of consolidated power certainly does not resemble the state that we think of today; one that is

¹⁵ Coercion – intensive states often lacked the capital to fund warfare independently therefore, relied heavily on their nobility for the supply of funds and men to fight their battles. See Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD990-1990* (1990, p. 137-143) for an in-depth description.

relatively all pervading throughout its society, be it benign or otherwise. This process was to begin further along in the late fifteenth century and sixteenth century when absolutism became an evolving feature of the period. It was this period that many put the emergence of the modern state at (Maravall, 1961; Tilly, 1990; Morris, 1998). José Antonio Maravall argues that in regard to the period of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, “Nowhere was the Modern State of the pure type; but in Spain, France and England the political form adopted by the monarchy had features in common with those of art, philosophy, science and economy of the new age which we call modern” (1961, p. 792). In this period, kings and other ruling elite increasingly concentrated and secured their hold on power, taking away in the process much of the power that rival sources such as the church or nobility had. An aspect of this was to ensure security for the ruler and their Kingdom or territory.

At later stages of this period in European history, Europe was in the grips of the Thirty Year war which would lead to the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. This would result in the idea, that the sovereign has sole control over their territory. This would lead to the popular notion of state sovereignty, a key concept in any discourse on the state. Though a key landmark in consolidating power, it was also a key point here in defining sovereignty as equating to security.

This too was at a time when influential philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes and Niccolo Machiavelli were advocating strong forms of Governance. Hobbes especially was influential with his work *Leviathan* in which he advocated for there to be a sovereign ruler of the territory. The said sovereign, preferentially a monarch in Hobbes’s view (though able to be an assembly of people or group of elite aristocracy) would have complete control over the territory and all those within submitting themselves to the sovereigns’ authority (MacDonald Ross, 2009). The sovereign would set the parameters by which laws would be in place and what religion should be allowed. This would prevent what Hobbes saw stemming out of

human nature, “of war of everyone against everyone” (1958, p. 110). Hobbes was influenced by the affairs of the English Civil War and believed that to prevent such things from occurring an absolute sovereign was a necessity (MacDonald Ross, 2009).

The idea of the sovereign being just one leader was common, with the state being their possession. George MacDonald Ross writes that, “Louis XIV of France is notorious for having (allegedly) said ‘L’état c’est moi’, or ‘The state is me’” (2009, p. 115). That would change as time went on, notably the French revolution and the progression of democracy within Britain would change this. As Morris writes, “Some moderns attribute the notion of sovereignty not to be the state but to “the people” (Rousseau), “La nation” (the French Déclaration des droits de l’homme et du citoyen of 1789), or the “King – in – Parliament” (the British tradition)” (1998, p. 40). Yet, though this may be the case that the state is the realm of the people, in most instances the state is seen as to be “a unitary public order distinct from and superior to, both ruled and rulers, one capable of agency” (Morris, 1998, p. 288).

The notion’s spread was indicative of the countries who were adopting it. At this period the modern state was not guaranteed. Tilly argues that, “Three different types of state have all proliferated in various parts of Europe during major segments of the period since 990: tribute taking – empires; systems of fragmented sovereignty such as city – states and urban federations, and national states” (1990, p. 21). He further adds, “The long survival and coexistence of all three types tell against any notion of European state formation as a single, unilinear process, or of the national state – which did, indeed, eventually prevail – as an inherently superior form of government” (1990, p. 21). The adoption of the modern state was according to Tilly because, “They won out in Europe because the most powerful states – France and Spain before all others – adopted forms of warfare that temporarily crushed their neighbours, and whose support generated as by – products centralisation, differentiation, and autonomy of the state apparatus” (1990, p. 183).

The fact that the state won out over other systems such as empires and city states in Europe would mean that it would win out in the rest of the world. This was logical as the larger European powers (Britain, France, Spain, Germany and the oddity in this group, Portugal¹⁶) effectively colonised much of the world. Therefore, when the process of decolonisation began, there was no alternative available in a world dominated by modern states. By this point the success of the modern state in the West would fill its architects with confidence in its suitability for the newly decolonised world. Indeed, Terry Pickett writes, “With characteristic arrogance, the colonial powers withdrew from their colonies without giving adequate attention to the reality of tribe, regional distinctions, resources, or traditions of the indigenous people they abandoned” (1996, p. 21). This highlights the problems the state would face in these territories; it shows the state in this sense was a rational project without addressing the complexities of the state formation process and its history of development in Europe as has been discussed.

2.4 A Shift of Focus

The role of the state and the way that it interacts with its people has been a continual process of negotiation between the state and citizenry. This process has changed from the public being mere subjects of its control to active participants in determining its machinery and shaping its role (i.e. participation in government and economic performance). Part of this was the states need to secure a source of revenue to finance standing armies. This meant the implementation of taxes and tariffs. Tilly (1990) argues that it was especially important for the state to negotiate with the capitalist class. As a side effect of this, political ideology was to help influence the shape the state. In particular, Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver (1998) attribute this to the rise of liberalism as an ideological thought. They argue that:

¹⁶ It should be noted that Germany was itself as a state much more recent in its advent and its colonies were acquired later on towards the end of the 19th century. Portugal remains an oddity in that despite being a rather important power in the 15th and early 16th centuries, after this period it was rather weak as a power.

“classical liberalism was a project for “desecuritisation “– understood mainly as reducing the number of issues over which force could be legitimately used. Liberals wanted to restrict the rhetorics of threat and survival to the military sector and the state, in order to open up space for a civil society in which individuals did not deal with each other in a security mode” (1998, p. 1).

This freedom paradoxically meant greater security for the individual from the sometimes arbitrary actions of the state. States real concerns nevertheless, lay in protecting themselves and their population from other states. This resulted in the creation of the League of Nations in a bid to provide a framework to prevent states from going to war. Its failure and the events of World War Two would result in the United Nations. At the heart of the United Nations, the interests of states would be paramount (UN Charter, 1945). The basis of this though, would also be on a principle and shared respect for human rights as seen in Article 55 of the UN Charter (UN Charter, 1945). This shift in focus has created the idea, particularly amongst Western states, that a strong state is a healthy and prosperous state, whose machinery is effective, runs smoothly and provides for its population.

As a result there has been a variety of indicators of state development adopted by the United Nations and are recognised by most Western states as accurate measures of states performance. This includes indicators such as GDP, GNP, life expectancy, growth rates, literacy rates, and respect for human rights, etc. Essentially they can be broken into two broad generalisations, economic indicators and societal indicators.

More so, from a Western view, a state is seen to be more legitimate and secure if its government is elected democratically. That its structures, such as bureaucracy, police force and other public services are transparent and free of corruption. These values are reflected in the efforts of Western states in their state building activities around the world and their aid programmes to poorer states. This leads us to examine Australia’s role in Solomon Islands and PNG.

2.5 Australia's Role in PNG and Solomon Islands

As mentioned at the outset of this thesis, Australia is the most influential Western state within the two countries. Australian actions and policies in the region have been a result of history and various political factors both domestically and internationally. A 2003 Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) report titled "Our Failing neighbour: Australia and the future of Solomon Islands" briefly outlines the traditional Australian policy towards the Southwest Pacific. It writes:

"This policy paradigm has given top priority to ensuring that our new neighbours take and retain responsibility themselves for solving their own problems. We have worked hard to avoid becoming too closely involved in their internal affairs, and have bent over backwards to avoid being seen as infringing upon their sovereignty" (2003, p. 8).

In this instance, it can be seen that Australia focused on letting PNG and Solomon Islands decide their own futures following on the widespread notion of a state maintaining its sovereignty. This was also to avoid being cast as having imperial ambitions in the region (ASPI, 2003; Dinnen, 2004; Patience, 2005).

Events however, would change during this period that would lead to Australia having a much more interventionist role within both PNG and Solomon Islands. There was the Solomon's crisis; a low intensity conflict that simmered away between 1998 and 2003 (Watson, 2005). Similarly, the state of Papua New Guinea was of increasing concern. This came about in the wider context of Australia's security fears within the region following the events of September 11, the Bali bombings and the Jakarta embassy bombing (Dinnen, 2004; McDougall, 2005; Patience, 2005). This would lead to the RAMSI mission on 24 July 2003 (Dinnen, 2004; Watson, 2005) and the ECP agreement between Australia and PNG and the future "Partnership for Development between the Government of Australia and the Government of Papua New Guinea" (AusAID, 2012; Dinnen, 2004; Patience, 2005). This was

in response to a number of fears about what could transpire in the region if these countries were left to decay. What was to come out and be used in the dialogue was the idea of ‘Failed States’ or ‘Failing States’ within the region and to what extent this threatened Australia and its strategic interests. These fears, either rational or irrational¹⁷ involved the threat of terrorist cells using the region as a base, trans-national crime becoming more widely rooted, the spread of HIV/Aids, boat people, drug and weapons smuggling and a threat of a wider and more dire security crisis on its door step (ASPI, 2003; McDougall, 2005; Patience, 2005). As a result Australia sought to assist these two states to prevent these fears from coming true. Though done out of self-interest in Australia’s engagement (Dinnen, 2004; Patience, 2005), the reasoning behind it fits in well with the framework of a modern state in that the well being of and productiveness of the state is tied to that of its people. If Australia can secure the state in both PNG and Solomon Islands it can strengthen its own state security along the north-eastern boundary that is dubiously called by some ‘The arc of instability’ (Ayson, 2007).

2.6 Australia’s designs for the state in PNG

Australia’s design for the state in PNG can be easily seen at the outset of independence in 1975. This new state was to be designed on a structure similar to Australia. That was a Westminster style parliamentary system, with a Prime Minister as Head of Government, the Queen as Head of State, and a Governor General to serve as her representative. Governments were to be elected democratically and the day to day running of the country was to be carried out by a modern bureaucracy that operated separately and independently of the government. There were a few adjustments to accommodate for the local culture and situations that existed within PNG, such as traditional customary law, etc. As a structure though it would fit closely

¹⁷ John Fraenkel opines in “Myths of Pacific Terrorism” that, “Trying to reconfigure real domestic security threats in the region so that these appear to conform to a supranational ‘war on terror’ agenda perpetuates the prevailing ignorance about Pacific conflict” (2005, p. 122). That is terrorist cells and activities were unlikely within the region.

with ideas of what shape the modern state should take and be. As John Ballard cited by Allan Patience writes, “The state itself was a colonial concept, imposed upon pre-colonial societies with disregard for their own structures and boundaries” (Patience, 2005, p. 2). Australia carried out this implementation of the state in a hurried manner. This was partly because as Patience notes “Gough Whitlam first sought to appease African states that were critical in the UN of what they saw as Australia’s desultory colonial record in PNG. The irony is that African post-colonial hubris and naivety about PNG combined to push for a problematic independence” (2005, p. 4).

Though the decolonisation process was rapid, PNG managed to achieve independence without the bloodshed that occurred elsewhere. Yet, the situation of the state which will be discussed in Chapter Three has meant that Australia has to an extent had to re-engage with and attempt to help shape the state in PNG. To this extent, the best means to determine this and what shape Australia sees the state being is to look at Australia’s aid policy towards PNG. This re-engagement took the form of the Enhanced Cooperation Program between Australia and PNG. This was agreed upon in December 2003. It laid out six target areas that Australia would concentrate its assistance on. These areas were, law and order, justice, economic management, public sector reform, border control and transport security and safety (Parliament of Australia Joint Standing Committee on Treaties, 2005). It was signed on 30 June 2004 and enabled in Papua New Guinea’s parliament on 27 July (Parliament of Australia Joint Standing Committee on Treaties, 2005). This was to be implemented by the placement of Australian police and experts in the various places that were highlighted as areas for targeted development. The aim at least was to help set PNG back on a stable path of development and provide successful service delivery to its population.

Most recently was the “Partnership for Development between the Government of Australia and the Government of Papua New Guinea” signed on 20 August 2008 in Niue (Partnership

for Development between the Government of Australia and the Government of Papua New Guinea, 2008). This outlines the partnership between the two countries and also the aims of the partnership. In this most current partnership, there are five priority areas for the program: Improved transport infrastructure; faster progress towards universal basic education; improving health outcomes; strengthening the public service and improving statistical data (Partnership for Development between the Government of Australia and the Government of Papua New Guinea, 2008). The performance of which would be tied to various development and measurement indicators such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other internationally recognised development indicators (Partnership for Development between the Government of Australia and the Government of Papua New Guinea, 2008).

In the declaration signed by both countries it outlines the aims and the commitments of each party in the partnership. This is also a good means of assessing just what the aims of the Australian government are in shaping the state with its development assistance. The overriding objective is:

“to work together in close cooperation to meet our common challenges and to achieve improved development outcomes and sustainable improvements in the quality of life of all Papua New Guineans. Specifically, this partnership seeks more rapid progress towards poverty reduction and the other Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015”

(Partnership for Development between the Government of Australia and the Government of Papua New Guinea, 2008, p. 1).

This fits well with the model of the modern state as being a means for ensuring human well being and development. Also of what shape the Australians see the state as being. Most telling however is not the actual Australian statement of intent; but that of the PNG government’s statement of commitment to the Australian Government. Part of this commitment is, “improved governance, including the rule of law, sound macroeconomic policy and management of public resources, including strengthened public sector capacity and public

financial management;” (Partnership for Development between the Government of Australia and the Government of Papua New Guinea, 2008, p. 2). As been discussed above, Australia has been keen in the past to not appear as neo-imperialist, nonetheless, it wants value for its money from its assistance program and Papua New Guinea recognises this. For this assistance to continue, Papua New Guinea needs to show that it knows what it has to do to achieve.

2.7 Australia’s design for the state in Solomon Islands

Though Britain was Solomon Islands colonial master for some time, they never really took an active interest in the running or maintenance of the colony (Kent, 1972). Likewise, when it came to the granting of independence in 1978, it was somewhat hastily thrust upon them. It is widely cited that at this time the country only contained a handful of university graduates. This meant that for some time the state faltered along. Australia during this period was a large aid donor to Solomon Islands, and as has been discussed, this was largely a ‘hands off’ approach (ASPI, 2003). Full Australian engagement with shaping the Solomon Islands state did not occur until the deployment of the RAMSI force on 24 July 2003 (McDougall, 2006; Watson, 2005). At this point the Solomon’s had endured a long running low-intensity civil conflict, mainly between ethnic groups from Guadalcanal and Malaita (Watson, 2005). The mechanisms of the state were in a ramshackle state. Law and order had broken down and the police basically had become an extension of the Malaitan Eagle Force (MEF), one of the militias involved in the conflict. The country was nearly bankrupt with Sinclair Dinnen noting that “Ministers and Treasury officials were intimidated routinely, often at gunpoint” (2004, p. 4). This was blatant extortion, often under the guise of compensation. The situation got to be so bad that at one point as Greg Watson writes, “Six of the Solomons’ nine provinces threatened to secede” (2005, p. 404).

It was all this that would lead to the deployment of RAMSI. RAMSI’s main objectives were to firstly restore security to the country by disarming militants, arresting corrupt officers,

politicians and those responsible for various crimes during the unrest. Re-establish the country's judiciary and legal system and to re-invigorate the country's economy and government functioning. Though a regional mission consisting of various Pacific Island states and New Zealand, the majority of the mission was financed and staffed by Australia.

RAMSI's effect was quite rapid and for the better; law and order was quickly established, militants and others who were wanted were rounded up quickly and there was a rather quick improvement in government and economic performance.

RAMSI's involvement in Solomon Islands though, was not a short term measure. Initially a mission that had a large military and police contingent as well as technical experts, the mission still continues today though largely now as a technical contingent of government experts, with a smaller police contingent and a vastly smaller military contingent. The focus of RAMSI however, remains the core tenets of "helping the Solomon Islands to lay the foundations for long-term stability, security and prosperity – through support for improved law, justice and security; for more effective, accountable and democratic government; for stronger, broad-based economic growth; and for enhanced service delivery" (RAMSI, 2011).

Solomon Islands like PNG have entered into an agreement with the Australian Government for a development plan (AusAID, 2011). This plan: "The Solomon Islands – Australia Partnership for Development" outlines four priority areas. These are improving service delivery, improve economic livelihoods, improve economic infrastructure, and address economic and fiscal challenges (AusAID, 2011). It is articulated to follow closely with the Solomon Island's Medium Term Development Strategy 2008-2010 (MTDS) and UN Millennium Development Goals (AusAID, 2011).

Though somewhat different to the case of PNG, with the Solomon's being a direct intervention. The aim is the same: securing a stronger state. That is creating a state that can look after its people and perform well economically. More specifically to fit with a model of

the modern state having features of law and order so that it can police its territory and borders; a functioning legislature; judiciary; education; health care system and a formal economy.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an account of the modern state and why it is somewhat difficult to accurately ascertain just what it is. The framework provided by Morris allows a general picture of what the state is without being too narrow like some scientific accounts such as Weber's. It is not too broad though, to be able to include all other forms of organisation that humans have lived under (another limitation of Weber's account) and shows some of the distinct features that the state has. It is also flexible enough to explain the path the state has taken over the relatively short time that it has existed as a form of political organisation.

This chapter has also highlighted the origins of the state and its development in history. Showing how it has changed from being the possession of the absolute monarch in need of protection from other monarchs to being the body within which, the parameters of human development should flourish in peace.

With this in mind it has been demonstrated how the state should function from the view of Western states. As a sequel it has shown Australia's particular interest in the states of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands has led to a process of interaction in a bid to strengthen these two states along the lines of that envisioned by the West. Australia's focus is on shoring up the two states ability to control their territories through effective policing and border control. A further focus is on enabling these states to be able to provide for their populations; through alleviating poverty, providing basic health care and education. Australia also aims to ensure the states are viable economically and maintain an efficient functioning of state machinery. Last, Australia values that state agents maintain legitimacy through transparent and efficient functioning.

The next chapter then outlines the realities of these two states. Discussing what conditions exist within them and using the performance indicators mentioned above to assess just how effective they are as states. It suggests that despite the large amounts of money being spent by Australia on development, these two states are still not meeting the ideal set out above.

3.0 The State in PNG and Solomon Islands

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter looked at defining the modern state as a structure and its origins in history. It highlighted its evolution and showed the spread of the phenomena. It furthermore, showed why it was relevant to the two countries (PNG and Solomon Islands) involved in this study. The reason being that they had the structures placed upon them as a result of decolonisation. It also showed the important role that Australia has with regards to these two states and its designs for the state in both countries.

This chapter follows on from this, outlining the problem that both states face. Its primary thesis is that the state has a very weak presence within both countries. The state is weak as it does not penetrate very far beyond main centres of population. The chapter highlights the fractured social nature of the two Melanesian countries before discussing a set of indicators that are used to measure the performance and success of the state. These indicators are quite generalised ones adopted by organisations like the UN, World Bank, and AusAID. These indicators are then applied respectively to the two countries and a general conclusion is reached about the two states possessing state structures that are not particularly strong. This then sets the aims for the research in the following chapters.

3.2 The Presence of the State

It can be argued that unlike many modern states in the West and elsewhere, the jurisdiction of the state in PNG and Solomon Islands does not extend far. This weakens the states despite the large amount of funding they receive from Australia. Hank Nelson cites the case of Tabara village on the Gira River, Papua New Guinea:

“While Tabara was enclosed within the geographic area of the nation of Papua New Guinea, the state of Papua New Guinea had withdrawn from Tabara. Nearly all decisions

about law and order, communal fencing of gardens against pigs, and other group activities that might involve more than one family were made within the village. If people wished to use the services of the state they had to leave the village. That was an option” (2006, p. 2).

It is highlighted by the recent case of a young boy who received an arrow to the chest in a remote part of PNG. As the Post-Courier reports, “the rescue party took four days to walk to the nearest aid post with no Government services in the vicinity” (Post-Courier, August 19, 2011). With this in mind it can be said that the state in both countries is optional. That is, it is not the all pervading entity that we envision. The people can either make a conscious effort to engage with it when they like or choose not to.

