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The Politics of Information: Information, Communication and Democracy in Fiji

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DECLARATION

I declare that the work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original and my own work, except as acknowledged in the text. The material has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

Esther W. L. Batiri Williams  Date: 10 January 1998
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Vinaka vakalevu vei kevuru kece
ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to examine the impact of information on democracy. Its primary purpose is to test the hypothesis that access to information is a political necessity for democracy, and that the introduction of measures to ensure information access are constrained by cultural, social, political, technical and economic factors.

The impact of information and communication on political transformation is explored at the global and national levels. The global analysis was undertaken by first, establishing an overview of the information and communication situation, and second, by making a comparative assessment of the intra-societal penetration of information and communication systems. The national or micro-level analysis comprised a detailed case study of the relationship between information, communication and democracy in one country, Fiji.

Research was conducted using the triangulation method incorporating in-depth interviews, participant observation, discussions in groups and library and archives research. I developed two questionnaires and an interview schedule to explore the different perceptions and attitudes held by the Fijians about information, communication and how these affected their role in politics. Three groups of interviews were conducted. A total of 640 people were interviewed in selected urban areas. Another 100 academics and professionals in the urban areas were interviewed. The research in the village was based on group discussions.

The findings of this study suggest that there is a correlation between information, communication and democracy. However, the degree of this correlation is influenced and controlled by cultural, political, technical, social and economic factors. For countries that are democratic, information access is high. For countries with insecure governments and authoritarian philosophies, the trend is to control information access and content. As far as the Fijians are concerned, the lack of information is not the problem, but rather, the difficulty is inherent in the way people perceive information, communication and democracy and their role in this; the impact of culture and politics in controlling the flow of information; the general negative attitudes on information held by leaders; and the lack of an organised information system in Fiji. In reality, many Fijians are not aware that information and communication are important development “tools” which can facilitate as well as control the transition to democracy. This thesis argues that the co-existence of the modern information/communication systems and the old, redefined and reinterpreted, could be effective in building a more informed and politically aware Fijian society.
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ABBREVIATIONS

ALTA  Agricultural Landlord and Tenants Act
AP   Alliance Party
BBC  British Broadcasting Corporation
DC  District Commissioner
DO  District Officer
DDO  Deputy District Officer
FA  Fijian Association
FBC  Fiji Broadcasting Commission
FLP  Fiji Labour Party
FPTL  Fiji Posts and Telecommunication Limited
GDP  Gross Domestic Product
GE  General Electors
GNP  Gross National Product
GVP  General Voters Party
ISD  International Subscriber Dialling
JPSC  Joint Parliamentary and Senate Select Committee on the Constitutional Review Report
MC  Methodist Church
NFP  National Federation Party
NLC  Native Lands Commission
NLTB  Native Land Trust Board
PDU  Provincial Development Unit
PIM  Pacific Islands Monthly
PIPSA  Pacific Islands Political Science Association
PRO  Public Relations Office
SP  South Pacific
SVT  Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei
TELECOM  Telecommunications Fiji
UNESCO  United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USP  The University of the South Pacific
VKB  Vola ni Kawa Bula
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<tr>
<td>Bose</td>
<td>Meeting</td>
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<td>Bose ni Tikina</td>
<td>District Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bose ni Yasana</td>
<td>Provincial Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cake</td>
<td>Top; high</td>
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<tr>
<td>Keatu</td>
<td>To take</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kaivalagi</td>
<td>Caucasian or European</td>
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<td>Koro</td>
<td>Village</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lali</td>
<td>A wooden gong or drum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leva</td>
<td>Large; big; important</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mata</td>
<td>Village representative to various activities and meetings</td>
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<td>Mataqali</td>
<td>Sub-clan or lineage</td>
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<td>Tikina</td>
<td>An administrative sub-unit of a Province</td>
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<td>Tokaroka</td>
<td>Extended family</td>
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<td>Tui</td>
<td>Chief</td>
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<td>Tukutuku</td>
<td>Message</td>
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<td>Turaga</td>
<td>Gentleman; Chief</td>
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<td>Twaganikoro</td>
<td>Elected (or appointed) administrative head of the village</td>
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<td>Vakasala</td>
<td>Instruction or Advice</td>
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<td>Vakaro</td>
<td>Order</td>
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<td>Vale</td>
<td>House</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vanua</td>
<td>Land, people, and custom</td>
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<td>Valesi</td>
<td>Radio</td>
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<td>Yasana</td>
<td>Visitor or guest</td>
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<td>Yasona</td>
<td>The largest administrative unit of the Fijian administration, Province</td>
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<td>Yavusa</td>
<td>Clan</td>
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Democracy is not a state in which people act like sheep. Under democracy individual liberty of opinion and action is jealously guarded.