Despite the presence of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), the state remains, according to academics such as Hegarty *et al*, “a weak presence in the everyday lives of most Solomon Islanders, who continue to live in villages, surviving through a combination of traditional agriculture, fishing and cash-cropping” (2004, p. 5). The state is in many senses incomplete, an only partially centralised force of control and reach (Hegarty *et al*, 2004). In PNG and Solomon Islands this can be attributed to the traditional social fabric in the countryside where allegiances are mainly towards family and wantok (Douglas, 2000; Hegarty *et al*, 2004; Narakobi, 1983). This means that in the first place, the state was not needed or had little relevance.

Even before independence the sense of the state being all pervasive was not there. It was represented only by Colonial policemen. These officers would carry out patrols, perhaps visiting a particular village every few months or even once a year. This was understandable given the terrain of the territory and its vast expanse coupled with the limited resources that colonial governments had at their disposal (Kent, 1972; Nelson, 2006).

If the colonial governments lacked control over their territories, the post-independence governments lost more territorial control when the realities of being self sustaining states

became obvious. Nelson (2006) cites the findings of Transparency International in the Post-Courier, February 6, 2006 which read.

“The extent to which the state services – in effect the state – has withdrawn is apparent in a statement by Transparency International on health services in Papua New Guinea. In February 2006 it said that only about half of the medical aid posts operating thirty years ago were then working, and where it had been government policy to ensure no one walked more than four hours to an aid post, some people were walking four days to reach medical help”(2006, p. 3).

Such a decline was typical in both countries and led to a concerted effort by Australia to improve the situation. It also, however, caused two effects that could be said to weaken the state in both societies. The decline reinforced the traditional structures of family and kinship and furthermore; it strengthened the role of the church in both countries.

3.3 Pluralistic Societies

As has been emphasised above, the state in both PNG and Solomon Islands never had a strong foothold. This has resulted in the state being seen as optional for many of its inhabitants. This has, in turn, given influence to rival groups within the state for the peoples’ loyalties. Namely, these are traditional power structures and the various church groups that exist within the two countries. There exists a sort of pluralistic society that existed previously in Europe before the modern state as we know consolidated its power, and made other rivals to it subservient.

These rivals have in the eyes of the inhabitants as much legitimacy (if not more in instances¹⁸) than the state in some cases. Into A. Goudsmit argues, “As the foundation of civil society in Papua New Guinea, customary social groups structure the life of most Papua New Guineans” (2008, p. 2). Bronwen Douglas writes “Christianity has long offered Melanesians membership

¹⁸ Often the settling of grievances in both countries is used by traditional means as opposed to using the state (Fraenkel, 2004; Goldman, 2003). It will be discussed further on in this thesis, that the state is often seen as a source of compensation in these incidences.

in a global moral community which transcends the doubtful legitimacy accorded colonial and national states” (2000, p. 6). In many instances, the various churches were, and are often the major providers of formal education to inhabitants of both countries making them pre-eminent actors that are deeply involved in both PNG and Solomon Islands (Douglas, 2000; Kent, 1972; McDougall, 2008). This will be discussed further in Chapter Four.

It is a widely cited fact that Papua New Guinea has over 800 different spoken languages spoken and the Solomon Islands around 86 spoken languages. This linguistic diversity is used to highlight the multiplicity of cultures and ethnic identities that make unity a difficult concept. Defining clear distinctions between groups and interests is not straight forward. Nor do they always explain sources of tension and fissures within PNG and Solomon Islands.

Nelson highlights this well. He writes:

“In Enga Province where the village courts record over 1,500 deaths in tribal fighting in the five years 2000-2006, many of the people fighting each other speak the same language and many wives come from enemy groups. If Engans fight their brothers-in-law, fragmentation and conflict are not a reflection of ethnic diversity. It is also apparent that in national elections the multiplicity of candidates has little to do with ‘ethnicity’. It cannot account for an average of around twenty-five candidates in each national electorate” (2009, p. 15-16).

The wantok system is reductionist and also splinters the sense of community. Nelson describes it as, “In its restricted sense it refers to those of the one family or extended family or who maintain the obligations of family” (2009, p. 16). Opposed to this though, it can be argued that there is much overlap between families through intermarriage and reciprocal arrangements making it difficult to use as an explanation. Nelson argues, “when explaining the dynamic and inhibiting forces in a nation its usefulness is either unknown or limited” (2009, p. 17).

3.4 Measuring the States Success

All the factors above serve to make the political situation in both PNG and Solomon Islands complex. It is necessary to gauge how PNG and Solomon Islands measure against international criteria of state performance. There are five¹⁹ main factors that will be examined. First, an assessment of security in each state will be undertaken. Security concerns whether there is effective control over the territory by the state's agents. State agents in this case refer to either the police or the military.

Second, the economic performance of the two states will be assessed. This performance differs depending on whether the governments are able to sustain their spending and fund their projects in both states. Economic performance will be looked at using growth indicators such as GDP, financial reports and future economic outlooks.

Third, if part of the role of the state is to provide for its people, social indicators of well-being will be assessed. In assessing social well-being the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will be primarily used here. The use of MDGs as a measure is because Australia as the major donor to both states assesses both their performances against them. The MDGs are a total of eight goals and will receive a brief mention here. They are as follows: End poverty and hunger; universal education; gender equality; child health; maternal health; combat HIV/Aids; environmental sustainability; global partnership²⁰ (UN Millennium Development Goals , 2011).

Fourth, an investigation of the two states infrastructure will be assessed. With this there will be some overlap with the above mentioned MDGs. Particularly when discussing structures

¹⁹ There are five main factors discussed, however the last two have a lot of overlap with the first three factors. Hence there will be three headings of: Security; economic performance and last, social well-being.

²⁰ For a definitive description of what they entail please refer to www.un.org.

such as hospitals and schools. Also transport infrastructure and the two governments' ability to maintain it will be assessed. This will fit in too with the area of economic performance. Last, though overlapping with law and order and economic performance will be the issue of corruption and transparency coupled with the oft mentioned and exalted good governance indicators.

3.5 Security

3.5.1 PNG

The security situation in PNG is severe. Crime and violence is at very high levels. If one just opened a Papua New Guinean newspaper, they would be rather quickly greeted with the often violent situation there. Murders are extremely common, as is rape. Sorcery related killings are still an everyday feature of life (Amnesty International, 2011). And furthermore, tribal warfare is a regular occurrence (Goldman, 2003; Nelson, 2009; Rumsey, 2009; Watson, 2005). The problem is made worse by the fact that, in most instances, the police are not able to adequately respond to such situations. In many cases of tribal warfare, the police, and even military, are out gunned by the combatants. These forces have to simply step away until mediation efforts begin. Though warfare is an endemic feature of Papua New Guinean society, the acquisition of modern fire arms has made such outcomes far bloodier than traditional wars. The statistics provided by Nelson (2009) in Enga province alone are staggering. Greg Watson (2005) provides a table of known incidents and casualty rates from the period between 1999 and 2005 that contain frightening numbers. Further, since that period, matters have not become more peaceful. Last year alone there were a number of serious instances. An example is of gun battles between rival groups over a provincial election in Mendi, the capital of Southern Highlands Province in August (The National, August 16, 2011; Post-Courier, August 18, 2011).

Not only are the battles costly in the numbers of people killed or wounded, they are also expensive in terms of damage to surrounding infrastructure. A common practice associated with this type of warfare is to torch the houses of the targets. This practice can often leave hundreds (even thousands in some instances) displaced and creates further tension when these people settle elsewhere. Similarly, displaced people create a heavy burden on the state in trying to re-settle them and providing them with compensation²¹ (On that note it is worth highlighting that often locals of the newly settled area demand compensation from the state for the arrival of these new settlers).

As mentioned, tribal battles are often beyond the abilities of the state's agents to quell. The state's agents though are not beyond taking sides. Nor are they a unified force in service to the state with police fighting military and the police fighting police over jurisdiction and authority (Standish, 2001; The National, January, 17, 2011; The National, January 18, 2011; The National, January 19, 2011; The National, February 7, 2011).

The behaviour of the police themselves is often in the spotlight. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have been particularly vocal about police abusing their powers and being heavy handed in their actions. Of particular concern to them is the habit of forced evictions and police brutality (Human Rights Watch, 2005; Amnesty International, 2010). But in some incidences it extends further. In late July 2011, an incident took place where police raided villages in the Margarima district of the Southern Highlands Province. The National reports, "District chief Kerry Mamai Lero said more than 100 homes and trade stores were raided and properties destroyed during the raid at Hiri in the lower Waghi local level government" (The National, July 28, 2011). It is reported to have left hundreds homeless and was allegedly "to be in retaliation for the recent burning of a police vehicle allegedly by

²¹ The role of the state in providing compensation will be discussed further on in this thesis.

locals” (The National, July 28, 2011). That incident itself occurred when six drunken police officers got into an argument with two drunken youths (The National, July 28, 2011).

There are numerous more outrages like this throughout PNG. Tribal warfare is costly to the state. The cost from police indiscretions to the state however, is higher. The Post-Courier reports that, “Human rights abuses by the police has cost the State more than K100 million in compensation payments” (Post-Courier, July 25, 2011). That was from figures for a ten year period released by the Minister for Justice and Attorney General Sir Arnold Amet (Post-Courier, July 25, 2011). Not only was the most compensation paid out for incidents involving the police, the police also lead the total number of cases brought against the state with 6399 (Post-Courier, July 25, 2011). The exact total of compensation paid out for police indiscretions was K101, 405,358.03 and was followed closely by the defence force in which K77, 594,427.09 was paid out (Post-Courier, July 25, 2011). The Post-Courier reports that Amet “said the high number of cases with the defence force was due to poor management and procedural matters relating mainly to termination decisions” (Post-Courier, July 25, 2011).

Police and the military are also ill-equipped to police their borders, allowing for smugglers to easily conduct business across the border with the disputed Indonesian Province of West Papua. This has meant an influx of arms and also of West Papuan rebels crossing into PNG to hide out (Alpers, 2004; Pacific Islands Report, May 12, 2005). This has led to attempts at haphazard border operations by the PNG Defence Force (PNGDF) and police much to the chagrin of Indonesian authorities (The National, January 18, 2011).

Police are inadequately trained and do not have the resources to carry out the job effectively. Often they do not have the funds to even put petrol in their patrol cars. Nor are they housed properly by the government, or even paid on a regular basis (The National, August 25, 2010; Post-Courier, September 14, 2011). This often brings about dissent in the ranks and leads regularly to insubordination by officers. The military is somewhat the same, lacking adequate

financial resources (Post-Courier, January 13, 2012). Open dissent amongst the army is common with the worst incident being the Sandline affair in which the military threatened a coup in response to the PNG Government hiring mercenaries to fill their role during the Bougainville conflict in 1997 (An incident that was only diffused at the insistence of Australia that the PNG Government should not hire mercenaries to fight its battles) (Kerr, 1999; Standish, 2001). The problem of security in PNG is further compounded when the state agents are themselves in a dysfunctional state of order.

3.5.2 Solomon Islands

Comparatively speaking, the law and order situation in Solomon Islands is not as unstable as is in PNG. That was not always the way, though the arrival of RAMSI did stabilise it significantly. RAMSI upon arrival established a strong military and police presence. The operation was able to quickly disarm militants involved in the conflict. Despite this presence, the security situation in Solomon Islands has proven to be fragile. This fragility was characterised by the Honiara riots of 2006 after the announcement of Snyder Rini being declared Prime Minister (Dinnen, 2007). Further, there is not much faith in calm persisting after RAMSI departs the country. Many believe that tensions will again come to the fore and conflict resume after the mission's departure (RAMSI Peoples Survey, 2011).

The lack of faith in lasting peace is not just held by the public. Leaked cables that came out of the US embassy in Port Moresby were hardly glowing in the assessment of long-term security. The Solomon Times reports experts claiming that "if RAMSI officers should leave tomorrow, the Solomons could quickly revert to the sad state before its arrival" (Solomon Times, August 30, 2011). Similarly, the Solomon Star News reports that "US officials have approvingly quoted the assessment of key diplomatic contacts in Honiara that if RAMSI departs "it would only take about a week for trouble to break out again since RAMSI and the

Government has failed to address the underlying issues [which caused widespread ethnic violence]” (Solomon Star News, August 31, 2011).

Though the Solomon Islands Government has established a truth and reconciliation process it has proved to be overly ineffective without actually addressing the issues at hand (Solomon Times, June 4, 2009). And on a recent intervention by RAMSI to bring one particular individual to justice as a result of the process, there was widespread condemnation from Solomon officials for not respecting the process (Solomon Star News, September 6, 2011). A ‘Forgiveness Bill’ was also drafted by the then government; though, it drew widespread condemnation from the opposition who labelled it disrespectful (Solomon Times, November 5, 2010).

It follows that there is not much faith placed on the ability of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF). According to the Solomon Star News, “This is because there is no trust discipline, honesty, integrity, professionalism, respect, trust, fairness, transparency and accountability within the RSIPF, a document cited by the Solomon Star had revealed” (Solomon Star News, September 13, 2011). This document had been revealed after concerns were raised by serving officers within the RSIPF over poor leadership. In the article the Solomon Star News reports, “Subordinate officers called on the NCRA government to intervene and change the senior officers who have criminal offences against their names but are yet leading the force without any actions taken against them” (Solomon Star News, September 13, 2011). If one looks back to the crisis of 1998 – 2003, the situation arose that the police were effectively infiltrated by the militia groups and thus became an extension of them (Fraenkel, 2004; Watson, 2005). Despite purges by RAMSI, many who had links to various groups during the crisis maintained their positions and some even climbed the ranks higher. It poses problems for the future if the police are seen to have little legitimacy. It does

not help to strengthen the state either as the strength of the police force is vital for providing an environment in which the state's agents can operate effectively.

3.6 Economic Performance

3.6.1 PNG

Papua New Guinea is currently experiencing a boom in the mining industry. It is the largest growth sector in Papua New Guinea and is the main driver behind growth in the country.

Papua New Guinea has been experiencing an average growth rate of 7.35 per cent of real GDP over the last six years (Dfat, 2012). GNI has also increased (World Bank, 2011). It has though, been experiencing an average population growth rate of 2.2 per cent from between 2008 and 2010 (Asian Development Bank, 2011). And inflation rose to 6.6 per cent in 2010 and to 8.4 per cent in the first part of 2011 (Dfat, 2012). Therefore, the growth is really non-existent when applied against the greater reality of Papua New Guinea's situation. As mentioned, this has been a result of mining boom. Helen Hughes warns that this focus on the development of the resource industry is at the detriment of the wider population and does not actually correspond to real growth (Hughes, 2004). That is there has been no growth within Papua New Guinea with regards to agricultural production and industry. Agricultural growth is particularly important here as 85 per cent of the population relies on it for sustenance (Hughes, 2004).

There may be an economic boom thanks to mining projects in the country but it certainly has not reached the full economic potential hoped for. This is primarily due to the issues of landownership that exist within the country. It has meant many disruptions for mining and other extractive operations in PNG. The biggest project in the country, the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) project is the best example of this. Production on the LNG site is regularly halted through protests and acts of sabotage by local land owners holding out for more compensation

payments. To compound this, the political wrangling of politicians in the area has helped impede and delay full production on the site.

Similarly, issues of who owns the land make it difficult for mining companies to operate and get the required consent to start a project on most of the land area of PNG. That is because 97 per cent of available land is customary land and has remained a firm political issue (Post-Courier, June 21, 2011). There is a growing argument amongst landowners that they should be receiving ownership of the mineral and natural gas wealth on their land. This is currently not government policy with the State owning all minerals and hydrocarbons in Papua New Guinea. With a change of government recently, there was an increased call for changes to take place (The National, August 25, 2011). The new government led by Prime Minister Peter O'Neill has denied that this is a policy of the government (The National, August 25, 2011). Any change in policy around mineral rights though would have a detrimental effect on the development of this industry. As The National reports that the, "issue was sensitive and one industry watcher said any change by the current regime "will be the single biggest mistake" and would cripple the economy" (The National, August 25, 2011). The prospect of dealing directly with landowners is not a desirable one for mining companies, and makes them less likely to invest in the country.

At the same time that there is such growth the economy, the economic performance of the state is poor. Budget shortages are rife in key areas such as transport infrastructure, health and education. In addition provincial governments are continuously blowing their budgets. As has been noted, Australia is focussing on the area of transport infrastructure as is the Asian Development Bank (Asian Development Bank, 2011; AusAID, 2011), yet improvements are minimal and projects are being stalled thanks to a lack of funds. A recent case is of the Madang Western Highlands trans-national highway. The project undertaken by the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF) came to a halt as funding for the project dried up. The

defence Secretary Bill Porykali demanded more funds from the government so work could continue (Post-Courier, July 25, 2011). This was after the Government had allocated to the PNGDF K80 million in total funds to complete the project and the PNGDF had so far only received K20 million in funds (Post-Courier, July 25, 2011).

The state of health services has been touched on above in the section on the state being optional. It is generally observed that the health infrastructure is weak and deteriorating (AusAID, 2012). Its steady decline has led to a resultant decline in the health statistics that will be discussed in the next section.

Education is another area where the state's performance is undermined by lack of funds. Schools are continuously short of the money needed to operate. Resource funding is almost non-existent with schools regularly being closed down as a result of this and the inability to maintain the school property. Furthermore, teachers often go months without pay and as a result will often just leave half way through the year. It is a familiar pattern throughout all sectors of the Papua New Guinea public service. Financial mismanagement and lack of funds has crippled its performance (Post-Courier, October 28, 2011). Often the public service is accused of being far too large by modern standards and rife with cronyism.

As a working bureaucracy, the Papua New Guinean government and public service are dysfunctional. Salaries are paid out to people who are no longer working in the sector and even to those who are dead. Corruption remains rife in the sector with daily accusations of mismanagement of funds being launched at the sector and the executive politicians (The National, January 20, 2012²²). Papua New Guinea sits low on the international transparency list. It sits near the bottom as one of the most corrupt countries in the world at a ranking of 154 of 178 (Transparency International, 2010). The government and the states servants are

²² Though this source falls just outside the time period being researched it provides an effective summary of the prevalence of corruption within PNG.

widely perceived by the public to be corrupt. One article states that “65 per cent said the current government’s effort to fight corruption was ineffective” (Post-Courier, December 10, 2010). The paper also reports “from the 3.5 million people, 26 per cent said they paid bribes to receive service from service providers in the past 12 months” (Post-Courier, December 10, 2010). Despite continued rhetoric about fighting corruption, many cases are dismissed or brushed under the carpet and sentences for those charged are light.

Many of the Provincial Governments have their economic autonomy taken away from them for the severe financial mismanagement that takes place (Gelu, 2009). Yet, financial mismanagement in the Central Government is just as bad and in both cases the funds allocated never reach the areas where they are needed. At one point, nine of the eleven provincial governments had their financial powers stripped (Gelu, 2009). Currently, two provinces are taking and threatening court action against the Central Government for allegedly planning to suspend their financial powers (The National, August 23, 2011; The National, October 24, 2011).

3.6.2 Solomon Islands

The economic indicators of Solomon Islands show some improvement as a result of RAMSI’s position in the country. GDP and GNI have increased (Asian Development Bank, 2011; Dfat, 2012; World Bank, 2012) and the government has increased its revenue through tax collection (The Solomon Islands Core Economic Working Group, 2011, RAMSI: Our Work..., 2011).

This as with PNG, can be seen as being misleading. Population growth has been a steady 2.2 per cent (Asian Development Bank, 2011) and inflation is currently at 6.7 per cent (Dfat, 2012). GDP figures though, do not take into account the unequal distribution of wealth and growth across the country. Only a small area has benefited in growth provided by industries such as mining and forestry. As such it is an inadequate indicator. It needs to be remembered

that RAMSI still has a strong presence in the territory with technical experts placed in the civil service and these figures could change again after RAMSI's withdrawal.

Peter Coventry (2009) sees issues for the Solomon's economy arising from budget constraints as certain lines of revenue dry up. In particular the revenue received from forestry has declined as the resource has largely been exhausted as a result of past mismanagement. He notes too that the Solomon Island Government (SIG) has recently been spending more than it is earning (Coventry, 2009). These figures are backed up by a World Bank report "Solomon Islands Growth Prospects: Constraints and Policy Priorities" (2010). With contracting economic returns this is not financially prudent.

The economic vulnerability of Solomon Islands is acknowledged by both governments. In the "The Solomon Islands – Australia Partnership for Development, Schedule 2: Implementation Strategy for Partnership Priority Outcome 4 – Addressing Economic and Fiscal Challenges" it notes that:

"Due to underlying structural issues the global recession has hit Solomon Islands hard and led to a declining financial position. This has been largely felt in the logging sector (log exports are predicted to fall by around 35 per cent in 2009) as well as a broader decline in economic activity leading to reduced government revenue and foreign reserves" (2009: 2).

According to the AusAID Annual Performance Report For Solomon Islands 2007-08:

Unsustainable logging activity accounts for around 17 per cent of the economy and 70 per cent of export earnings. Its decline and expected eventual collapse will have a significant negative effect on the economy as there is no obvious replacement for the loss of exports and revenue" (2008: 9).

Currently AusAID (2012) acknowledges that there is still an over reliance on logging and that there is currently a need for diversification but that the environment is much better for this

diversification to take place. Yet this could be rather ambitious given other factors such as the fragile security situation.

There has been some talk of the potential of mining in Solomon Islands but the country's biggest mining operation has shown that many of the problems that exist in PNG exist in Solomon Islands. The Gold Ridge mine was closed during the unrest of 1998-2003 but has since been reopened. Yet its operation has not been smooth. Disputes with local landowners have impacted the mines operation. Recently community members below the mine set up road blocks and acquisitioned a company vehicle leading to a disruption of operations (Solomon Star News, September 11, 2011). The paper reported that locals "demanded the company pay royalties for export of gold bars" (Solomon Star News, September 11, 2011).

With regards to transparency and corruption Solomon Islands sit at 110 on Transparency International's rating scale (Transparency International, 2011). This initially does not reveal much when it is compared next to some of the countries on the list. Nonetheless, according to diplomatic leaks corruption remains endemic within Solomon Island politics with a large part of this corruption being funded by Taiwanese money (Solomon Times, August 30, 2011). Further evidence of corruption can be seen in the daily papers²³. Allegations of corruption and misconduct were levelled at then Prime Minister Danny Phillips by the opposition (Solomon Star News, August 11, 2011). This led to an investigation by the Leadership Code Commission (LCC) to see if such allegations were correct (Solomon Star News, September 7 2011).

²³ This will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Five.

3.7 Health and Human Development

3.7.1 PNG

With regards to the indicators of human development in Papua New Guinea the state can be argued to be failing in this respect. PNG has not yet achieved any of the Millennium Development Goals yet and is far from doing so (AusAID, 2012). PNG is ranked 153 out of 187 on the Human Development Index (UNDP, 2012). In some respects PNG is actually moving in the reverse direction. According to the World Bank, the percentage of students enrolled in primary education has been on the decline with a slight increase from 2008 (World Bank, 2011). Similarly, the access to adequate sanitation in urban areas has also been declining (UNESCAP, 2011).

The decline of the healthcare infrastructure discussed earlier has also led to a decline in many of the health statistics. Rates of Tuberculosis (TB) though on the decline for some time have started to increase again as have the number of deaths in the country as a result (UNESCAP, 2011). Correspondingly detection rates and curable programs of treatment have been on the decline. Access to professional midwives for women in labour is the lowest in the Pacific and does not show much signs of increasing. It also happens to have the highest mother mortality rate in the Pacific (UNESCAP, 2011).

Recently, there has been a worrying increase in outbreaks of cholera throughout the country (Radio Australia News, February 16, 2011; Radio New Zealand International, February 16, 2011). This disease which is commonly associated with poor sanitation and drinking water quality has pushed PNG health authorities to the limit. These limited capabilities have led Australia to send medical teams to help out and furthermore, close the borders of their territory in the Torres Islands to those travelling from PNG (News.com.au, February 16 2011).

3.7.2 Solomon Islands

Health is still an issue in Solomon Islands. Against the Millennium Development Goals, Solomon Islands are on track to the meeting the goals of improving maternal health and reducing infant mortality (AusAID, 2011). The country yet, is still some way off from reaching the others. It sits at 142 on the Human Development Index (AusAID, 2011).

Solomon Islands had one of the worst rates of Malaria in the Asia Pacific region (UNESCAP, 2011). Further, statistics can be misleading. This is often in regards to the spatial variation of the population.

One misleading statistic relates to the percentage of the urban population with access to clean water and sanitation, which according to the World Bank is 98 per cent (World Bank, 2011). Only 18 per cent of the population live in urban areas (Asian Development Bank, 2011). The rest live in rural areas, areas where the state does not reach. According to the World Bank 65 per cent of people in rural areas have access to clean drinking water and sanitation (World Bank, 2011). Most of the population in fact relying on rivers and streams for their water supply. The real statistic is unclear as Amnesty International contests the statistics of the World Bank highlighting their own study which claims according to the Solomon Star News “that 92% of households do not have a proper water supply and sanitation” (Solomon Star News, September 9, 2011).

Aside from contentions over the statistics, there remain problems with health care. The state is still in no position to provide extensive health services. Solomon Islands rely heavily on Australia²⁴, other aid donors and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) for assistance in these provisions. With the inevitable withdrawal of RAMSI and the retraction of the extensive

²⁴ It was Australian efforts that reduced the number of Malaria cases in Solomon Islands that previously had been some of the worst within the region (UNESCAP, 2011).

support of other groups, it is likely that the Solomon Island state will not be able to maintain an extensive health service.

3.8 Conclusion

The state in PNG is not following the path that Australia has envisioned that it would with its aid. It is concerning that lawlessness is rife within the territory. In addition, the decline in health and education services is also of particular concern. The state seems to be in retreat within PNG with its infrastructure failing and economic growth failing to outpace population growth and inflation.

Though it can be argued that the Solomon Islands state is currently fairly stable and functioning rather more effectively than its neighbour PNG, one has to remember that it is currently being heavily supported by Australia. This is not just financially either. RAMSI staff are active throughout the whole Solomon Islands administration and many local achievements are a result of these placements. Understandably, a fear exists amongst many over the future of the Solomon's after RAMSI's withdrawal: Australia has tentatively laid out a withdrawal plan for the next five years. Australia's main partner in the venture, New Zealand, is hesitant about this time frame for withdrawal (Solomon Star News, September 8, 2011). As has been discussed above, the United States remains sceptical on the success of RAMSI. The US makes the assessment that RAMSI would have to stay another 10 – 15 years to make a lasting difference on the performance of the Solomon's (Solomon Star News, August 31, 2011). This, together with the New Zealand government's caginess on an exact withdrawal time indicates the uncertainty that they see for the state in Solomon Islands. Fears about the future are also echoed by civil society groups, academics and the public of the Solomon Islands.

This chapter has painted a grim picture of the state in PNG and Solomon Islands. A question is raised that if so much money has been spent on trying to create a state that follows the ideal envisioned by Australia, why has it not succeeded? Though this question has been answered

elsewhere it is of interest of what role that elites have in this situation. Specifically, three questions: First, what do elites see the state as being? Second, what role do they play in shaping the state? Third, what does it mean for the states of PNG and Solomon Islands? These three questions are the focus for the rest of this thesis and the following chapter will begin this process by looking at religious leaders.

4.0 The Religious Elites

4.1 Introduction

The first chapter of this thesis outlined why elites mattered in shaping the state. These elites were divided into two groupings; the political elite and the religious elite. Religious elites were chosen as Christianity has a strong presence in both countries religion penetrates the society extensively with Christian churches providing a number of services.

It follows from an examination of elites and the poor performance of the state, that this chapter will examine how the religious leaders see the state and how it should be. First, it will show how the weak nature of the state makes the church a functional alternative in providing the needs of the people. It briefly describes what extent that some of the churches carry out this role.

The chapter will outline three categories of how the state is seen by religious elites; these categories can overlap: First, the churches that seek to see the state become something more akin to the model explained in chapter one. This will look at the roles of some churches in trying to influence the state and its agents in the two countries. The second category is how some churches choose to avoid being involved with the state. This aversion to involvement with the state is determined by their doctrinal beliefs and the view they have of the state. It will also mention how their popularity has increased in some instances due to peoples perspectives of those churches who are involved with the state. Lastly, the third category to be examined includes churches that see their role as being partners in the process of state development. This looks at how the churches and the state see each other as partners in development. It also explains how some of these churches seek funding from the state to fulfil this role.

The chapter finishes by looking at the limits to the influence the churches have on the state. This focuses on the fractured nature of the society and how reliant some churches are on the government for funding which can cause their operations harm. Likewise, that the fractured nature of the two countries and subsequent religions can be a source of tension and serves to limit their influence further. It concludes that politicians' actions (as will be discussed further) show that there is a limit to the churches influence.

4.2 Churches as a Provider of State Services

There are two particular reasons that the churches are so entrenched in both PNG and Solomon Islands. The state never penetrated throughout the territories, and with the increased centralisation of the state there was a further retraction of government from many areas. The churches are much more firmly rooted than the state in the two countries (McDougall, 2008). This is in part to their history in the region and the aforementioned retraction of the state. This has meant that often they have been looked to as partners in government.

Not only do these groups penetrate society thoroughly, they provide much of the services that the state traditionally supplies. They often provide these services better than the state does.

Debra McDougall highlights the example of the schools the Seventh Day Adventists operate in Solomon Islands. She writes that they “are widely viewed as being better – run than the government schools” (2008, p. 10). In PNG the churches are a major provider of services.

These are mainly the services of health and education. The level of provision of healthcare by churches is significant as was noted in Chapter One. The significance of the churches work has meant that the partnership between the state and churches was formalised in 2008 by the Papua New Guinea government in providing healthcare to rural areas (The National, October 17, 2011).

It is not just the services of health and education that the churches have a large role within the state. One church, the Christian Fellowship Church has been proactive in running a whole

community of its followers. It organises work for village members and reinvests the wealth back into the village. Its success in doing so extends to the point where it negotiates directly with logging companies. This is in part to the level of influence over large areas of territory under the customary ownership of its members. It had the ability to pick and choose who got the rights. As McDougall writes:

“At the beginning of the logging boom in the 1980s, the CFC opposed Lever’s Pacific Timber, which refused to negotiate with local landowners. Soon after, however, the CFC allowed the Malaysian company Golden Springs International to commence logging on its territory. Because the church controlled such a large swath of territory, its leaders were able to negotiate a favourable contract with the company” (2008, p. 11).

In this sense the church has been effectively running its own government within the state. Further, to an extent, many of the churches as a result of their efforts have been co-opted into a partnership with the government in helping to deliver goods and services. Of more interest though, it needs to be discussed how these churches and their leaders see the state. This can be broken into three categories: First, those that see the state as an entity for the betterment of their respective society. The second category is those churches that see the state as largely ineffective as an organisation and an entity to be avoided or opposed. Third, those who see themselves as partners with the state and are seen as such by the state; therefore, an entity that should accord them funding in their role. It must then be stated that it is hard sometimes to distinguish between the groups. Some churches can come under all three depending on issues such as what their elites believe and whether they are local churches or have a central doctrine determined elsewhere in the world. The most common overlap for churches is between the state being seen as providing the betterment and security of the people and the churches being partners with the state. These overlaps will be clarified as needed.

4.3 The State as an Object of Benefit

Many churches see a role for themselves as promoting ideas of the state as being for the well being of the people. Historically they have shown this by engaging with the state in providing many of the services assigned to the state. It has not only been in this field that they have assisted. They have also used their position to try influence politicians with regards to working towards a strong state.

Some churches play a more active role in politics than others. Usually it is using their moral authority to criticise and try influence the state as opposed to any other form of power or control. This has in a sense overlap with the category around those who oppose the state. From what will be shown though, these churches voice opposition to the states agents as a means to try better it.

The Solomon Islands crisis of 1998-2003 was a very good example of this. The crisis saw the five main churches of the country band together. These being the Roman Catholic Church, Church of Melanesia, United Church, South Sea Evangelical Church and the Seventh Day Adventists (SICA, 2001). Under the title of the Solomon Islands Christian Association (SICA), they went about in trying to influence leaders during the crisis. In a newsletter dated March 2001, the group stated its role which read:

“The church is a peacemaker, and has a duty to remind the people of Solomon Islands even in this time of difficulty, to uphold the good values taught in the Bible. The continuing presence of the Holy Spirit in our churches reminds us to apply these values to the situation of today” (2001, p. 1).

Certainly, the group argues strongly that it has an important role within Solomon Islands society. It claims to represent the people adding further, “We, the people of SI acknowledge that we are a nation of Christians and want Christian principles and values to be followed” (2001, p. 1).

It was upon this presumption that it, and its members, went about trying to influence the government of the time. Directly, the SICA sent a letter to the then Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare on 16 March 2001. The letter outlined thirty key points it wanted to make clear to the government. Amongst the thirty, of most interest is numbers two, three, five, twenty four and twenty five.

Point two outlines simply that “SICA is an apolitical body – meaning that we do not interfere in politics, and do not side with any political, government or political candidates” (2001, p. 1).

Number three states that “SICA as an association of the main churches in the Solomon Islands maintains the Church – State separation as an important divide that is necessary for both bodies” (2001, p. 1). The SICA elaborates further on this role in the general terms that those who understand the concept of separation between Church and State would be familiar with.

In point five however, the SICA points out God’s role for government writing, “Further, SICA acknowledges that governments are called to be God’s instruments for order and progress in society” (2001, p. 1). It is not hard to see from this instance, that given the declaration of point five, that a leader if they chose to heed the SICA’s information could call upon something not too dissimilar to the notion of the ‘divine right of the King.’ Certainly, this has been the case in Papua New Guinea and will be discussed further.

Though acknowledging God’s role for government, the SICA believe that the states agents should be free of corruption and that the state is not an object to be captured by those with less noble intentions. In point 24 they write:

“Prime Minister, the Christian gospel teaches that when a wrong is acknowledged it must be repented of with appropriate demonstrations of that repentance. We believe that in this case it means a resignation by you from the position of Prime Minister. We respect your conscience in this matter and your freedom to make a decision which you believe to be the correct one. It is not our objective to remove you from power, rather we believe the

circumstances under which you came to power must be acknowledged and redressed, and a coming to our senses as in the parable of the prodigal son, Luke 15” (2001, p. 2).

They follow this with point 25 that states, “We are not concerning ourselves with a legal question of legitimacy but a higher moral question” (2001, p. 2).

The argument for this was that Sogavare was appointed Prime Minister after the 5 June 2000 coup that led to the then Prime Minister Bart Ulufa’alu being deposed. There is a case for questioning Sogavare’s legitimacy as leader. Though he was voted in through the normal channels for the role of Prime Minister as described in chapter three, behind the scenes militia groups were exerting their influence to get the desired appointment (Fraenkel, 2004). It is an attempt by the SICA to exert its sense of moral authority to bring into question the legitimacy of the state’s agents. They seek to effect change for an outcome that they see as being better for the people of the Solomon Islands. In this case the clearing out of those agents of the state who were implicated in the crisis.

In PNG some churches see their role as being the moral compass for the state. The Solomon Star News reports that at a recent Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea, the bishops present, “called for an end to the current system of allocating constituency development funds for MPs to distribute” (Solomon Star News, June 21, 2011). It follows upon the decision that, “The Conference has decided to take a stand against corruption among parliamentarians who the Bishops largely blame for the misuse of millions of kina of public funds” (Solomon Star News, June 21, 2011).

In another incident tied to the political crisis that PNG is facing over who is legally the government, the Catholic Bishops waded in to express their concerns to leaders (The National, November 18, 2011). In the article they are quoted as saying, “Politics and governance exist for the benefit of the common good of the country and its people” (The National, November 18, 2011). Further on the Bishops state, “When public authority fails to seek the common

good, it abandons its proper purpose and delegitimises itself” (The National, November 18, 2011). They note though that the state has its place within society writing, “Jesus refused the oppressive and despotic power shown by some rulers (Mk 10: 42), but he did acknowledge that temporal power has its place (Mk 12: 13-17)” (The National, November 18, 2011). The Bishops then accord the state legitimacy despite the problems that they see with the functioning of its apparatus. Importantly for this paper they outline that the state should be for the common good; but they also go further to make clear that the state’s institutions should be separate from each other as a means of maintaining the state’s integrity (The National, November 18, 2011). In this case it involves promoting the separation of powers and the independence of parliament, and the judiciary in light of political manoeuvring to impede the actions of the judiciary (The National, November 18, 2011).

As briefly elaborated on earlier, government is seen in some ways as sanctioned by God. The state should then have a standard that it should reach. In the case of PNG it can be quite pronounced. Though, it can also be used as a means to legitimise certain situations. One commentator in referring to the bid to charge Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare for supposed corruption told the Post-Courier that, “It must be accepted that God Almighty, the All Knowing, deliberately and purposefully gave Sir Michael Somare the mandate to be the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea at least for this term of Parliament” (Post-Courier, February 18, 2011). Saka Ben Wia elaborates further saying, “Those pushing for Sir Michael to be sidelined must know too that God chose Sir Michael to be Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea despite his weaknesses” (Post-Courier, February 18, 2011). This is a strange means of according legitimacy to the government and by essentially elaborating that God has plans for the state and that his chosen representatives therefore, know what is best.

Certainly, given the opposition by the Catholic Church and the SICA to government actions, this deferral to God’s will is not the given norm within both countries. Instead most groups

who engage with the state expect a high standard of the states agents and subsequently for the state to fulfil its role within society.

4.4 The Churches as Opposition to the State

It can be argued that the popularity of the church and especially such churches that offer alternatives to the state can stem out of the past unrest in the country. In the context of this past history, Jaap Timmer puts it simply writing, “It is out of this broader experience of crisis and uncertainty that people often search for alternate ways of governing themselves” (2008, p. 198). It is this past experience that has led to many turning their backs on the mainstream churches involved in politics in favour of smaller, newer churches. The mainstream churches have and historically took on an active role in Solomon Island politics as shown in the above section. Many members of Parliament profess to be members of the churches and to be devout Christians. Given the events of the past it can be easy to see why people may turn their backs on these churches. It becomes more visible when one acknowledges that the constitution of the state is written in the name of God. Timmer cites an interesting passage from the Solomon Star News that reads:

“Solomon Islands has the highest Constitution that was ever written in human history which is the Holy Bible and was inspired by God’s Holy Spirit. It directs man to the way, the truth and the life. It is the inherent and immutable word of God the Almighty Creator. There is no man made constitution or declaration which can or will ever excel its literary works, saying, truths, promises and unchangeable prophetic message which are now being fulfilled in these last days” (as cited in Timmer, 2008, p. 194).

Christianity therefore, has a very serious role to play in Solomon Islands. It also serves to show that when supposedly good Christian leaders are being implicated in the past unrest and dealings, as well as continuing to be involved in current indiscretions, it can be said to project a certain image of the mainstream churches to the people. In PNG, pastors have been warned

about their role in politics. The Post-Courier reports the comments made to United Church pastors by Joseph Warai the director of NGO Community Based Health Care. On warning pastors against getting too involved with politics the Post-Courier reports, “He said instead of pastors speaking out against corruption, pastors often benefitted in the spoils of these corrupt dealings especially when politicians present pastors and churches with vehicles, money and materials in the name to support the work of church” (Post-Courier, September 22, 2011). He adds further warning to the assembled pastors saying, “Politicians will use you (pastors) as rubber stamps for their political gain and you will be suppressed to speak about their wrongs” (Post-Courier, September 22, 2011).