Mohandas K. Gandhi

To live effectively is to live with adequate information.

Norbert Wiener

Those who control the government can control the flow and content of information that is communicated electronically.

Robert W. Packwood

Perhaps the most general and essential attribute of culture is communication, since cultures could not develop, survive, extend and generally succeed without communication.

Dennis McQuail
I was born and raised in Fiji. I am from the Mataqali (clan) Soso, Yavusa (larger village clan) Namasi and Koro ko (village of) Levukana in the Tikina ko (district of) Lomaloma on the island of Vanuabalavu in the Yasana ko (Province of) Lau. Like my father, the late Tui Levukana (chief of Levukana), I spend some time in the village and some time in the urban area. During my childhood and up to now, I have sought to explain and understand what it is like living two lifestyles; the Fijian way of life in the village which is basically traditional and communal and the life in the city which is more urban and individualistic. There were many things to understand and learn. In particular, I attempted to analyze and understand specific processes of information and communication and how these affected the life in the village and in the urban areas. I was keen to find out people’s perception of information, communication channels, and the control mechanisms and influences that existed and affected the flow of information in both the rural and urban areas.

I can recall frequently asking my father while growing up, about the decision making process within the Fijian village community and why the people were always silent, particularly the women. I wanted to know why certain types of decisions were not made at the village level and had to be taken up, or as is commonly said in Fijian, “e na qai kau cake” to the appropriate body for a decision. I can also remember how this “higher” body in the form of a government department or Provincial Council made major decisions on development for the village and controlled the flow and type of information to the people. I have often pondered Government’s need to control this information flow versus our - the people’s - right to access and know as a prerequisite for effective political participation. The more I viewed information flow in the village and urban areas, the traditional and modern information channels that could be used to access needed information and the barriers that existed, the more aware I became of the information and communication context of politics.

Similarly, I was also certain that the Government did not want an informed Fijian society. I also believed that the Government’s desire to contain and control the Fijian people would be tested as villages became more modernized and people more educated. The increased expectations and desires of the people could bring about changes in the practice of Government control of information. These changes would in turn lead to changes in the internal political processes of the country.
Over the past ten years I have found myself searching for reasons why democracy could not survive in a large number of developing countries particularly in Fiji. I found myself thinking of a number of reasons - corrupt and greedy leaders, inexperienced ministers, authoritarian cultures and ethnic conflicts - for the absence of democracy in Fiji. I believed that perhaps the lack of a free flow of information could be a reason for the slow transition to democracy in Fiji.

These circumstances and views led to my study of politics, more specifically democracy, from an information and communication perspective. In undertaking this approach I was aware that it could be ambitious suggesting that a study of any movement towards democracy could be analysed in terms of the degree of access to and effect of information on societies. This would require a study of peoples' political interaction and perceptions of information and the political environment. It would also require an analysis of the infrastructure of political systems and how these structures controlled information access. Furthermore, it would call for a study of the potential impact of cultures on the political order.

In using Fiji as the case study I was aware that this would require an understanding of how Fijians generally perceive information in relation to government and politics. It was also necessary to know how Fijians access, select, use and communicate information so as to be able to engage effectively in politics. I examined the traditional structure through which information is communicated and decisions made, and how this overlapped with the modern information communication channels such as the newspapers, radio and television to keep Fijians informed. It was necessary to determine at which level and under what circumstances Fijians used the traditional structure to access information for political purposes, and under what conditions and to what extent, they used the modern. I tried to place the whole information and communication process in the context of life in Fiji accepting the traditional information system in the village alongside the modern of television, computers, and Internet. The role of the traditional information and communication systems in the political process of a developing country, therefore, was considered important particularly where the systems complemented instead of competed with the modern.

I proceeded to explore the questions: Does information and its communication play a significant role in the political life of the Fijians? Do culture and tradition reduce information access and control political participation? Are new information and communication technologies facilitators of democracy, or do they have the potential to fragment society? Is access to information a manifestation of democracy, or the
means of achieving it? What degree of correlation exists between information access and the development of democracy? A main challenge was to find a possible way that the Government could deal with the development of democracy working within Western style institutions integrated with strong influences of indigenous traditions of authority, loyalty, information, communication and social order.