The main churches involvement with politics has caused many to join newer and smaller churches such as the Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses and various other Pentecostal churches that do not involve themselves with the state and its politics. Some people are turning away from Christianity altogether and joining religions such as Islam (McDougall, 2008; McDougall, 2009)²⁵. McDougall highlights an experience with “A number of young Malaitan men who had become Sunni Muslims” (2008, p. 14). She noted in conversation with them that:

“They spoke, obliquely, of their own personal transgressions that caused them to be ostracized or ignored by the established church community. They spoke angrily about the general sinfulness in society – epidemics of adultery, lying, cheating, and stealing. If the nation is Christian, is not Christianity to blame for its failures? A few new converts to non-Christian religions feel that it is time to leave Christianity entirely” (2008, p. 14).

²⁵ It is of worth noting that Solomon Islands have had a Muslim population since the early 1970s (McDougall, 2009). These converts were most likely to be educated professionals who subscribed to a more enlightened sect of Islam under the appeal of the ideal of unity (McDougall, 2009). There has been since the conflict an increase in converts to Sunni Islam and is as McDougall argues, related to a perception of society being riddled with sin (McDougall, 2008; McDougall, 2009).

Similarly, localised Christian churches such as the Remnant Church see the state as being un-Christian and seek to oppose the state. They seek to replace it with a state formulated along the idea of being a Kingdom of God, with its mandates and parameters having their basis in the Bible (Burt, 1983). In short a theocracy. These groups can be based on Nationalist movements and seek to oppose the state on this basis. Mailaita in Solomon Islands has traditionally been the home of such movements as the Remnant Church and the Deep Sea Canoe Movement (Burt, 1983; McDougall, 2008; Timmer, 2008). This highlights implications that will be discussed further on in the chapter.

4.5 The Churches as Agents of the State

As explained in section 4.2 the churches provide a wide array of services that are often performed elsewhere by states. Generally churches are accorded with a mandate of legitimacy by the people, NGOs and even the state. This status provides them with the funding to carry out the roles discussed in section 4.2. This can be seen in PNG by the wording of the Vision 2050 document which was briefly discussed in Chapter One legitimising the role of the church as an area of study in this project. The Churches have been accorded the status of partners in providing health and education services. The aim being that by 2050 the role of the churches providing the services of basic health provision and education increases from current levels²⁶ (PNG Vision 2050).

Likewise, leaders have accorded religion a firm place within the state. Both Sir Michael Somare and his political adversary Peter O'Neill have enacted a National Day of Prayer (The National, July 18, 2011). Furthermore, Sir Michael Somare when still Prime Minister signed "a covenant to commit the country in worshipping the God of Israel" (The National, July 18, 2011). In this endeavour, some of the churches representatives were involved in helping the

²⁶ These levels are currently 46 per cent in basic health provision. 50 per cent in provision of basic education. In secondary education the church provides 30 per cent of services and currently the churches provide 41 percent of vocational schooling (2009, p. 10).

government appoint the correct date for this holiday as according to the scriptures (The National, July 18, 2011). In Solomon Islands the Governor General Sir Frank Kabui acknowledged the churches as partners thanking them “for their spiritual and physical support,” (Solomon Star News, January 4, 2012). Solomon Islands even have a Minister for Home and Ecclesiastical Affairs (Solomon Times, June 24, 2009). In 2007 the Solomon’s government accorded the churches nearly SB\$157 million and in 2008, SB\$166.77 million (Solomon Times, June 24, 2009).

In PNG Peter O’Neill presented a cheque to the Lutheran church for the building of a Lutheran University (Post-Courier, September 30, 2011). The Post-Courier reports that, “Mr O’Neill said the money was part of the K6 million that he had promised to give when he visited Lae recently” (Post-Courier, September 30, 2011). O’Neill also touched on how the Lutheran church had a historic role in the country and had signed an agreement with the government in 2009 (Post-Courier, September 30, 2011). The Post-Courier reports him as saying, “That churches were the key agencies in developing the country as where the Government could not go, the churches always go, bringing services to the people” (Post-Courier, September 30, 2011).

It is the role of being a state agent that many religious elites see themselves fulfilling. The head of the Solomon Islands Full Gospel Association (SIFGA), Geoffrey Alacky in an article written for the Solomon Star News states the importance of the Government funding churches in their work within the country. He notes that, “Solomon Islands is a nation of churches, or Solomon Islands is a church” (Solomon Star News, March 1, 2011). Furthermore, that “Solomon Islands history is inextricably attached to the history of the church” (Solomon Star News, March 1, 2011). He elaborates on the history of the state elsewhere and the role religion has had in its success concluding that, “It is in this assertion that I am calling on the

government to pay attention to the need of the churches in the country” (Solomon Star News, March 1, 2011).

In PNG, missionary and lawyer Kelly Naru called upon the government to fund the churches. The Post-Courier reports him as saying, “the government should give 10 per cent of the National Budget to church groups to help them with their work of evangelisation” (Post-Courier, August 17, 2011).

It is clear for the most part that religious elites see themselves as agents of the state, or as partners with the state in the development of the two countries. There is much basis to their claims as discussed above. Similarly, political elites have accorded them the same status. Indeed, many political elites are also religious elites; therefore the two are quite entwined in places. This though, can bring about problems for the churches in shaping the state. These limitations will be discussed in more depth.

4.6 Limits to the Churches Influence

For the most part, the churches that are actively engaging with the state have designs on the state being for the well being and security of the people. Chiefly, they desire an effective organisation and seek to help in this process. Though, for all the evidence and talk of using the churches as an alternate means of governance, distribution and a tool for development, the churches in PNG and Solomon Islands have a precarious hold on influence and power. The churches, like the two states are subject to the people and the fractious nature of the society.²⁷

²⁷ Some 96 percent of the population in PNG are Christian. According to CIA Fact Book using 2000 census data religion can be broken down as follows, “Roman Catholic 27%, Evangelical Lutheran 19.5%, United Church 11.5%, Seventh-Day Adventist 10%, Pentecostal 8.6%, Evangelical Alliance 5.2%, Anglican 3.2%, Baptist 2.5%, other Protestant 8.9%, Baha'i 0.3%, indigenous beliefs and other 3.3%” (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pp.html>, 2011)

In Solomon Islands the break down in 1999 was “Protestant 73.7% (Church of Melanesia 32.8%, South Seas Evangelical 17%, Seventh-Day Adventist 11.2%, United Church 10.3%, Christian Fellowship Church 2.4%), Roman Catholic 19%, other Christian 4.4%, other 2.4%, unspecified 0.3%, none 0.2% (1999 census)” (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bp.html>, 2011). This unfortunately is the most up to date data on these

It follows that much of PNG and Solomon Islands past populations' first contact with white men were missionaries and these various groups stuck to their own turf so to speak (Hauck, 2010; Kent, 1972).

Since the two countries have relatively small populations the churches have small congregations. These small congregation sizes have meant that it is difficult for many churches to gather sufficient revenue locally. In particular locally governed and centred churches struggle the most (McDougall, 2008). This can evidence why the state is seen by many of these churches as a partner to engage with and receive funding from. Certainly those who tend to avoid interaction with the state have their own outside funding (Gibbs, 2007; Hauck, 2010; McDougall, 2008). This can be problematic for the churches reliant on the state for funding. By being reliant, they are subject to the various governments whims. Though the governments have been more than willing to include the churches and fund them, it is not always sufficient or completely beneficial.

The large role that churches play in PNG in providing medical services is a case in point. The Chairman of the Churches Medical Council (CMC), Wallace Kintak was reported as calling for pay parity between those working for the government health services and those working for the church services (Post-Courier, May 26, 2011). This is in relation to the CMC operations being funded by the government, therefore CMC workers were seen as worthy of the pay increase that their public sector equivalents were receiving (Post-Courier, May 26, 2011).

In more recent events, the CMC as The National reports, "has threatened to shut down its health services because of insufficient funding and unfair treatment by the government" (The National, October 17, 2011). At issue was that according to the CMC chairman Wallace

statistics and does not take into account the changes that have taken place since (McDougall, 2008).

White, “the government had categorised 17 church-run hospitals as health centres and funded them as such” (The National, October 17, 2011). As a result, the 40 million kina that they received annually was not enough.

This difficulty of obtaining funds means that religious leaders are regularly appealing to businessmen and parishioners alike to give more to the churches. It is common in both countries. In May 2011 a leader of the South Seas Evangelical Church and businessman made a call for more funding from businesses. His reasoning was that it was needed and was to the benefit of both communities and businesses. He was quoted by the paper as saying, “We should open our business opportunity to the rural people so that God could step in and assist us in our business either secondary or primary business we manage” (Solomon Times, May 4, 2011). This shows an appeal using incentives why business should support the church, albeit to a degree quite strange to many in the West.

In PNG Kelly Naru in calling upon government for funding as we have seen earlier, has called on his fellow parishioners to do the same. As the Post-Courier reports, Naru noted that the Lutheran church was failing in maintaining its infrastructure such as churches, schools and health centres (Post-Courier, August 5, 2011). He was also reported as having said that, “too much concentration was put on the futuristic belief of eternal life while the physical wellbeing of the church was degrading” (Post-Courier, August 5, 2011). Furthermore, he was reported as saying, “that Biblical Law of giving one-tenth to the Church should be upheld at all times, adding that God would bless those who give generous to the Church in return” (Post-Courier, August 5, 2011).

This creates pressure on parishioners to contribute to the churches well being. As McDougall writes, “Leaders of woman’s groups in the late 1990s told me, for example, that they wanted to stop worrying about fundraising so that they could focus more on the spiritual aspects of fellowship” (2008, p. 7). This has led to people choosing to convert to the many churches with

international ties and outside governance structures (Gibbs, 2007; McDougall, 2008). This is because of the funding that these outside churches have. In a nation where people do not have much it often drives them away from locally governed and financed churches (Gibbs, 2007). In a sense, the choice of religion for many is not about spirituality but about benefits that they can receive from the church. These benefits may be as little as not placing a large burden on parishioners in regards to maintaining the wellbeing of the congregation.

Tensions too, do exist between the various groups in PNG (Gibbs, 2007; Hauck, 2010). As V.A. Hauck notes:

“Church presence and activities throughout the years have reinforced traditional conflict lines between tribes and ethnic groups. These have contributed to divisions at different levels which persist to this day. A major divide exists between the mainline churches, which speak on behalf of a wider constituency, and the fundamentalist groups fragmented throughout the country” (2010, p. 54).

This can be applied to the case of Solomon Islands as well. It was traditionally in the Solomon Islands that whole villages were usually of one religion and the community was coordinated along these lines. This has changed in recent years. As McDougall writes that:

“Even if only one family in a village of several hundred converts to a different form of Christianity, the effects are felt by everyone. Not only is that family removed from the center of social life, but community work (such as repairing village school buildings) becomes much more difficult to coordinate” (2008, p. 5).

Another factor that shows the limits to the churches influence is the behaviour of political elites. Though the subject of political elites will be discussed in the next chapter it needs to be briefly touched on here. The involvement of the various churches in politics has already been noted. This has led to many turning away from these churches as a result (Timmer, 2008). Due to the importance of religion in the two countries most politicians claim to be good Christians and some are church ministers themselves. It will be shown further in the next

chapter that their behaviour is not always reflective of what they profess to believe in.

Religious groups subsequently may not have as much influence on the states agents in this context. They remain important in politics, yet they remain somewhat on the periphery when it comes to shaping the state. This is further highlighted when the findings of Chapter Three are examined, showing a lack of progress in development outcomes. This is despite the churches still being significant actors during the post-independence period.

The various churches in both countries have a very important role within their respective societies but their strengths should not be overestimated (Hauck, 2010). It needs to be realised that the churches are exactly that; churches in the plural form and as discussed above subsequently prone to the limits caused by the fragmented nature of their societies. This fragmentation is characteristic of both societies in the politics as will be discussed further.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has looked at the historical basis for the various churches within the state as providing many of the services that are the realm of the state. In this role they have been very important. This chapter also looked at three different categories that the churches can be in with respects to their relationship with the state of both countries. There can be overlap between these categories as many of the churches fit into more than one.

The first category was those that saw the state as an object of betterment. This could be said to include most of the main line churches that have participated with the state or tried to influence political behaviour like the SICA or Catholic Church. These churches see the state as being legitimate and a means to provide for well being of the states citizenry.

It is with this in mind that there can be an overlap with those who see the state as an entity to oppose. In this chapter, it was the opposition by groups such as the SICA and Catholic Church to the actions of state agents that are contrary to their idea of what the state should be. This section also showed that some churches and religions choose not to engage with the state

because of their doctrines. Consequently these groupings have gained in popularity as some citizens see the mainline churches being too entwined with the politics of the states agents, therefore involved in the dysfunction that characterises the two states.

The third category included those churches that saw themselves as agents and partners of the state. They seek to be funded by the state for them to be able to fulfil their aims. These groups are also seen by the state as partners, receiving funding from the state.

The chapter finished though by showing the limits that the churches face in influencing the state. Though churches are seen as partners in development by the two states they are at the mercy of the state in how much funding they receive. This is problematic for locally based churches as they rely heavily on state funding. They do not have the same revenue bases that global churches like the Seventh Day Adventists have. Local churches also have to try retain people who may not necessarily be concerned with the spiritual aspect of the church; rather, being more interested in benefits that can be provided to them by a church. Furthermore, given the development outcomes and behaviours of the states agents over the years it presents evidence that the churches may not be as influential in shaping the state as originally thought here. Ultimately, they are affected by the fragmented nature of the two countries diminishing their strength. Noting the fragmentation of society and the church's reliance on the state, the next chapter seeks to address the role of political elites in shaping the state.

5.0 Political Elites

5.1 Introduction

The last chapter looked at the ideas that religious elites have about the state. This chapter follows from the last and looks at the political elites. To clarify, by political elites, we mean elected members of parliament. Specifically this means the 109 MPs of PNG and the 50 of Solomon Islands. This definition of political elite is necessary as if not narrowly defined, political elites could encompass a wide spectre of people within both PNG and Solomon Islands. It could include politicians at the top and throughout the bureaucratic system right down to the ‘big men’ of the wantoks.

First, this chapter will look at the idea of the state as an object of capture. That the state is regarded as means to gain benefit to oneself or for particular interest groups that support the elite. The primary focus will be the actions of politicians in ways that can be classed as corruption, indiscretions and personal political agendas²⁸.

In the second section will explore the notion that for some elites keeping the state weak is actually beneficial to them in that this secures funds for the functioning of the state.

The third section will look at the notion of seeing the state as a way to advance the interests of the people, as in line with the notions discussed in Chapter Two. This will discuss the policies and agendas of political elites in both countries with regards to these ideas. It will focus on election policies, efforts made towards key indicators discussed in chapter two and economic development.

²⁸ These are vague categories and can be one and the same thing as notions of what constitutes as these are extremely subjective locally in PNG and Solomon Islands. Likewise, many of these notions are tied into local culture (Fraenkel, 2004; Hameiri, 2007) and the difficulty of dissecting this is discussed in chapter seven of this thesis. For the purposes of this chapter these are looked at as they would fall under the category of being undesirable in the good governance narrative that Australia and other aid donors espouse. Furthermore, though corruption happens elsewhere (including the pillars of good democracy) the prevalence and occurrence of such behaviours and the culture that they represent have arguably had an effect on the functioning of the state. What these actions represent will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

The fourth section will then look at whether section three has much merit. This will look at actual progress and actions. Despite lip service paid to the idea of the state in its ideal form, often the reality of the politics is closely linked to issues discussed earlier in the chapter where the state is seen as an item of capture. That being, the state is a way to secure power, esteem and often wealth.

The last section will discuss the idea that there is a lot more to the problem than just elites. There are factors that need further investigation on the way that the state is seen and the forces that drive these views. With this outlined it then becomes appropriate to discuss the state as an item of capture.

5.2 The State as an Object of Capture.

As has been repeatedly mentioned before in this thesis, the state in both PNG and Solomon Islands is effectively too weak to perform the roles most often attributed to the state (see Chapter Three). Often cited is the inefficiency of both countries bureaucracies. Indeed, it was one of the target areas of the RAMSI intervention in Solomon Islands (Dinnen, 2008). Mark Turner and David Kavanamur discuss Papua New Guinea, they write, “Conventional explanations blame inadequate bureaucratic capacity or inappropriate donor solutions. Such accounts have validity at one level of analysis, but as one digs deeper another explanation of policy failure is uncovered. That is politics” (2009, p. 9). This is to suggest that political elites are the ones that set the policies and conditions for the areas of public sector operation. In some senses this is not very contentious; in most states it is politics that sets the policies adopted by the bureaucracy. It is not the case of a clear dichotomy that is often presented by Western democracies (Svara, 2001). This is not a straight forward relationship either. James Svara citing Leonard White writes, “Although legislative control of administration is critical, he argued," it is nevertheless important to remember that the administration cooperates indispensably with the legislature, and that without its assistance, the task of legislation would

become much less informed and much less effective”” (2001, p. 176). Evidence has shown that the bureaucracies of both PNG and Solomon Islands (other than a few examples) tend to be weak in their influence and capacities (Dinnen, 2002; Fraenkel, 2004; Nelson, 2006)²⁹.

It is the functioning of politics in Papua New Guinea that is most interesting here. Turner and Kavanamur provide more evidence to suggest the role of politics in the state’s inefficiency.

Discussing PNG’s long history of failed public sector reform, they write:

“The government of Prime Minister Bill Skate was next to introduce public sector reforms, not at the behest of the World Bank but on the advice of one of its former Papua New Guinea specialists, Dr Pirouz Hamidian-Rad. While he argued that the World Bank was trying to bully Papua New Guinea to making policy decisions, some of which were unnecessary, he also announced that what Papua New Guinea needed was an aggressive public sector reform program (Wesley-Smith 1999). He believed political manoeuvring in Papua New Guinea would always derail any piecemeal approach. Politicians and bureaucrats would initially agree to reforms only to relent later once loans were released (personal communication, Hamidian-Rad 1998)” (2009, p. 17).

This suggests moves such as public sector reform are done strategically. There are two reasons that support this suggestion. First, to protect the status quo as the government is a large employer of the public (Turner and Kavanamur, 2009). Second, as the means to secure a source of income for the government.

²⁹ It should be noted here that in the case of the Solomon Islands it can be contested on this judgement. During the crisis period when public sector reforms were pushed through it could be that the bureaucracy was weak in its capacities, yet branches of it were strong in their influence and managing to mount opposition to reforms (Fraenkel, 2004; Hameiri, 2007). This is due to the patronage networks set up between differing levels of society and government in which these reforms impacted access to revenue (Hameiri, 2007). This complexity of networks will however, be discussed in chapter seven. And of worth noting is that the bureaucracy was ultimately divided and government managed to push through the reforms with the support of businessmen and key figures within the bureaucracy (Hameiri, 2007). The same could be said to apply in the case of PNG though ultimately it seems to come down to the decision of the government at the time. Turner and Kavanamur (2009) argue it is often as a means to secure the interests of political elite. This exercise of power is not always born out of self-interest though. For example Peter O’Neill’s crackdown on corruption and financial inefficiency that will be discussed further on in this chapter.

As Chapter Three has discussed, Solomon Islands has fared better in the sense that it has RAMSI staff still established within its bureaucracy. Yet there is still much left to be desired in regards to state operation when politics is examined and there is reason to suggest that the state is seen as an item of capture for benefits.

One factor that getting elected into government means is to an extent gaining a lot of power; especially over finances. This can be both through state funding and also through private revenue. Jon Fraenkel writes, “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” (2010, p. 7). This is the same throughout both countries. In both cases, being elected to parliament provides each MP with access to large funds for spending. In Solomon Islands it is called the Rural Constituency Development fund (RCD). This is provided by the Republic of China and provides MPs with funds to spend on development. Francis Fukuyama writes:

“each member of parliament (MP) is given SI\$1-2 million to distribute directly to constituents. The system is directly comparable to the District Support Grants in Papua New Guinea. Part of the motivation for the RCD funds lies in poor capacity of the formal administrative structure to deliver services on a local level; MPs find they can get resources to constituents more effectively through this channel” (2008, p. 6).

This is often not seen as targeted aid, but more a means to secure political recognition of the ROC by Solomon Islands (Dobell, 2007).

Each of these funds is assigned to the politician to use in funding projects in their respective electorates. These funds were established in order to fight allegations of over centralisation of the state and its revenue so that the whole country would benefit. Indeed it was and is often argued in Solomon Islands that most of the State’s revenue is kept around the capital Honiara. This was also one of the driving forces behind the unrest experienced there (Dinnen, 2002).

Yet, problems arise out of such funds in both countries. First, this funding often achieves nothing in terms of the projects it is given to. Second, it is often common practice for MPs to not use these funds until the period leading up to an election (Fraenkel, 2004). And third, MPs are often accused of corrupt behaviour in the spending of such funds. Usually this is in regards to the above mentioned use before an election for the purpose of vote buying. Allegations are regularly made of MPs favouring clan and family groups in the allocation of such funds. There is plenty of evidence to support both aspects of criticism labelled at MPs in the two countries. John Cox after explaining a couple of extreme examples of Solomon Island politicians' behaviour notes:

“there are many other everyday examples of what outsiders usually call corruption, where decisions are made to benefit a small elite rather than a broader common good. Allocation of overseas scholarships to children of politicians and permanent secretaries is an example of quite legal procedures that work consistently to benefit the Honiara-based elite” (2009, p. 968).

Both contested PM Sir Michael Somare³⁰ and his son Arthur Somare were only just recently subject to investigations on allegations of corruption. Arthur Somare has been in court for an extended period of time facing such charges. His father and family have in a more politically motivated agenda, been accused of misappropriating, and corruptly using public funds for his treatment in Singapore (Post-Courier, January 5, 2012). Somare's Deputy PM and acting PM, Sam Abal, in his absence was accused by the opposition of setting up businesses using public funds (The National, July 21, 2011). Similarly, other MPs such as Belden Namah have been accused of being funded by Malaysian interests. The incident in question saw a flight made to Malaysia in a private jet that drew protests from PNG's neighbour Indonesia for flying

³⁰ This is reference to the current political dead lock in PNG over who is legally still PM (see Appendix 1). Somare claims that his dismissal from the job and the current Government lead by Peter O'Neill was illegal. A decision contentiously ruled on in his favour 3-2 in the country's Supreme Court, see Appendix 1 for more information.

unauthorised at a low level through their airspace (Pacific.scoop, January 12, 2012). It was further rumoured that Namah brought back large bags of money from this flying visit, and since then has been subject of argument between both government and opposition about the truth of such claims and just what was discussed in Malaysia (Post-Courier, January 10, 2012).

In the Solomon Islands allegations of corruption are rife. The recently deposed former Prime Minister Danny Phillips came under intense scrutiny during the later part of his time as PM over his use of discretionary funding and continues to do so. This was after the opposition leader; the Hon. Derek Sikua obtained official figures on the spending of the Discretionary Fund allocated through the Prime Minister by Taiwan. The Solomon Star News was told by Sikua that “the official list shows that the more than \$7-Million of the \$10-Million already expended went to a total of 15 projects and not nine as government sources had told him earlier” (Solomon Star News, October 31, 2011). The paper further quotes Sikua as saying, “And all these projects all belong to the Prime Minister’s current wife Margret Phillip, two his ex-wives, his son, cronies and relatives” (Solomon Star News, October 31, 2011).

Nor would he be the first PM in Solomon Islands to be accused of such things. Alan Kemakezza was accused of being complicit in corrupt activities during the crisis period of 1998-2003 (Dinnen, 2002). Likewise, a number of other Solomon Island politicians were involved in the conflict of the crisis period (Dinnen, 2002). Some were even facing charges like Jimmy Lubisea who even after being convicted managed to retain his ministerial portfolio (Solomon Star News, 25 January, 2011; Solomon Star News, 27, January 2011).

Most recently was the case of two politicians who helped incite the 2006 Honiara riots; Charles Dausabea and Nelson Ne’e who were both arrested and charged as a result (Fraenkel, 2006). This was done in reaction to losing in the government formation process. Ultimately, it was a move that proved successful in the end for that particular bloc of MPs they were

members of (Fraenkel, 2006). This was in the light of the fact that the MP elected PM, Snyder Rini, was heavily involved in the conflict period. Rini was furthermore, subject to allegations of corruption during this period. The two MPs behind this escalation successfully capitalised on public discontent at his election to the role of PM. It was an incident that was to further highlight the precarious nature of the state in Solomon Islands for RAMSI and many other observers.

Yet Rini's successor, Manasseh Sogavare caused much trouble himself. By regularly engaging in diplomatic spats with Australia, he was seen by them as often perverting the course of justice in order to protect those accused of involvement in events of the crisis years. Furthermore, his election in 2000 though recognised by Australia and New Zealand was suspect, given as Sinclair Dinnen notes, "His election was assisted by the absence of six government MPs who failed to attend after being threatened by Malaitan militants" (2002, p. 288). His appointment of Julian Moti, a lawyer wanted in Australia over charges relating to sexual abuse, to a role within the state apparatus caused much derision amongst the Australian ranks and furthered their dim view of his suitability as PM.

Politics in general is evidence of the state being seen as a means of capture. The whole electoral process is evidence of this. As has been discussed in Chapter One, the government in both countries is formed through a period of intense negotiation (Corrin, 2009; Gelu, 2009). Often what is discussed are what benefits will be acquired by joining the coalition. Often incentives are put in place. For example, Solomon Islands parliament voted to raise the number of ministerial chairs to 24 as a bargaining chip to help form government (Corrin, 2009). Though this is done as a means to try shore up support for the government formation

process (this is in a parliament of 50), this incidentally is a very clear example of incentives being put forward for political elites to seize³¹.

In PNG when Peter O’Neill took power in August 2011, he appointed 33 ministers in cabinet (The National, August 8, 2011)³². This is from a parliament that holds only 109 members³³. 33 cabinet positions though, were not enough given the complaints of some MPs. Three MPs who had crossed the floor to join the Peter O’Neill coalition had complained that they had not received ministerial portfolios (The National, August 8, 2011). The guise one un-named politician used as an excuse was according to The National, “This is not a fair distribution of ministries as the Sepiks have not been represented” (The National, August 8, 2011). More evidence that these ministerial jobs were used as a deal breaker comes from further remarks by the group of MPs. The National quotes them as saying, “The same people on the other side

³¹ In getting such ministerial position one gets prestige in their local constituencies and the ability to bring back greater benefits to their constituents as well as personal benefits. Those who hold forestry, mining and fisheries portfolios are continuously courted by suitors trying to get contracts. This often provides these ministers good incentives to grant contracts. Having a portfolio gives a greater advantage for the politician to bring a project to his constituency, securing his position and benefiting supporting interests. An example of this was provided above with the revelation of the spending of discretionary funds by former Prime Minister Danny Phillip (Solomon Star News, October 31, 2011).

³² This is also striking as the constitution doesn’t provide for such a number of ministers. It is supposed to be that there be no more than a quarter of Parliament holding ministerial portfolios (www.Commonwealth-of-nations.org, 2012). Basic maths would show that currently a third of Parliament hold ministerial positions.

³³ This has to be specified further. The situation in PNG and Solomon Islands with regard to number of ministerial seats is similar to New Zealand. New Zealand currently has 28 ministers and spokespersons in the government (www.beehive.govt.nz, 2012). This is in a parliament of 120 seats. This is in comparison to other countries such as the UK (having 119 ministers inside and outside cabinet in the House of Commons with 650 MPs (BBC News, March 16, 2010; www.direct.gov.uk, 2012; www.parliament.uk, 2012), and France (formerly with 33 ministerial positions within government, now with 39 out of a total number of 331 members in the Senate and 577 members in the National Assembly (www.electionguide.org 2012; www.gouvernement.fr 2012). The distinction however, that needs to be made is that in the case of New Zealand, these ministerial portfolios are given to those within the party and major coalition partners that reflect a wider base of support (McLeay, 2003). It is true that these are used as bargaining chips and rewards for loyalty and service but there is a distinction that needs to be made. In the case of PNG and Solomon Islands with a lack of any real party system, ministerial positions are given to individual MPs who have a very narrow base of support (see Chapter One) and therefore, are much more important as a bargaining chip with regards to the formation of government than in NZ even under MMP. Likewise, such appointments in both PNG and Solomon Islands cannot guarantee loyalty to the coalition as evidenced by frequent changes of allegiance.

have come again to control government. There is no difference in the new government,” they said” (The National, August 8, 2011). Regional politics has a lot to do with this as the O’Neill government is largely dominated at the top by Highlanders while the previous was dominated by Sepiks (The National, August 8, 2011 a; The National, August 8, 2011 b). Even when a politician does not sit in the cabinet they can act strategically to position themselves for any future opportunity. As Fraenkel writes, “Many outside cabinet in PNG have preferred to sit on the “middle benches” poised between government and opposition, so as to be open to offers of ministerial portfolios but equally accessible to being courted by opposition schemers planning assembly of a new government” (2010, p. 7).

Even if one were to disregard such issues of corruption, misappropriation of funds etc. that plague the politics of both countries, it is clear that politics in both countries is about competition and control. Most of the arguments around the centralisation of government are about the notion that too few get too much control over resources in the two countries. The counter argument however, is the same for those made against decentralised government in the two territories and has led to number provinces in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands having their provincial governments and spending powers cancelled (Corrin, 2009; Gelu, 2009). Likewise, as Gelu (2009) evidences, there has not been an improvement in development of the PNG state as a result of either approach to controlling expenditure.

5.3 A Weak State being Beneficial

The above section looked at the notion of the state being an object which provides politicians with positions of power and access to finance. In these instances the state is seen as a means to serve personal interests and provide benefits. Turner and Kavanamur (2009) noted earlier that there has been popular rhetoric about PNG being bullied into reforms and being somewhat tantamount as perilous to their national sovereignty. It can be argued however, that such comments are just rhetoric to appease the masses. This weakening of sovereignty can in

fact be a strategic move to gain access to further benefits. This is a view held by Christopher Rudolph writing about the transitional nature of the sovereignty of states. He writes:

“Maximizing domestic economic growth can only serve to strengthen domestic state sovereignty, whereas neglect can only serve to weaken the relationship between state and society. Sovereignty is not simply “sold” for economic gain, but dimensions can be “traded” (decreasing control over one dimension in order to increase others) to forward the interests of the state” (2005, p. 8).

To an extent, this proves true for PNG. It could be argued that maintaining a weak state can have some advantages for politicians. Chapter Four highlighted this by the governments co-opting of churches into the role of providing many services that are the realm of the state.

There also exists by being weak the ability to receive large amounts of aid money. A. Batten notes in his study on the affect that aid has on PNG governments are that:

“The accusation that grant aid, in particular budget support, has undermined the PNG government’s incentives to expand its tax collections appears well founded. Higher levels of grants are strongly associated with lower levels of domestic revenue mobilisation, reflecting a preference by the government to continue drawing on foreign resources rather than tax its own constituents” (2010, p. 157-158).

Since independence, PNG has remained a state heavily reliant on foreign aid (Batten, 2010).

On one level, this is a particularly good strategy. The limited amount of economic development and subsequently small formal economy means that raising domestic revenue would be a rather hard task. Also, given the laissez faire nature of PNG bureaucracy it is more convenient to use donor money to fund government functioning than try raise it themselves.

Despite allegations that aid encourages reckless and corrupt practices (Hughes, 2003), Batten argues that aid is used rather pragmatically and seriously. He notes:

“that in addition to revenue substitution, the government has displayed a preference for using additional grant resources to lower its levels of domestic borrowing rather than

funding new expenditure items. This result is in stark contrast to the numerous authors who have posited that aid has contributed to reckless expenditure behaviour and public debt accumulation by successive PNG governments” (2010, p. 158).

Therefore aid in a sense is a strategic tool to finance the state. As the outgoing Minister of Education James Marape told *The National*, “Without our partners, we cannot do the work alone as we need aid for the task ahead. I encourage the new minister to maintain relations and contact with our development partners” (*The National*, August 11, 2011). It concerns MPs that they maintain good ties with donor countries, especially that of Australia. In July 2011, the recently sacked Foreign Affairs Minister told the *Post-Courier* that “The indifference by Government on major foreign policy matters is threatening PNG’s relations with its oldest friend, Australia and the big tiger economies of Asia” (*Post-Courier*, July 19, 2011). The aid in question is mostly grants and targeted projects, not loans (Batten, 2010). The nature of such aid and fact that PNG relies so heavily on this aid means that politicians are active in trying to look as though they are doing the right thing with regards to economic reforms, making progress and stamping out dysfunctional practices.

There is a more interesting example of political elites using their status to try get funding. In Australia’s ongoing search to find somewhere to establish an immigration detention centre, the PNG island of Manus was looked at as it had formerly held such a centre (*Yahoo New Zealand News*, August 18, 2011). On recognising such potential, the governor of the island presented a list of 28 projects that it wanted Australia to fund in the event of it re-opening the detention centre (*Yahoo New Zealand News*, August 18, 2011). As the AAP reports in the article, “The projects it wants funded include fixing local roads and highways, upgrading the domestic Momote Airport, fixing parts of the island’s water supply, police housing, upgrading the local hospital, building a technical high school and a broadband network” (*Yahoo New Zealand News*, August 18, 2011). Sent to the PNG government for the negotiation process, it is reported that, “The projects are currently without cost estimates, the

memo says” (Yahoo New Zealand News, August 18, 2011). Though not particularly realistic in expectation (Australia moved on elsewhere anyway), it shows that such opportunities are readily seized upon as a means to get benefits.

5.4 The State as an Object of Betterment

This section looks at the idea amongst political elite towards the state being a structure for national advancement and the betterment of its people. The most striking character of Melanesian politics as has been discussed so often here is the fluidity of it. Both countries historically have seen politicians scramble about trying to attain power and trying to overthrow rivals for the power in a rather circular pattern. This has often been argued to be a root cause of the weakness in both states. The reason being that politicians are too busy fighting for power to be able to achieve anything that develops the state or advance its interests. This has lead to the actions of political elites in trying to stabilise the politics of both countries.

In the case of PNG it was the establishment of OLIPPAC as part of the constitution governing affairs and the powers of the state. As Turner and Kavanamur explain:

“The Morauta government’s wide-ranging reforms also included a new element — political parties and the electoral process, which were seen as being at the heart of bad governance and irrational behaviour by public officials. The quality of the policy process could be improved through political engineering rather than traditional capacity-building initiatives (*The National* 24 April 2001). This new approach led to the Organic Law on the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates of 2001. Its objective was to limit the numerical dominance of independent MPs and their party-hopping practices as well as to reduce the burgeoning number of political parties” (2009, p. 18).

As has been discussed earlier it achieved this in respects to the fact that the next government, led by Sir Michael Somare from 2002 – 2007 survived a full term of office, the first to do so.

It bound politicians who voted for Somare to stay loyal and for the most part support government policy (Gelu, 2009).

A similar exercise in political engineering was suggested as a way to help solve the state's problems in Solomon Islands. And a similar reform project was advanced by Solomon Island PM Derek Sikua (Fraenkel, Regan, and Hegarty, 2008). Nonetheless, despite these intentions the changes proposed never got the majority of votes it needed amongst leaders to be achieved. This was due to many within the Solomon Islands parliament citing that the proposed legislation was undemocratic (Fraenkel, Regan, and Hegarty, 2008; Steeves, 2011). Discussed in the first section of this chapter, politicians often engage in behaviour that the West would term corrupt. They are widely perceived to be corrupt in both countries and as a result political elites are very quick to promote the idea that they will stamp out corruption. In addition, politicians claim that they will apply principles of good governance and accountability if they are elected to government.

It leads to much whistle blowing by politicians on the alleged corruption of their peers. Calls for commissions of inquiry into ministers are a regular occurrence as has been evidenced earlier on in this chapter with the few instances raised. The current Papua New Guinean (formally recognised) government led by Peter O'Neill has been particularly proactive in this sense. O'Neill acknowledges that the country's wealth has been mismanaged; particularly the revenue received from mining that makes up 60 per cent of the country's exports. He told the Post-Courier that, "The revenues that we have got from these mines have been mismanaged as such that we don't even have any money now," (Post-Courier, November 18, 2011). As such, the Post-Courier reports that, "The Prime Minister said the Government would be setting up a fund management law in the next session of Parliament. He said it was important that PNG had to have a law to manage funds and reports could be made every three months" (Post-Courier, November 18, 2011). Leaders in PNG have historically never lacked aspiration

in what they hoped to publicly achieve. The O'Neill government though, has been rather more zealous as of yet than most.

It is common for leaders to announce grand schemes for what they hope to achieve in government. The current PNG government of Peter O'Neill has announced and started implementing a policy of free education within PNG schools. Since education is on many accounts beneficial to both the people and the economy, this is a design that is meant to achieve strengthening the state (Post-Courier, October 26, 2011).

To add to this policy approach O'Neill's government has promised that if re-elected in the 2012 election they will implement a program of free healthcare for every citizen in the country (Post-Courier, October 26, 2011). Again this is a policy that has never been achieved by any PNG government before. Given what has been discussed in Chapter Three; improving health outcomes of the country's citizens is very much to the benefit of the state, especially given PNGs dismal record on health.

Most striking though in the case of PNG is the development of the Vision 2050 document. This document drafted by the National Planning Committee at the request of Sir Michael Somare during his term as PM in 2008 and published in 2009 provides an ambitious outline for what his government hoped the country would achieve in the next 40 years between 2010 and 2050 (PNG Vision 2050). The report was based on numerous consultations and was a home grown initiative as Sir Michael Somare writes:

“the aspirations that are reflected in Vision 2050 have been derived from wide consultations with our people from the 89 constituencies in the country. Simple villagers, mothers, children, qualified academics, and other professionals have contributed to this document. The final version of Vision 2050 has been prepared by our own sons and daughters, with inputs from some of our most qualified citizens” (2009, p. x).

Somare argues the value of such a document in the introduction of it saying:

“Our Vision 2050 provides every man, woman, boy, and girl in this nation with the opportunity for personal development and positive engagement. As a government, we are convinced that we must empower our people with the right education and life-skills, and provide them with the opportunity to earn an honest living. Only then can we guarantee our nation’s continued prosperity and security” (2009, p. x)

The document readily acknowledges the failings of the past and looks forward to the future as a chance for the country to turn its fortunes around (PNG Vision 2050). It also outlines what it hopes to achieve for the state. As then Deputy PM Sir Dr. Puka I. Temu writes:

“Vision 2050 sets the overall direction for the country to attain our dream to be a Smart, Wise, Fair, Healthy and Happy Society by 2050. This means that by 2050, we as a people, will reward excellence and reach high standards of innovativeness. We will also be healthy, wealthy and safe. Our institutions will practise and uphold higher standards of transparency, accountability and good governance. In addition, our people and government will contribute more effectively to the social and economic well-being of our beautiful nation” (2009, p. xii).

In short the document aspires to create a state much along the lines of that as discussed in Chapter Two. It hopes for a state that resembles those in the West. It focuses on several key pillars for a healthy society:

- Human Capital Development, Gender, Youth and People Empowerment;
- Wealth Creation;
- Institutional Development and Service Delivery;
- Security and International Relations;
- Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change;
- Spiritual, Cultural and Community Development; and
- Strategic Planning, Integration and Control.

(2009, p. xiv)

In providing an outline for what some leaders and people at least want the state to be in terms of shape and structure, it has now become the basis for how successive governments formulate their policy and sets the general tone of politics within the country. On this basis it is successful as a tool of aspiration. After reading such a document, one could best describe it as rather over ambitious and slightly utopian in its goals and forecasts.

Examples of designs for a stronger, healthier state are also present in Solomon Islands. The current government led by Gordon Darcy Lilo and formerly by Danny Phillip called itself the National Coalition of Rural Advancement (NCRA). Their aims are to supposedly advance the development of rural Solomon Islands. Strategically it is wise in that most of Solomon Island is rural and previously most development had been centred on the country's capital Honiara which was one of the roots of the conflict period. As with the current PNG government's approach, the current government in Solomon Islands has focused on providing better healthcare and better education outcomes.