It was interesting to find during my fieldwork and interviews that people, both the Fijians and the Indo-Fijians, had difficulty defining information, least of all perceiving information as a process, as knowledge or a thing that can be important to their lives. As one interviewee said, "information is things I hear from other people". Another said, "it is news I get in the radio, television and the newspapers". Yet another noted that information "is an order from the top". Another interviewee said, "it is gossip". The concept of information as affecting people's lives and in particular, political participation was not easy to recognise or accept by the people. How can information affect politics? This was a question I was asked by a number of people I interviewed. Information concerns knowledge. Politics concerns power and control, and applying an understanding of how power is used to access and control information for political purpose in Fiji is an area that is still very vague.

In the course of this study and through interviews it was clear to me that if I was to establish the impact of information on the Fijians, I needed to identify the positive and negative implications of information and communication in Fijian society. It was necessary to review the situation from a general point of view, from the national as well as village levels. This led to my interviewing people of different ethnic, social and economic backgrounds in the urban areas including professionals, academics and media people. I then assessed the information access and use in one Fijian village. This focused on how the people here obtained information and the gatekeeper and agenda-setting role of the Fijian Provincial Administration established to take care of the Fijian interests and resources in the different provinces in Fiji since the colonial days. This enabled me to obtain some useful comparisons of and data on the impact of information between the rural and urban Fijians. After a close examination of the field research results Dr Ian Ward, one of my supervisors, provided useful and practical suggestions on the presentation and productive use of the data collected.

During the course of my Ph. D studies Dr. Ulf Sundhaussen, also my supervisor, continually asked me what political system should Fiji move towards? With the

1 In this study, I refer to the ethnic Indians as Indo-Fijians, and the indigenous Fijians or Taukei as Fijians. General electors are non-indigenous, non-Indian population and include Europeans, Chinese, people of mixed racial origin and other Pacific Islanders.
current racial 1990 Constitution which is communal based, and the power and interests of one ethnic group, the Fijians, protected, Fiji could not be considered a democracy in terms of the many definitions that existed on the concept. However, if it were democracy that Fiji should strive for, then the Fijians would have to be prepared to give up or share with others, political power and their land. The Fijians would also have to accept some erosion of culture and traditions. Further, political representation under the 1990 Constitution cannot continue to be unequal between the Fijians and the Indo-Fijians. Are the Fijians prepared to give up political power? Are they willing to share their land?

I argued that in my view, not all people in Fiji, particularly the Fijians would agree that democracy would be the best thing for Fiji. As Ravuvu indicated in an interview, democracy was a façade and was innately flawed. Ravuvu rejected political structures that exploited the Fijians in the past two centuries. Furthermore, the Indo-Fijians and the Fijians have lived side by side for over one hundred years, and yet there has been little sign of integration. According to Ravuvu, "while we raise the question of asking the Fijian to share or give up political power, it is only fair to also ask whether the Indo-Fijians are prepared to share their wealth and go into partnership in business with the Fijians to help the Fijians catch up in education, business development and economics".

I believe the problem goes further than this. Basically, the Fijians do not trust the Indo-Fijians in many ways. The Fijians are also very much divided. Measures have been taken to improve the situation. For instance, the preferential policies of the Government to help bring more Fijians into the business and education sectors have good objectives but they fall far short of ensuring that there is some sharing of business knowledge, information, and skills between the Indo-Fijians and Fijians. In addition, the influence of the "Fijian way of life" and the authority of the Fijian chiefs influence the economic life of the Fijians. It would seem that the "Fijian way of life" and the "money way of life" would not mix. Strong cultural factors, shortage of capital and the lack of a business background have made it difficult for the Fijians to get into business. As a result, Fijians have not done too well in business. Hence, despite the preferential policies that exist for the Fijians, the perceived economic gap between the two major races remains irrespective of the fact that there are also many poor Indo-Fijian families in Fiji. These policies have neither diminished ethnic conflict nor inequalities and divisiveness.

3 Professor of Pacific Studies at the University of the South Pacific at the time of writing this thesis.
In addition Fijians see the land as an extension of the self—na noqu vanua or my land—and is something that cannot be given away by whatever means. It would be fair to say that many rural Fijians perceive democracy as an instrument that may take away their land and compromise their traditional life style. Faced with having a generally low economic status, the threat of losing their land and the lack of trust of their Indo-Fijian fellow citizens, I believe many Fijians are not ready to accept democracy as being best for Fiji's - their - future. In my view, unless the Fijians control political power, control the administration of the land and are assured of their destiny, continued national political stability will be difficult to attain. This is the reality.

The Indo-Fijians on the other hand have been fighting for a long time to better their lives and status in Fiji. Generally, Indo-Fijians argue that they are treated as second class citizens in Fiji as far as owning land, education and equal representation in Parliament are concerned. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the Indo-Fijians, through hard work, control the economic wealth of Fiji in terms of numbers of big and small businesses owned by Indo-Fijians. There are also considerably higher numbers of Indo-Fijians who are better qualified academically. For many Indo-Fijians, democracy is the instrument that will bring them greater security and equality in a country that is very much their own.