If we look back at Solomon Islands during the conflict period there was awareness amongst some political elite that the state was falling into disrepair and that something needed to be done. This can be seen in two requests by former PMs to Australia and New Zealand for outside intervention to help stop the decline (Watson, 2005). The first request being declined and the second resulting in the RAMSI intervention as discussed in Chapter Two.

In both countries the political leaders talk of grand plans for the economic advancement of the state and its people. PNG is very rich in minerals and natural gas and governments readily proclaim that they are at the forefront of harnessing such resources and generating the wealth for the PNG people. One of the current PM's³⁴, Peter O'Neill has grand visions for the country. Todagia Kelola reports in the Post-Courier that, "Papua New Guinea's challenge

³⁴ Given the current political situation in PNG there is technically two Prime Ministers.

now is to be economically independent, says Prime Minister Peter O'Neill" (Post-Courier, November 18, 2011). His vision is that the country would achieve prosperity. He was looking towards the up-coming 2012 elections because, "He said the 2012 National Election was far more important than previous elections as it should ensure that PNG had economic independence so that by 2014, the country would have enormous wealth" (Post-Courier, November 18, 2011). Sir Michael Somare too has made such statements as can be seen by the Vision 2050 document and a former statement in the media (Post-Courier, December 13, 2010).

In the Solomon Islands, the same has been said about the country's agricultural industry, it's potential for undersea mining, fisheries and it's rather depleted forestry resource. Regular talk is made by Solomon politicians on the benefits that economic partnerships will have with countries such as Israel, New Zealand, Taiwan, Australia and recently Russia.

5.5 The Realities

It must be stated that these grand schemes and policy actions are often either just a facade or a convenient ploy and can be traced back to the key theme of Melanesian politics; that of survival. Certainly much has been made of the success of OLIPPAC, yet some argue that in fact it has not been that successful. The first government in PNG to survive a whole term has been accredited to the success of OLIPPAC. It was though, also greatly assisted by Somare suspending parliament for long periods of time and at other points the opposition not turning up due to the seemingly futile nature of being in opposition. Politicians also found ways around the law by creating one member political parties (Cox, 2009; Fraenkel, Regan, and Hegarty, 2008).

There may be other reasons why stability was achieved for a whole term of government.

Fraenkel takes a cynical approach to the success of OLIPPAC writing, "The more plausible explanation was better handling of the country's second resources boom (Baton et al, 2009),

and the availability of a good deal more money to grease the political wheels” (2010, p. 9). Also one has to acknowledge that though the government saw out a full term of office there were a large number of changes in ministerial positions under Somare’s bidding, hardly the picture of stability (Fraenkel, 2010). And as the current period between the 2007 election and the upcoming 2012 election has shown, OLIPPAC has not made that much of a difference and has actually in ways caused one of PNG’s most severe political crises.

Fraenkel, Regan, and Hegarty (2008) argue that such legislation and amendments can serve another purpose too. That is as a means to cement ones position of power in government for the maximum amount of time possible. Again the strong man actions of Somare during the period of 2002-2007 are an example of this (Fraenkel, 2010). Former PM Julias Chan came out and attacked the formerly ruling National Alliance, warning “that the National Alliance-led Government coalition is taking PNG down the same route which dictated the downfall of African nations by using its superior numbers to dictate absolute control at the national level, effectively eroding Parliamentary democracy and building a time bomb ready to explode in time” (Post-Courier, July 28, 2011)³⁵. Indeed, that was why Fraenkel, Regan, and Hegarty (2008) argue so many politicians in Solomon Islands were opposed to Derek Sikua’s proposal to implement such a policy. It does not take much analysis of the rhetoric of Somare and his associates to see that they are using OLIPPAC as a basis to justify that his dismissal was constitutionally illegal.³⁶ Also, it has not strengthened the position of political parties in PNG. Parties are still based on personalities more than anything, and even under OLIPPAC, at election time parties still appear and disappear overnight (Fraenkel, Regan, and Hegarty, 2008; Gelu, 2009).

³⁵ Given what was to transpire at the start of August, this claim may be a bit farfetched. Julias Chan was PM during the Sandline affair; arguably, (barring the current crisis) causing one of PNG’s biggest political crises with the military revolting and Chan eventually stepping down as PM (Kerr, 1999). It does highlight though to show that there is a perception that OLIPPAC stifles democracy.

³⁶ See Appendix 1.

With the role of being an agent of the state seen as a popular way to get access to money, it is against many politicians' interests to enable such legislation. Fraenkel writes, "Regular no confidence votes in Solomon Islands are popularly believed to be money-making schemes: even if they do not succeed, the MPs all round earn large sums of cash as recipients of rival factions' bids for political support" (2010, p. 7). With this bit of information in hand it makes even less sense for MPs to want such legislation. When PM Derek Sikua tried passing such legislation it failed. The effects though, were telling as Fraenkel notes:

"several ministers in Dr Sikua's cabinet conspired against the proposed constitutional amendment, which failed to obtain the required two-thirds majority. Those ministers were sacked by Dr Sikua for this act of rebellion, but they re-emerged, holding key portfolios, in the government led by new Prime Minister Danny Philip after the August 2010 election" (2010, p. 9).

Much is made of the various reforms that take place in PNG in an effort to improve the functioning of the state. Though when further examined it can be said that such reforms just cement the power of political elites. Turner and Kavanamur explain this:

"It is significant that the public service reforms that have been pushed through parliament have been of domestic origin and concerned with enhancing the power of the national political elite. They have secured control of appointments and subnational government while simultaneously allowing accountability to go into decline. When looked at from this viewpoint, public sector reform which produces good governance is actually a major threat to the political elite. While the system does not work for the majority of Papua New Guineans it may well work for many in the political elite" (2009, p. 20).

Another aspect of politics is even when purges are undertaken it is often viewed purely from a stand point of it being about personal agenda. Fraenkel (2010) and Fraenkel, Regan, and Hegarty (2008) note that after Sikua failed in his bid for enacting a political party strengthening law that he fired those in his cabinet who did not side with him. Recently, the

current use of the Papua New Guinea Corruption Task Force Sweep team was alleged to be being used for personal vendettas by the O'Neill government (Post-Courier, January 5, 2012). Whether this is true or not is hard to verify, however, it does show that politics is still seen as a way to seek and achieve personal agendas.

Often in the case of PNG political elites talk extensively of the importance of the constitution in securing and advancing the PNG state. Regular calls of doing things in line with the constitution are made by both sides. In essence there is some basis to the idea that the constitution does provide for a framework in which the state exists. Specifically the constitution does not lay out what the state is, but provides the out lines on how its mechanisms should operate. This among other things has lead to the current political crisis in PNG. The questioning of whether the current government is constitutionally legal and whether that its actions were legal has dominated the politics of PNG since August 2011 (The National, January 6, 2012). Both sides claim to be within the legal sanctioning of the constitution (BBC news, December 13, 2011).

The use of the constitution is a deliberate act of legitimising the actions of politicians. It does not prevent much of the self-serving behaviour that continues to go on with in the country. Certainly, this is the opinion of one former National and Supreme Court judge. Nemo Yalo in the Post-Courier told an audience that, "Some say we have a vibrant constitutional democracy." (Post-Courier, June 6, 2011). He follows through with, "I say we have a constitutional democracy provided for by the Constitution but in practice it is what I call a constitutional mobocracy" (Post-Courier, June 6, 2011). He elaborates, "It is a strange kind of democracy in which the mob rules not necessarily in accordance with the Constitution but under the shadow of the Constitution" (Post-Courier, June 6, 2011). He qualifies this assessment on a number of grounds; yet, one statement sums it up best:

“more often than not the Parliament is made in-operational because the mob decides to use it to serve self-interest such as sanctioning very long paid holidays or adjournments which are unconstitutional and its true purpose is made subservient to the interest of the mob by the mob at the expense of constitutional or parliamentary democracy as envisaged by our forefathers as reflected in the Constitution” (Post-Courier, June 6, 2011).

Certainly, provided the evidence of politics in PNG, the Constitution is readily used as a means to advance self-interest. It also fits with the wider picture of the state being an item of capture.

Overall it has to be argued that results will not necessarily change by adjusting structures. Indeed, the West learnt that during the period of decolonisation. Most scholars and governments readily acknowledge that such efforts will not work despite a few enthusiasts remaining (Dinnen, 2007, Fukuyama, 2008, Fraenkel, 2004). Many in PNG and Solomon Islands recognise this, some think that engineering by locals will fix it; however, it fails to recognise that the state as a concept and structure relies heavily on external ideals of its structure and function.

5.6 An Underlying Reason?

When one looks at the many grand statements and pledges made by political elites over the years, it is hard to not look at it cynically. For the most part, history has shown that they have never achieved high goals. There must though, be a basis to this parading of grandiose ambition and tough talking. It must at least serve a purpose. Arguably, what is desired by at least some of those who are in power is to project an image of being in control and achieving progress. This image serves to project some legitimacy of the government towards the people. An image of control fits into many aspects of the foundations of the state regardless of where one lives. On a deeper analysis, one would recognise that the states survival and authority in any country largely relies on projecting an image of authority and using symbolism to

maintain this. The state cannot police everything that we do in terms of the laws it sets. To an extent, the state has to rely on the illusion of having authority and that one believes in its capability to police its laws and that we should obey them (Morris, 1998).

Clifford Geertz's book, "Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth Century Bali", highlights how ritual and image was used to project power, authority and legitimacy in the Balinese state of Negara. He draws parallels to modernity in this regard, writing "No one remains dominant politically for very long who cannot in some way promise violence to recalcitrant's, pry support from producers, portray his actions as collective sentiment, or justify his decisions as ratified practice" (1980, p. 123). The focus for leaders in PNG and Solomon Islands is justification in the ratifying of the states practice. As it has been argued earlier that the state has no real authority in both countries. By authority, I mean the means to enforce ones will upon the territory. For example, the Solomon's police force was hijacked by militants and both the police and army in PNG have proven to be ineffective at quelling civil disorder. Leaders know this. In the essay The Very Idea of Popular Sovereignty, Christopher Morris writes:

"Something is a genuine authority only insofar as its directives are reasons for action. It is possible for something to have authority in this sense without possessing any (non-normative) power or without being able to impose sanctions for disobedience. However, it may be that *political* authority cannot be *justified* if it is not, to some extent, effective, and effectiveness for most political regimes may require some capacity for imposing sanctions.

On this view, justified political authority requires political *power*, understood as a *de facto* or causal ability to influence or control events (e.g., by imposing sanctions)" (2000, p. 3).

Though this paragraph talks about the coercive means to assert authority, i.e. the ability to impose sanctions, in both countries the state holds authority in the sense that it controls large

streams of revenue and provides a large number of services that people find necessary and desirable.³⁷

Political leaders then seek to get people to accord them legitimacy in their position as agents of the state. Being in government and indeed parliament puts one in a precarious position, if one survives the votes of no confidence and fluid shifts of support, come election time one still has to face their electorate. MPs face attack on all sides. Given the high turnover of MPs each election it is important to try to project some legitimacy. It has become even more important in PNG after the change from the First Past the Post (FPP) voting system to that of the Limited Preferential Voting (LPV) system in which politicians no longer can rely on their small voter base, now having to appeal to a wider base, at least only to a limited extent (Electoral Commission of PNG, 2007).

Though it also reveals something that warrants further discussion with regards to the greater population as a whole and how the state is viewed.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the way that Papua New Guinean and Solomon political leaders see the state. On one level, many leaders quite clearly see the role of being an agent of the state as means to gain benefits. There is no shortage of material detailing such allegations and charges against MPs. It has also shown that maintaining a weak state can be beneficial in that it entails the ability to access outside funding and avoid having to try generating revenue from local sources.

There are yet, some leaders who have desires for the state to be a strong modern entity that benefits the people as a whole. This is an idea of the state that follows along the lines of those discussed in Chapter Two. Though there may be this desire for a strong state, it is hard to

³⁷ Though more often than not these services rely heavily on foreign aid to fund them, the fact that they are accorded the money to provide these services justifies this authority.

actually verify this as being true. Popular rhetoric has been a feature of both countries politicians since independence, yet results still have not been delivered. Scholars have shown that often the measures put in place can have no effect in this regard, or further still, set to serve other purposes like the case of political party strengthening cementing certain politicians control on power.

In a politically competitive environment it seems a necessary ploy to make grand claims and project an image of legitimacy for one's role in the state. This then leads to an interesting question of just how much control political leaders actually have. It follows on from this that there needs to be an assessment of the role of the public in influencing politics and ultimately shaping the state. The next chapter will address this.

6.0 Synthesis

6.1 Introduction

The last chapter showed that the state is perceived in two separate ways by leaders; one, an item of capture, and two, the provider of benefits for the people. It argued that despite many claiming to be working to use the state for the wider good that this was actually hard to prove. Many politicians make such statements and gestures, but do not support it in practice causing difficulties in determining their actual intent. The last chapter found that structural reforms often have self-serving interests and in practice are highly dubious in their outcomes. Overall, it seems that the state is seen by many politicians as a prize and a convenient source of revenue. What the last chapter also found was that there is something driving these MPs to this. Where previously it was hypothesised that elites were the ones that shaped the state, it became clear that though they do to an extent, internal politics was unstable as a result of a perceived need to serve constituents. This chapter provides a synthesis of the arguments discussed earlier and their relation to the role that the people have in shaping the state. First, it shows the accountability of MPs to their people and the further limitations placed upon them by issues such as land ownership. It explains how the state is seen as an item of capture by many people, and as such, leaders and voters are engaged in a complex patron client relationship.

From this it is deduced what this means for the modern state. It also, suggests that though many note the alien nature of the state upon its creation in both countries, the state has readily been adopted by Melanesians to become an extension of their culture. In a sense the state has become hybridized. Finally, this chapter concludes that for Australia to see results of its aid and encouragement in helping the state to take its ideal form will not come until the populace of both states sees the state in a different light.

6.2 The Accountability of Leaders to the People

The common idea that the state is separate from both the ruled and ruler is difficult when compared to the two countries studied here. The sovereignty of the states of PNG and Solomon Islands and therefore, their effectiveness as states is severely bounded by the sovereignty of their inhabitants. This is not in the sense of legal protections offered to the people, but in the sense that their ability to exercise their choice severely limits the effectiveness of the state in both countries. It has created what Jeffery Steeves terms “unbounded politics” (2011, p. 344). This term means exactly what it says. Politics is unbounded in a way not seen in other states. Though more extreme in the case of Solomon Islands than PNG since the enactment of OLIPPAC, the roots of this phenomena are the same; that is the voter base.

The voter base is what can be termed as ‘shrewd consumers’ of politics. They go wherever they will get the best deal. That means for leaders to get the position they aspire to or maintain they have to placate this base. This then adds further momentum to the unbounded politics of both countries as MPs jostle for positions of power to be able to provide returns to their voter base (Fraenkel, 2004). Fraenkel further explains the case of Solomon Islands, he writes, “Horse-trading by back room cabals during the selection of the premier (or during ‘no confidence’ votes thereafter) often yields spectacular changes of allegiance. Parliamentarians who pursue such tactics are not *necessarily* corrupt (although many are)” (2004, p. 137). This shows that there is seen a direct need to actively seek a position where benefits will be obtained by many MPs, regardless of whether they are corrupt or not. John Cox further evidences the fluidity of politics post RAMSI writing, “it is characterised by continual re-negotiation of agreements and alliances, as well as challenges from new players who want to enter the circle, and the on-going demands for redistribution of the spoils of office from political supporters” (2009, p. 969).

A failure to do so will often mean that voters will go elsewhere as seen in the 2010 elections in Solomon Islands where 25 of the 50 MPS elected to parliament were not already formerly sitting MPs (Steeves, 2011). This follows the trend of the past with a high turnover of MPs (Roughan, 2000). In PNG Fraenkel, Regan and Hegarty note, “Between 50 and 75 percent of members in PNG tend to lose their seats at each general election” (2008, p. 5).

Donor countries and scholars alike note the lack of accountability of politicians in the two respective states, but ultimately given the high turnover rates at election time, politicians are accountable.

In Solomon Islands some politicians put the blame squarely on the people. The Solomon Star News reports the Premier of Malaita province, Edwin Suibaea as saying, “the public should accept who ever is chosen at the floor of parliament to take up the Prime Minister’s post” (Solomon Star News, November 17, 2011). The article expresses the view of another politician, the Premier for Choiseul province, Jackson Kiloe. The paper reports that he “said its time for people to recognize the rights of parliamentarians” (Solomon Star News, November 17, 2011). He alludes to the constitution as a basis for this and is directly quoted as saying “The public played their part in electing their Member of Parliament and now it’s the parliamentarians turn to choose the Prime Minister” (Solomon Star News, November 17, 2011). This was following` the recent political coup launched by Gordon Darcy Lilo to usurp Danny Phillip as PM, which led to a number of protests by the public calling for Lilo’s resignation as PM. This highlights two things. First, it is obvious the people have some power over politics in the country. Second, as a result of this, some politicians think that they should have more power in regards to their decisions as MPs on matters such as who forms government.

Often it is the case that politicians are extremely accountable to their electorates in ways that the Western politicians mostly are not³⁸. That is, if you manage to incense the electorate to such an extent, they will react violently, either protesting or directly attacking politicians. The 2006 Solomon Islands elections were of course an example of this (Dinnen, 2007; Fraenkel, Regan and Hegarty, 2008; Steeves, 2011). PNG can be just as extreme in this respect. In one case the Defence Minister Guma Wau was attacked by members of his tribe (The National, September 6, 2011). According to the paper, “Several government vehicles, including police land cruisers, were smashed while escorting Gau” (The National, September 6, 2011). Shortly after this incident another MP, Chimbu Governor Fr John Garia was attacked by an angry mob, apparently only being saved by the actions of police (The National, September 19, 2011). Furthermore, after the dismissal of the National Alliance from government, an ex-MP was threatened to leave the province he lives in for the actions of his successor Speaker Jeffery Nape who had dismissed the former PM Sir Michael Somare (Post-Courier, September 14, 2011).

Though there is this accountability, it is based upon a populous with rather narrow self interests in receiving benefits for themselves. In Solomon Islands it can be clearly evidenced by the results of successive ‘Peoples Surveys’ conducted by RAMSI. They find that a large proportion of people see their politicians as being directly representative of them and their needs, therefore charged with serving them almost exclusively. The 2007 survey found that “Sixty-nine per cent said one of the main jobs of an MP was ‘assist individual people in their electorate’” (RAMSI Peoples Survey, 2007, p. 9). Interestingly, the 2009 survey shows the most interesting result on this question with “42% said it was to ‘assist those who voted for

³⁸ It has to be stated that this is of course disregarding assassination which has in instances been a factor in both Western and non-Western states alike.

him’,” (RAMSI Peoples Survey, 2009, p. 11). It has remained a recurrent theme amongst the surveys from 2006 to 2009.³⁹

Fraenkel, Regan and Hegarty, 2008; Steeves, 2011 provide evidence of this explaining the fact that many Solomon Island politicians did not see political strengthening amendments to their constitution as beneficial. Rather they saw it as a direct threat to democracy and not in the interests of their constituents. Steeves cites one politician, writing “As Haomae (2009) stated, ‘. . . I have been voted by chiefs and people of Small Malaita who have given me the mandate to make judgements on national issues before Parliament on their behalf” (2011, p. 347). He also noted that, “Oti (2009) also saw parties as blocking the freedom of backbenchers to express themselves in parliament” (2011, p. 347).

Similarly, in PNG the enactment of OLIPPAC has been contentious. Though many have heralded it as a success, others have seen it as threat to democracy and a means to allow potential abuses of power by ruling governments (Standish, 2002).

This political fluidity where five minutes is a long time effectively limits the ability of the state to function. Yet the feature of MPs getting elected with only a narrow voter base is a most poignant reflection of the society it represents. The unity of Melanesians rarely extends beyond a very narrow scope of family, clan and wantok. It is as John Stuart Mills argues in the essay ‘Of Nationality’ that, “Free institutions are next to impossible in a country made up of different nationalities. Among a people without fellow-feeling, especially if they read and speak different languages, the united public opinion, necessary to the working of representative government, cannot exist” (1997, p. 547).

³⁹ The 2010 RAMSI Peoples Survey did not ask respondents the role that their MPs played (RAMSI Peoples Survey, 2010).

6.3 Further Limitations

Politicians speak often about the large amount of mineral and natural gas wealth that the country holds. They are particularly vocal in trumpeting how beneficial those projects such as the joint venture LNG project will be to the development of PNG. However, this project has been a stop start affair from the beginning and still has not really taken off, nor produced the grandiose visions of wealth the politicians promised. Nor is any other project likely to do so. This is because of issues around land ownership.

Land ownership is a complex issue in both PNG and Solomon Islands and was discussed briefly in Chapter Three. Politically, it is a hot potato when what is at stake is examined. Figures released by the Bank of PNG third quarter bulletin, and as reported in *The National* show that “60% of annual export revenue comes from the mining sector” (*The National*, December 21, 2010). This is a large figure that comes from only several mines in production (*The National*, December 21, 2010). Land owners have a lot of influence in both countries given that most land is still held under customary title. Land owners therefore are important actors in election outcomes. In PNG landowners regularly call upon politicians to enact legislation that enables land owners to lay claim to the minerals and gas on their land. Some politicians have taken this on board (*The National*, August 25, 2011; *Post-Courier*, August 28, 2011). Politicians however, know too, that to enact such legislation taking mineral and gas ownership away from the state would severely impact potential state revenue and deter foreign investors (*The National*, August 25, 2011). The detrimental effects of such an action were discussed in Chapter Three. It remains hard enough at the moment for the PNG government to negotiate compensation with land owners for the use of their land. The same difficulties apply to foreign companies trying to negotiate compensation with locals. If the locals demand more compensation (as they regularly do) and do not receive it they resort to halting operations on that area (*Post-Courier*, November 30, 2011). This can either be in the

form of road blocks, sabotaging equipment or even direct attacks on workers (Post-Courier, January 24, 2011; PNG Industry News, September 14, 2011). This too is the case in Solomon Islands with the Gold Ridge mine in which land owners have sabotaged operations in protest and made compensation claims upon the company (Solomon Star News, September 11, 2011).

Land reform is a contentious issue. As Helen Hughes points out, “Not one country in the world has developed on the basis of communal land ownership” (2003, p. 13). She further adds, “The extraction of timber from communal lands with huge associated corruption, with little return to the landowners or the nation state and without replanting to sustain yields, indicates the utter failure of communal ownership to manage resources” (2003, p. 13). This presents a problem that any government in the two countries will face; that without drastic reforms, the success in obtaining revenue from mining projects and consequent economic development it supposedly entails will not be achievable.

It is however, fine to suggest such reforms. Though, when one looks at the evidence above there is plenty to suggest that such attempt at reforms would be equal to political suicide. No leader or government could possibly get such a mandate in the two countries. It also suggests something about the state and what it requires that will be discussed further on in this chapter.

6.4 The State as an Item of Capture

It should be noted that the way the inhabitants of both countries see the state is somewhat the way that the West and this paper sees the state: That being a structure that provides for the people and protects them to a degree. However, in the case of both PNG and Solomon Islands citizens their views diverge from the West at this point. Where many in the West would see the state as a means to provide the conditions suitable for thriving and pursuing ambitions, those in PNG and Solomon Islands often see the state as a structure that can provide direct wealth (Fraenkel, 2004). Bill Standish notes, “In the Highlands, especially, people have

shown they are prepared to corrupt, defy and even attack agents of the state in their efforts to gain control of its resources” (2002, p. 31). By extension of this, political leaders are therefore seen as agents to acquire this wealth and are consequently held accountable to do so in a democratic system as noted by the high turnover of those elected to office. It also promotes a strong sense of competition at election time as Standish writes in relation to the 2002 PNG elections, “With few exceptions, MPs redistribute little money to local level councils, yet they are themselves unable to spend it effectively. This process further antagonises those who miss out, and intensifies political competition and conflict. It was almost certainly contributed to 83 sitting MPs losing their seats in 2002” (2002, p. 30). Similarly, as discussed in chapter four, the same competition applies to the various churches to an extent. Though not providing in quite the same way the benefits the state can, people will shop around for the religion that suits them best. No different, one could say in relation to people’s choice of religion in any other society. However, in the case of both countries it is often along the lines of what the church can provide them in terms of services and also terms of the least amount of effort exerted in church life (McDougall, 2008).

Following on from what was discussed in the above section showing just how accountable political elites are to their constituencies, it can be argued that those who choose these elites are driven by a notion that the state is there as an item of capture. Politics is linked to desire in many cases. As has been discussed, for a politician to survive in both countries, one must placate the voter base; often a narrow voter base with very self-serving interests.

In section 6.2 the incident of MP Guma Wau being attacked by members of his own Dagle tribe was noted. The reason why he was attacked however, was not. The National reported, “He was allegedly distributing funds to people in the upper Dagle area a week ago. Reports from Wau’s tribe said his own people at Moroma village complained that he had overlooked

them and was distributing cash to others” (The National, September 6, 2011). It is an overt example of a populous seeing an MP as being a direct link to the benefits a state can bring. Steeves evidences the view of many people in Solomon Islands that MPs equate cash benefits and the expectation placed upon them. He writes, “The Honourable Soalaol (2009) captured this reality sharply: ‘. . . when you go for consultation in the constituency it is going to be cash-sultation, people will be asking you for money’” (2011, p. 345). Indeed it has been noted by many that the expectation of Solomon Islanders during elections is that they will receive bribes for their vote (Fraenkel, 2006; Steeves, 2011). It can either be in cash form or in materials (Steeves, 2011). The practice of gift giving is widespread throughout the Pacific and is not seen as corruption but a normal part of custom (Findlay, 2003). This though, can be hazy in what is constituted as normal and these aspects of tradition/culture will be discussed further on in this chapter.

This local expectation of benefits from the state and political leaders’ ambitions to hold power leads to the development of a complicated patron client relationship that is not always clear due to the complexities of the Melanesian politics. John Cox writes, “On the one hand, patrons need to mobilise resources to negotiate their survival within the oligarchy; but, on the other, they need also to satisfy the demands from their clients, usually kinsfolk. The instability of the system means that patrons and clients may exchange places unexpectedly” (2009, p. 969). Indeed, politicians as a result may be in a position of power but it can quickly change for them from being the patron to that of the recipient in the relationship. Towards election time MPs may find this to be the case. This is where the relationship becomes most blurry in determining who is who and is difficult to properly identify. It however, does clarify the idea that state equals benefits to many involved in the process.

A similar way of seeing the state as something to capture, is the way that people see the state as a source of compensation. The intricacies of Melanesian Kastom are not for this paper (or

within its ability to do so) to thoroughly explain (It is complex and not always attributable to traditional custom; see Fraenkel, 2004; Hameiri, 2007 for indepth discussions on the intricacies of Kastom). However, compensation for grievances is a common feature in both countries. In the example of Solomon Islands, a lot of what took place during the conflict period was about capturing the state for compensation claims between Malaitans and Guales (Fraenkel, 2004; Watson, 2005). It was to virtually bankrupt the Solomon Islands government.

In the aftermath of a tribal battle in Popondetta in which two were killed, The National reported that “relatives of the youths, who had died in the fight, had held a meeting on Sunday and had demanded the provincial government pay K50, 000 as belkol money within 48 hours so they could make funeral arrangements” (The National, June 21, 2011). The reason why was because the relatives blamed the provincial government for allowing the settlers who were the supposed belligerents to settle on the outskirts of the city (The National, June 21, 2011). The state of course has much greater access to funds than any rival tribe; therefore the state is seen as a very ready and easy source of compensation.

What can be said about the aspirations of elites for the state is that their aspirations are tied to those of the people. This is not unique; it is a factor in any democracy. What is unique is the incoherency of these aspirations. In a society of so many different factions and interests there cannot be at present a coherent view of the state. The state becomes an item of competition. It is a complex web where people compete to get their choice of person into power and the leaders similarly compete to maintain their position and achieve their aspirations.

Paradoxically, this incoherency presents us with a coherent view of the state. In this view the state is seen as something to compete for and capture amongst elites and the people alike; to shape for those with more Western ideals of the state, or as a means to use to one’s benefit for those with different ideas of the state. It means however, that the state will continue to limp

along as it is. The state in its ideal form needs unity and a coherent view of maintaining that unity. The state cannot function in its ideal form when its population and its agents are engaged in a continuous struggle for control of it.

6.5 A Problem for the State as an Entity

The role that people play in the whole political process and subsequently the state as a whole is important. As with the discussion set out in chapter two, the state encompasses both the rulers and ruled within a territory (Morris, 1998). As was discussed the state has come to be viewed as an entity that benefits the people. What has also changed is that the locus of state sovereignty has shifted towards being invested in the people. In short the notion of the democratic state. A central idea though remains in describing the ideal modern state; that the state should be exclusive of the population, both ruled and rulers (Morris, 1998; Hameiri, 2007).

To argue that the state is exclusive of the people is rather tenuous if we believe that the sovereignty of the state is located partly in the people. Shahar Hameiri suggests, “State power is a set of complex social relationships that is dynamic and shapes the use of the state apparatus. Because they exist within a context of social relations, it is misleading to view the state or its apparatus as neutral” (2007, p. 420). If we were to really look at the state in a Western country it would be very hard to show that the state is completely neutral. The state though, is not seen as an item of competition and capture to the extent that it is in PNG and Solomon Islands. The reasons why are complex and this section will try to address them and what it means for the state.

Some in the past have attributed the weakness of the state to a lack of education on one level about ideas of good governance. However, if one was to investigate the opinions of people, one would see that many Papua New Guineans and Solomon Islanders have a sound basis for

their reasons. The basis is very much located in local tradition and culture⁴⁰. Modern politics in many ways has been readily and easily adapted to become an extension of local systems of culture. Essentially politicians are now seen as an extension of the wantok⁴¹ system (Steeves, 2011). To get to the exalted position of ‘Big Man’⁴² (In this case an elected politician) one needs to win approval of the people through actions such as gift giving, reciprocity, etc. Politicians are seen to directly serve the people. The ‘people’ in this regard being the people of their constituency only. Failure to do so will result in failing to retain a seat in parliament. Many have talked about the alien nature of the state to such countries as PNG and Solomon Islands. The state as a concept may have been alien at the outset; it however, has quickly been adopted and adapted by Melanesians to suit their designs. It just happens in the example of the two countries that the state is seen as a handy source of wealth to capture and an object of intense competition. This is where it can be said that Melanesia does differ in the state formation process from those who have already been through it. Democracy in Western European states may have been an incremental process (many fears were expressed that trouble would be caused by the lay man, women and former slaves or immigrants getting the vote⁴³). Many voters when they first got such rights would have been ‘uneducated’ in the

⁴⁰ I try to avoid referring to such actions as firmly located in tradition, preferring local culture as a term. As Fraenkel (2004) and (Hameiri 2007) note, it is very hard to define what is traditional. Often the use of the word is purely for strategic purposes in the case of both countries (Fraenkel, 2004; Hameiri, 2007).

⁴¹ Again this term is used loosely to reflect a common theme of social organisation within Melanesian politics and society (see Chapter Three). To equate it to being a singular set of traditional values and processes would be wrong (Fraenkel, 2004).

⁴² This is a common term coined for those who are the heads of a wantok, community or politician (Boege, Brown, Clements, 2009; Fraenkel, 2004).

⁴³ Certainly during the time period that it began to be discussed many were hesitant. John Stuart Mill in *On Representative Government* writes “Government consists of acts done by human beings; and if the agents, or those who choose the agents, or those to whom the agents are responsible, or the lookers-on whose opinion ought to influence and check all these, are mere masses of ignorance, stupidity, and baleful prejudice, every operation of government will go wrong: while, in proportion as the men rise above this standard, so will the government improve in quality” (1977, p. 390).

political sense. Though this may have been the reality, a process of consolidation of the state and an identity regarding it had already taken place. In some places the identification aspect had already slowly taken place before the advent of the modern state. In others it took place under the consolidation of the state. Absolutism helped in this matter. People in Europe were at first subjects of the state. Many had been subjects of some form of over arching governance or another before hand for some time. The sense of being part of something wider was familiar. All that changed was loyalty to the sovereign was transferred to a broader concept of state.

Contrast this ideal picture of the state with Melanesian society and it is easy to see the differences. Traditional Melanesian society was far more egalitarian than North-western Europe has ever been for some time (Since the time of ancient German tribes). There was no supreme authority per se. Relationships were based on reciprocity and merit, not the divine right of kings or the monopoly on violence. Nor are Papua New Guinean and Solomon Island societies heavily militarised to allow for one group to reign supreme. Traditionally, outside of the village and wantok group was considered foreign policy in Melanesian societies (Schwass, 2008). There was no sense of wider community. Neighbours were potential trading partners, allies or the opposite: enemies. With the eventual colonisation of both countries, colonial governments never penetrated far into reaching everyone within their boundaries (Nelson, 2006). On top of an extremely diverse and fragmented population the state and its institutions were rationally⁴⁴ constructed by colonial governments.

Melanesian politics still reflects an older style of social system. One best described as a segmentary society. Francis Fukuyama describes it in the Melanesian context as such, “The *wantok* is simply the local version of what anthropologists call a segmentary lineage or

⁴⁴ This is open to interpretation. Certainly it was rational in its construction yet it could be termed irrational in disregarding the factors above and the history of the state and its formation.

descent group” (2008, p. 1). Furthermore, he adds, “Segmentary societies are a coherent and stable form of social organisation” (2008, p. 1). This is not to say that it does not have weaknesses. Fukuyama explains that:

“The most important weakness of a segmentary society is its inability to achieve collective action at a large scale for extended periods of time. Since there is no state—a sovereign source of political authority— cooperation is voluntary and consensual. Alliances can fall apart or are subject to renegotiation at any time” (2008, p. 2).

This is where we find the state in both PNG and Solomon Islands; in both cases a juxtaposition of a segmentary society operating under a structure that requires the opposite to reach its full potential. Politics reflects this nature in both countries. Hameiri gives a good explanation of how this plays out in politics. He writes:

“State-oriented patronage networks form the very foundation of the political system in Solomon Islands, because no other arrangement is able to sustain and integrate the state’s many disparate societal forces. This is not a matter of traditional versus modern institutions, but one of political coalition making in the context of limited and unsustainable economic development, which is reliant on foreign-owned, resource-intensive, and migrant labor-dependent export industries, in a geographically and ethnically fragmented country” (2007, p. 422).

This is worth noting as it ties in with what was written about the state further above in this section. The state was alien at the outset; to be accorded legitimacy it had to have some relevance to the people. At the outset it never pervaded wholly the area within its territory and it was rivalled by other powers from within. Therefore, the state was not accorded legitimacy upon the basis of authority and force as other states were. The state was accorded legitimacy because of what it could provide. For the states agents to do this, they had to link it to their own cultural norms. This has created what Volker Boeg, M. Anne Brown and Kevin P. Clements term a ‘hybrid political order’ (2009). They write:

“In hybrid political orders, diverse and competing authority structures, sets of rules, logics of order, and claims to power co-exist, overlap, interact, and intertwine, combining elements of introduced Western models of governance and elements stemming from local indigenous traditions of governance and politics, with further influences exerted by the forces of globalization and associated societal fragmentation (in various forms: ethnic, tribal, religious)” (2009, p. 17).

From the basis of local realities and culture it can be argued that to a degree, both countries were at the stage Europe was at in the period before 990 AD when the state was bequeathed upon them. Though Europe was on a whole, different than both countries, the similarities exist in that European society was extremely fragmented and with a myriad of loyalties dividing it (Tilly, 1990). Europe though, had grown into its distinctive form over a few hundred years. Generally this was through the process of warfare and power struggles as discussed in Chapter Two. Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands on the other hand have been given this structure and told to work with it. They have done this to a degree; though their efforts have created something that, though fitting with their culture, is not likely to operate quite as effectively as the state does elsewhere.

It then leads us back to John Stuart Mill’s opinion from ‘Of Nationality’.⁴⁵ The state historically was successful because there was unity beneath it⁴⁶. People accorded it a certain degree of legitimacy as being above the people for the most part. The opposite has been the case in PNG and Solomon Islands with the state being seen as something to compete for. This provides some basis from which change could and would need to happen for the state to function more effectively.

⁴⁵ “Free institutions are next to impossible in a country made up of different nationalities. Among a people without fellow-feeling, especially if they read and speak different languages, the united public opinion, necessary to the working of representative government, cannot exist” (1977, p. 547).

⁴⁶ This could be, if not the people, at least the powerful who could unite behind a ruler to enforce their claim to rule.

6.6 Changing the State

Too often the focus has been on fixing the institutions of the state and that the state stands alone from all else within its borders. As argued above, the state is never fully exclusive of the people, especially in the case of democratic states. It is even less so in the case of PNG and Solomon Islands. For the state to continue to be accorded legitimacy and have purchase in both countries it has meant that its agents and subsequently its apparatus have had to be entwined with the people. Though the state has hybridized to fit with local culture and gained legitimacy it does not bode well for the state in being an effective entity in bettering the outcomes of the general population.

The state, to achieve success needs a degree of unity that is not present within the two countries. Fukuyama notes after conducting interviews in Solomon Islands, “One of the most striking gaps in the discussions we had with Solomon Islanders was the absence of any sense of national identity on their part, around which a nation-building project could be established” (2008, p. 8). To create this unity however, is a huge undertaking. This could be argued to be an unsavoury one too. To be successful one would have to virtually bulldoze over all existing social structures and start again with a blank canvas. The state would need to gain a monopoly over the people. This would entail engaging in an ultimately homogenizing project. Such an undertaking would be considered abhorrent by modern standards of thinking (yet paradoxically that is what many in the state building process are hoping will happen yet in a manner that is organic).

Any effort to do this would be met by vast amounts of resistance within both countries.

Donors have very little leverage (Fukuyama, 2008). This can be seen in examples of where Australia has tried to over exert itself in both countries with RAMSI, the Julian Moti case and Australian demands for immunity clauses in any Australian policing effort in PNG (Dinnen, 2007). Amongst the PNG, Solomon Island political elite and voter base alike, the idea of state

sovereignty in the classical Westphalian sense remains to a large extent popular despite the realities. It is most often used as a means to protect the status quo of both countries, i.e. the preservation of the dysfunction that goes on within (Dinnen, 2007; Turner and Kavanamur, 2009).

Leaders and the population alike only make changes when it seems that benefits are at stake of being lost. The state as a whole is (though necessary in a world based on modern states) an item of benefit. In the case of politics it is a valuable benefit worth fighting for as reflected in the very nature of the two countries politics and the actions of the voter base.

This is one avenue where Australia could act. If Australia and other donors attached more strings to the aid that they gave PNG and Solomon Islands this could instigate the change needed. It would be likely though to elicit a backlash from political elites within the two countries. An AusAID report titled 'Review of the PNG - Australia Development Cooperation Treaty (1999)' notes, "Australia remains the dominant donor, but there are signs that PNG is diversifying to other donors" (2010, p. 2). Similarly, withdrawing aid would be likely to heighten tensions within both countries. A scarcity of resources in Solomon Islands helped to exacerbate the conflict there (Watson, 2005). Given Australia's concerns about the two countries as discussed in Chapter Two, it is not likely that they would be prepared to resort to such a measure.

It seems that to create a real difference within the country and subsequently the state and what role it has, one needs to change the politics. To change the politics at its supreme level the politics of the micro level needs to be changed. This is not lost on some within the two countries. The Post-Courier reported former National Court Judge Nemo Yalo's view on the subject. According to the paper:

"Mr Yalo also said the change in leadership would only come when people changed their ethics culture. He stressed good leadership could not be bought and sold if it is genuine.

“Leadership which is bought or sold does not have the people’s interest at heart,” he said”

(Post-Courier, June 23, 2011).

It is also a message that many politicians are aware of too. In the Vision 2050 document it is acknowledged that the leadership ethics of PNG needed strengthening, but ultimately it also relied on the people to make the right choices and vote for those who can deliver responsible leadership (PNG Vision 2050, 2009).