A multi-party system of government may be able to address some of the ethnic, cultural and economic problems facing Fiji and should bring the country back on the road to democracy. At the time of writing, on-going political experiences, information controls and government performance make it difficult to categorise Fiji as a democracy. Cultural, ethnic and economic factors continue to divide the different races and communities, and it may take more than political will and understanding to get Fiji on the transition phase to democracy. When can democracy be achieved is also uncertain as the meaning of democracy may be different within the different communities in Fiji. It may also change over time because, partly in this case, the nature of information and forms of communication with which to conduct politics change. Most importantly, the communal basis of the "Fijian way of life" and traditions go against the principles of democracy. For the majority of the Fijians, judging from prevailing collective political moods and beliefs, democracy may not be what they want.

Finding a balance between Fijian domination and the sharing of power, preferential policies and equitable distribution of resources, individualism and collectivism, traditional and modern forms of information systems, will not be easy. Generally, the
Fijians want to maintain political dominance in their own land. The Indo-Fijians, other ethnic groups and a number of educated urban Fijians would prefer a sharing of power. These conflicts and dilemma are not simple and will be a concern of all citizens of Fiji.

As Fiji battles through its constitutional crisis there seems to be little regard given to the possible and effective role information and communication can play in educating and developing a politically conscious Fijian population. There is also little appreciation of the role of information in conflict resolution and negotiation between the government and the people and between the different communities. Instead, the Government is partly negative towards information and communication. It seems to ignore the fact that information and communication can go a long way in educating and making the public aware of the difficulties in finding some compromising but workable and acceptable solutions to the country's constitutional crisis. Through the different communication channels the problem of stereotyping can be tackled. Some effort could be made to reduce the view that has existed throughout Fiji's past and current history regarding the mistrust and lack of understanding between the two major ethnic groups. Creating national public awareness through greater information dissemination would seem one way forward towards building some understanding, political tolerance and partnership between the Fijians and Indo-Fijians. But then, is this truly what our political leaders want? It can be argued that our leaders know that an educated and well-informed society is a threat to their leadership and will proceed with caution towards any policy and legislation that promote the free access and flow of information.

At the time of writing this thesis, Fiji is promised a new Constitution by 1999 based on democratic principles. In addition, the Government has also endorsed a report of a review of media legislation with possible new laws to be introduced in July 1998. How these get implemented, and how they impact on the future political development of the country is uncertain. However, it would seem that the Government is desirous of a move towards some form of democracy, and it is hoped that this is not only rhetoric. In political terms, the Government, while offering the people some liberalism, this appears to be at odds with its view of democracy and that of a free press. Many times in the recent past the Government would support the interests of the press, radio, television and the free flow of information. At the same time it would curtail freedom if there were some leak in government information, "irresponsible"
reporting by the press and "unacceptable" content in radio and television programmes.
It is difficult to gauge what the Government wants and where it is going. The road to
democracy in Fiji remains difficult and unpredictable.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is concerned with the impact of information on democracy. Its purpose is to test the hypothesis that access to information is a political necessity for democracy, and that the introduction of measures to ensure information access are constrained by cultural, social, political, technical and economic factors.

The question that can be asked from the beginning is "why this approach to the study of democracy, one that adopts the information and communication perspective?" In the discussion of the theoretical framework in chapter 2 details of studies that use the information and communication approach to politics are given. Deutsch1 was the first to provide such an approach maintaining that politics can be explained through a cybernetic model of communication and control. All governments, "as all communication systems, depend upon the processing of information".2 Easton3 also used the information and communication approach concentrating on the broad categories of information flow and their impact on political systems. These studies, however, were broad and not directed at any one political system, in this case "democracy" which is the focus of this study.

Analysing democracy through the conceptual framework of information and communication is complex reflecting the complexity of studies on democracy as this study will show. The Encyclopedia of Democracy4 reaffirms this complexity in terms of the many definitions of the concept that exist and the different outlooks and expectations of democracy held by people in the different cultural settings around the world. The Encyclopedia also acknowledges that while the transition to democracy is not simple, many countries in the world are moving towards democracy. The three most important influences identified for this movement as given by the Encyclopedia include economic factors, political and social culture and religion.5 The influences of

2 Ibid., p. 145.
5 Ibid., p. lvi.
information and communication are downplayed in the consideration of democracy at the national, regional and global levels. I believe, however, that information and communication will increasingly become important influences in developing and sustaining effective democracies in developing countries. It is, therefore, important to understand the vital role they play in the democratic process. Further, it is also necessary to understand the potentials of intertwined new communication technologies and the traditional information systems in changing the ways governments operate and make decisions in developing countries.