This is a definite need for the state if it is to start functioning in a more Western oriented fashion. Yet developing the notion of responsible citizenship in which the state is not seen as an item of capture may be hard. John Cox writes, “Without the experience of entitlement to basic services, no ethos of citizenship capable of subverting clientelistic relationships and expectations is likely to emerge” (2009, p. 965). This is a view shared by Bill Standish who links the lack and decline of a civic consciousness to the decline in the state’s effectiveness (Standish, 2002). This is a task upon itself. Establishing such entitlements (Basic services) has been the focus of aid for the whole period of independence in both countries yet it has been hindered by continual self-serving behaviour that perpetuates the lack of progress further. If we are to look at the history of the modern state in Europe, the state did not provide the benefits that it does till quite late in its advent. When the state did start providing benefits such as healthcare, social security and effective infrastructure it did so effectively because the state had already consolidated itself beforehand as an extremely effective structure that could pervade society within its borders. Contrast this with both PNG and Solomon Islands and one would see that the state was never consolidated in the first place nor could it effectively penetrate both territories (Nelson, 2006). This meant that services were never reliable from independence and as a result, getting a representative to the position of state agent was a way of getting benefits from the state.

If then we are to take Cox's suggestion as helpful the institutions of the state would have to be strengthened first before it could effectively operate. It is though; a problem that is too big for any number of NGOs to fix (Cox, 2009). This leads to the problem of the political elite and the people they represent. That is, there needs to be a focus on changing the political culture of both countries. Until the political culture is changed no manner of anti-corruption campaigns or structural strengthening will adequately work (Standish, 2002).

Currently, the state is seen regardless of agendas and desires as an item of capture by the elite and common person alike. The state in being an entity that is to be captured makes it as a result an item of intense competition. This is reflected in the politics of both countries as discussed in Chapter Five, and in the actions of the people discussed within this chapter. The state being an item of competition means that the state is not likely to function along the lines idealised by aid donors. Though the state may limp along as a result of this competition and lack of unity, it is unlikely to completely fall away. There is too much interest in the state from elites and the people. The competition for control and what the state can provide means that it is likely to continue to function and be accorded some form of legitimacy.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed some of the key findings of this thesis. It has firstly discussed the idea that though elites do shape the state to an extent; they are ultimately held accountable to a very fractured and diverse people. This is evident in the high turnover rate of politicians at election time. It is also evident in some instances of attacks launched on politicians as a result of dissatisfaction with them.

This chapter also discussed that leaders are quite restrained in their abilities and actions by a large and influential group that is customary land owners. They have the ability to derail any large scale economic operation if they are not satisfied with it.

It followed from this that the state was seen as a means of capture by many. It is often seen as an item that could provide direct benefits to them if they were able to get representatives into the state apparatus as agents.

The chapter discussed what this meant for the state as an entity, showing that many aspects that the state needs or has historically had elsewhere have never existed in both countries. That is, the modern state in Europe had a relatively homogenised unity and that people were familiar with many of the structures. In a way the state had an organic process in its formation for Europeans. In PNG and Solomon Islands this never occurred. The state however, has readily been adopted by the people of both countries and adapted to their cultures.

It is these cultures that are problematic for the functioning of the state. Though it was conceded that the state can never fully be exclusive of the people, the sheer lack of unity within both countries means that the deeply entwined relationship between the states agents and the people limits both states abilities to function along those idealised by Western countries. The state is seen by leaders and the people alike as an item of competition. It concluded that to achieve more effective functioning of the state, there needed to be a greater amount of unity amongst the population. It briefly discussed some options for this; however, it concluded that such processes were not straight forward.

This then leads to the need for a conclusion about the role of elites and the modern state in both PNG and Solomon Islands and what realities the state faces.

7.0 Conclusion

This thesis set out to look at the problem of the modern state in PNG and Solomon Islands and the designs that two sets of elites have for it. This posed the question of what then do the elites of the two states want the state to be? Chapter one introduced the topic and what it hoped to outline. This chapter explained why elites were chosen for analysis. This chapter provided an account of who elites are, and defined for the purposes of this thesis the two particular groups that were to be examined. Specifically, the two sets of elites to be examined were religious elites and political elites. Religious elites were chosen because the churches have had a long and important role within both countries. Political elites were picked as they were in charge of the states government. The fact that most of the political elite were only elected to parliament with a relatively small percentage of votes made their role of further interest.

The chapter continued further by explaining the method that was to be used for this thesis. The method used was a qualitative analysis known as the grounded theory method. This was chosen as two reasons. First, though it would have been ideal, it was not possible to conduct face to face interviews with political and religious elites. Second, it is very hard for empirical evidence to be gathered from the material available for this thesis. The material, in the form of articles and newspaper articles then required analysis to see what it could tell the author about elite's ideas for the state. The grounded theory method is much more suited in this kind of study.

Chapter Two identified what the modern state was and its history. The modern state was shown to be categorised by five broad criteria using Christopher Morris's model (1998). It was shown that the state had its origins in Europe in the period after 990 AD. More specifically, the modern state as we know it came about in the late 16th and early 17th Centuries reaching its familiar form in the 18th Century. It came about through a mixture of

warfare and the subsequent need by rulers to consolidate power over their territories. The chapter showed that sovereignty lay almost exclusively with the ruler in the earlier stages of the development of the state, it began to change to be located more and more in the people. It also showed that the modern state was not the only form of political organisation that existed at that period in European history. The modern state had rivals in the form of city states and empires. The modern state with its superior attributes as a form of political organisation was adopted by the largest powers of the time and this meant that it won out in Europe. Consequently, it would mean that it would expand to dominate the world through colonisation.

This then led to the case of PNG and Solomon Islands. Two colonised territories that were bequeathed the modern state as a form of political organisation. Chapter Two showed that Australia had a strong interest in this region due to its historical role as colonial master in PNG and for strategic purposes in securing its own defence. This has meant that Australia has had an active role in state building in the two case countries. The Australian aim is to make the two states better at providing for their people and in turn making the states more secure and stable.

Chapter Three looked at how PNG and Solomon Islands measured against a selection of criteria often used to measure state performance. These were three broad categories that covered a number of measures under them. These were: that of security, economic development and health indicators. The chapter showed that despite considerable assistance from Australia, both states were performing poorly under the criteria provided.

Chapter Four looked at the role of religious elites and their designs on the state. Three broad categorisations were provided for this. First, the state could be seen as an object for the betterment of the people along the lines envisaged by the West. Second, the state was seen by some as an entity to oppose. Third, some elites saw themselves as being partners with the

state. As a result of this partnership, these elites look to the state for funding to help their objectives.

What Chapter Four found, was that though many religious elites had designs on the state being the entity idealised by Western donors such as Australia. They however, were limited in their influence. Churches often found themselves in competition with other churches for the hearts and minds of the people. The people of the two countries are not afraid to 'shop around' for the religion that offers them the best deal. This leaves the churches in a precarious position. Similarly, the churches are divided amongst themselves and reflect the greater divisions amongst the two countries as a whole.

Many of the churches that are interested in bettering the state are reliant on the state for funding. Therefore, this places them at the mercy of governments who may not be wholly cooperative. This limits their influence and their ability to perform the roles that they are often asked by the state to perform. Many of the churches that have greater funding from outside sources choose not to involve themselves with affairs of the state.

Chapter Five looked at the designs that political elites had for the state. This chapter outlined three broad categories of how political elites saw the state. First, the state could be seen as an item of capture: Capturing the state was beneficial in what it could offer politicians in terms of rewards, status and power. Second, the state could be seen as an entity that was beneficial to keep weak. By keeping the state weak it provided governments with aid money that was very useful for the running of the state. This aid placed less of a burden on the government in trying to extract finance locally for state operations. Third, the state was seen by some as a means to better the plight of the two countries population. That is, these leaders seek to shape the state along the lines of that encouraged by Australia.

This chapter found that despite there often being much rhetoric by politicians about bettering the state, the reality was often different. Further, it was often hard to discern whether these

ideas were just empty politicking by leaders. Chapter Five found that leaders reverted to making grand speeches as a way to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

Chapter Six then addressed this. It showed that politicians were extremely accountable to their electorate in ways that politicians were not elsewhere. It showed that there was a high turnover of MPs every election in both PNG and Solomon Islands. Politicians could also face physical attack from constituents if they did not deliver on promises, or were seen to be serving groups other than their constituents. The chapter also showed that the issue of customary land ownership further limited the ability of political leaders to deliver on their goals.

Chapter Six showed that many of the general populace in both countries see the state as an item of capture. The state can provide access to wealth that is not available elsewhere in the two countries. Politics is then about getting someone into parliament who is going to bring the greatest returns possible. Politics then becomes about competition. Politics reflects the fragmented nature of PNG and Solomon Island society. As an extension of this, the state becomes an item of competition. This then leads us to some conclusions about elites, people and the state.

There are some conclusions that can be made about elites and their designs on the state. First, religious elites are important. They have a prominent role in the two countries. They provide a number of services that are usually the realm of the state. Many have the idea that the state should be like that of the ideal model explained in Chapter Two. The state should be a strong entity that is separate from both the ruled and the rulers. It should be able to provide for its people and should not be an item of capture. Other religious elites saw it as something to avoid. The state and its government are corrupt and flawed and reflected the sinful nature of man. Others saw themselves as partners of the state and as such worked with its agents to better it.

Though religious elites have much prestige in both countries they sit on the periphery. Their only real power is that of the moral authority that they have in the two Christian countries. This is not enough to influence the shape of the state. Governments will, and do ignore their calls for building a more transparent and morally legitimate state. Those churches that are in active partnership with the state are further limited in their influence as they rely heavily on the state for resources. This partnership can also tarnish their own reputation as seen in the number of people in Solomon Islands moving away from the mainstream churches. The churches also reflect the wider divisions in society meaning that there is no one coherent voice of influence. Similarly the churches are victim to peoples who are rather transient in their faith and preference; moving often towards a church that will offer them the most for the least.

Political elites are much more important in shaping the state than the religious elites. Though it was shown further that even they were limited in their influence. This thesis categorised two main ways that the state could be seen by politicians: That of the state being an item of capture to bring a politician benefits to himself and his immediate electorate. Or those that saw the state as being an entity for the betterment of the people.

It acknowledged that it is often hard to determine just what some politicians see the state as. For they often have their own agendas when enacting legislation that is supposedly for the benefit of the people and the development of the state. As discussed in Chapter Five, OLIPPAC in PNG and proposed electoral strengthening legislation in Solomon Islands has often been seen to serve politicians own ends. In PNG it is even questionable whether OLIPPAC has even served its true purpose in light of current events.

Chapter Five also noted that most politicians talk seriously of working towards the benefit of the people and bettering both PNG and Solomon Islands. This is despite evidence to the contrary in so many instances. It led to concluding that these politicians are often trying to get

people to accord them legitimacy. This was seen in the information provided in Chapter Six with regards to the turnover rate at election time of MPs. This suggested that the general population had more power than first hypothesised limiting the power of politicians. Chapter Six showed that politicians were quite accountable to the people. It also revealed that politicians are locked into a complex patron/client relationship with the people. The role of patron and client can change suddenly and is far from stable in its dynamics. Therefore, politicians and their actions can be said to be that of a reflection of the people that they represent. It was argued that for the state to fit with the communities in both countries it had to be seen as legitimate and it had to be modified by locals to be accorded this legitimacy. This hybridization does not bode well for the state nor does it fit with the way that the state developed in Europe. The states legitimacy is not in that it has relative authority and coercive power within both territories (both states do not). The states legitimacy comes from what it can offer people in the form of wealth or services. This is reflected in the nature of the politics in PNG and Solomon Islands. Politics is highly competitive and it can be said that despite all the differing views held by politicians and the people that they represent, the state can be seen as essentially an item of competition.

The fact that the state is seen as an item of competition will severely limit the two states abilities to function. Nor will the states be able to be fully consolidated and set themselves apart from the general populace and their agents; the government. It can be concluded that without a rather drastic attitude change of the people or an equally draconian response from Australia in withdrawing aid the state is not likely to succeed in reaching the ideal that is put forth by scholars and that of donors like Australia.

It is argued here, on the basis of this research, that the scientific models of the state put forward by Weber and Tilly do not fit with cases of PNG and Solomon Islands. The state does not hold a monopoly of violence, nor is it the dominant authority within the two

countries. Scientific accounts do not fit with the ideas of the state that the two countries elites and the people have. It is not seen as holding a monopoly on the use of force. The churches do not see the state as being such an entity, nor does it seem that politicians seek to achieve this kind of structure. Those who do would be handicapped by a people who see the state more in the light of serving them and their needs.

Christopher Morris's description of the state fits better with the realities of the state's position in both countries. Though this model suits the purpose of this thesis better it could be said that the two countries do not wholly meet this ideal. Both are weak against the five criteria provided by Morris. Weak may these states be, generally the churches and at least some politicians see the state as ideally being along the lines expressed by Morris and further, that of Australia. These leaders though, are in competition with others who see the state as something different completely. As previously stated in this conclusion, this competition undermines the state from reaching its full potential as applied to Morris's framework. The task of trying to decipher just how elites see the state is large one. As was stated in Chapter One this research was extremely limited in what it could do. Ideally, there is a need for research on how politicians see the state based on face to face interviews. This of course has limits as outlined in Chapter One and further in Chapter Five. Politicians are experts in both countries at the art of grandstanding. This is where a comparative study could be carried out about what politicians say and what they do.

In acknowledging the role that the general populace has in PNG and Solomon Islands politics there is a hole in the literature about how the general population constructs the state. The Australian National University conducts on behalf of RAMSI yearly peoples surveys. However, these focus on RAMSI's performance and the perceived performance of the Solomon Islands government. Similarly, other literature focuses on this aspect of government and also notions of identity. As was discussed in Chapter Two, though important, the

government is just one aspect of the state and states can effectively be without government for periods of time. There is then room for research in seeing how communities construct the state and what they want from it. Though a large task, it could provide interesting findings and be of some help to aid donors in their operations within the two countries.

The modern state is a complex and intriguing entity that has come to dominate the world. It is seen as the best means to provide for human wellbeing. Though the state dominates the world, in many places it is floundering. The two countries studied here are examples of this. Despite Australia's intentions, it does not look like PNG and Solomon Islands as states are going to reach the ideal that Australia envisions. The state as a complex entity relies as much on the belief in it as the physical evidence of it. This is where the state falters in PNG and Solomon Islands. Though both politicians and the people alike believe in the state, they see it as an item of competition. This does not fit with principles where, for the state to be successful, it needs to be seen as being separate from both the ruling and the ruled. Nor does this competition foster a degree of unity needed for the state to succeed. Before Australia can see success in its state building there needs to be a change in how both political elite and the general populace see the state.

Appendix One: Summary of the Political Crisis in PNG

The political crisis in PNG started in late July and is continuing now as elections take place. To cover the topic in its entirety and complexity would be a thesis in itself and would stray too far from this thesis topic. Therefore, only a brief summary will be provided here.

The grounds had been set for this political situation to develop when Prime Minister (PM) Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare left for Singapore to receive medical treatment. He left his deputy Sam Abal as acting PM. Somare was out of the country for a number of months. The opposition capitalised on this and the dissent that was rife in Somare's National Alliance (NA) coalition (Some 48 according to the Post-Courier, August 3, 2011. The soon to be PM Peter O'Neill was among these 48). On August 1 2011 the opposition led by Belden Namah, and joined by a number of MPs from Somare's NA led by Don Poyle filed in parliament a claim which:

“He said pursuant to section 142, subsection 2 of the Constitution, and schedule 1.10 sub-section 3 of the constitution, and in the inherit powers of the parliament, the office of the prime minister be declared vacant and consequently in accordance with the provisions of section 142 (2), parliament should proceed with electing and appointing a new prime minister” (The National, August 2, 2011).

This was upheld by the speaker declaring the office vacant and allowing a new vote to take place in which Peter O'Neill was elected as PM with 70 votes to 24 (Post-Courier, August 3, 2011; The National, August 3, 2011). This is despite The National in another article showing that legal opinion in the country held that the office of PM was not vacant (The National, August 3, 2011).

The newly formed government quickly tried to find a way to force Somare out of parliament altogether (The National, August 31, 2011). Yet Somare from his hospital bed vowed that he was indeed still PM and that he would fight the decision in court (The National, September 1,

2011). This led to the matter being taken to the Supreme Court which ruled in favour of Somare by 3 votes to 2 (Post-Courier, December 13, 2011). This however, was disputed by O'Neill and his government who quickly moved in Parliament to shore up their position with a vote on the matter. The motion to shore up O'Neill's government passed with 69 votes to zero as the opposition now led by Somare refused to show up for the vote (Post-Courier, December 13, 2011). This has led to the situation where there are two PMs and a number of other double positions within the country.

This has continued to cause all sorts of problems in the politics of PNG. At times the O'Neill/Namah coalition has looked like being on the verge of collapse. Though, they have managed to hold on (Post-Courier, January 10, 2012). Though only a very brief description of the key points of the crisis, it does show the level of competition for control of the state apparatus present. This competition has made the crisis a protracted one. It seems that the only way that the matter of PNG having two PMs will be solved is by the result of the elections taking place as this is written.

Appendix Two: Summary of Political Events in Solomon

Islands in 2011

2011 saw a rather chaotic and fluid year in Solomon Island politics. It began in late January when the opposition started mounting a campaign to launch a vote of no confidence against the Danny Phillip led government over the tabling of the 2011 budget. This led to allegations by Phillip that certain outside countries were working with the opposition to oust the government (Solomon Star News, January 25 2011).

This momentum was further compounded by a number of MPs switching sides to join the opposition. Two MPs had previously switched from government to opposition, back to government then again to opposition. The end result was that the opposition led by Matthew Wale claimed to have 26 members as opposed to Danny Phillip with 22 (Though parliament has 50 members, there were only 48 members in this case as two members had recently died) (Solomon Star News, January 25 2011; Solomon Star News, February 8 2011). The Phillip led government was saved in this challenge when four MPs who had switched sides to join the opposition decided to switch back to the government side ensuring that Phillip had the numbers to pass the budget (Solomon Star News, February 18 2011).

Though the Danny Phillip led government survived that particular crisis, the opposition continued to try unseat his government. By September there were a growing number of people calling for Phillip to step down. One group, the Malaita Ma'asina Forum planned a public protest against Phillip and his government. The Solomon Star News reported that "some of their demands include an immediate removal of Finance Minister Gordon Darcy Lilo and Aid Coordination and Planning Minister Snyder Rini" (Solomon Star News,

September 16 2011)⁴⁷. The familiar topic of regional tensions was an underlying theme of these demands (Solomon Star News, September 16 2011).

By late October there were rumours that Danny Phillip's hold on the job of Prime Minister was shaky. This was coming from sources from within his own National Coalition for Rural Advancement (NCRA) who were planning to topple him (Solomon Star News, October 26 2011). To add to this, the opposition was still calling for Phillip's resignation "amidst allegations of misuse of up to more than \$6-million from the \$10-million discretionary fund from the Republic of China (Taiwan)" (Solomon Star News, October 26 2011).

In November Phillip was toppled and a new vote took place to fill the job of Prime Minister. This was won by Gordon Darcy Lilo and nearly ended in a repeat of the 2006 Honiara riots as people filled the streets to protest Lilo's election to the position (Solomon Star News, November 17 2011). However, this did not end the matter as the opposition now led by former Prime Minister Derek Sikua tried to file a motion of no confidence against the government as a result of the protest march (Solomon Star News, November 19 2011). It was later withdrawn as Sikua acknowledged he had not the numbers for the motion. The matter still continues to simmer away as this thesis is being completed. It is also (though beyond the scope of this thesis) a good example of politicians acting in self-interest and the competition that goes on within politics for a place in government (Solomon Star News, November 19 2011).

⁴⁷ This is the same Snyder Rini who was the root of the 2006 Honiara riots. For more information refer to Chapter Five.

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