Looking back over the past four decades, tremendous development has taken place worldwide in new information technologies. There has been an increase in the supply, demand and use of television, radios, telephones, and new computer and telecommunication technologies. This extensive use of technologies has influenced and improved the speed, relevance and accuracy of information accessed. While developments in information technologies expand, these have caused the media to converge in their functions, forms and interactive capabilities. These developments are unavoidably transforming the very nature of communications, which in turn influencing the ways that we manage our information and political, cultural and economic activities. Such a change is redefining work, human resources development, and social organisations. This transformation is foreshadowed by Castells, who states that

Toward the end of the second millennium of the Christian Era several events of historical significance have transformed the social landscape of human life. A technological revolution centred around information technologies, is reshaping, at accelerated pace, the material basis of society.

Earlier, Bell had forecasted that the development of information technologies will be one of the major growth areas in the 1990s which will continue to expand in the future, in both the developed and developing countries.

Coupled with this growth has been the growth in "democracy", growth in the sense that since the late 1980s but more so in the 1990s, many countries in the developing

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world are replacing military and authoritarian regimes with elected regimes. For example, Guatemala, Costa Rica and a number of other countries in Latin America; South Africa and Madagascar in Africa; Russia in Europe and the recent drive towards democracy in the Philippines, South Korea and Thailand in Asia. The focus has been on the "transition to democracy" argues Huntington. While this move towards democracy has been greatest in the Latin American region, there has also been a considerable impact on the politics of Asia, Africa and the South Pacific regions. This raises the question of whether the growth in democracy is related in any way to the current developments in information and communication.

This question is central to this thesis. While the literature provides detailed arguments and historical and contemporary cases by prominent theorists linking economic change or development to democracy, there are few theorists who address the issue of the correlation between information and the development of democracy directly and cross-nationally. In chapter 2, I will take up a detailed discussion of some of the major theoretical perspectives on the relationship between information and the emergence of democracy. In this chapter, I will provide only a brief historical account.

The argument that information is important and necessary to make sensible and wise decisions and choices goes back to the seventeenth century in England. During this era the Crown had the absolute power to rule, and suppressed any information that might interfere with its policies. Milton, Locke, Mill, Rousseau and Kant were among some of the earlier philosophers of Western heritage who put forward arguments relating to the right of the individual to have access to information and a free press. They advanced the views that the distribution of information among the people could influence public opinion and hence the type of government, just as particular forms of political systems will influence the level and degree of information communicated. The people were entitled to have greater access to factual and true information as well as open government.

Karl Marx, Max Weber, Barrington Moore and Samuel Huntington are some of the theorists who argued that a wealthy economy was one of the preconditions for the emergence of democracy.
In the 1950s and 1960s researchers undertook studies attempting to show that a relationship existed between the free access to information, open communication channels and development. Some of these researchers including Rostow,\(^{17}\) Deutsch,\(^{18}\) Pye\(^{19}\) and Lerner\(^{20}\) argued that if developing countries became more literate and educated, affluent, more urban, and more informed they would consequently become more modernized and democratic. More specifically, Missen recognised information as an important "adjunct of democracy".\(^{21}\) According to Rowat "a tradition of government secrecy is incompatible with the people's right to know."\(^{22}\) For Almond and Verba "democracies are maintained by a high level of information about public affairs".\(^{23}\) Schumpeter,\(^{24}\) Dahl,\(^{25}\) and Sartori\(^{26}\) recognised that the right to information and freedom of information and public opinion are "the substantive and effective foundations"\(^{27}\) of democracy. Westley and MacLean\(^{28}\) developed a model of communication linking theory to reality or "practical concerns".\(^{29}\) This model provides an approach to dealing with the problem of communicating effectively information that will help in democratic development. However, despite these studies\(^{30}\) and others that are discussed in greater detail in chapter 2, there was still no


\(^{18}\) Deutsch, (1965), op. cit.


\(^{29}\) Ibid., p. 31. Westley and MacLean tried to answer the question, "Can a simple, parsimonious model be built capable of drawing together many of the existing approaches to mass communications without serious loss in utility?".

\(^{30}\) Many of the studies noted here, although dated, are still relevant and provide the basis to our understanding of the problem being researched in this thesis. In my reading of the literature, I have found that works, for instance, by Deutsch, Lerner, Pye, Schumpeter, Almond and Verba and Westley and MacLean are classic detailed studies of the impact of information and communication on political development in different societies, linking theory to reality. These formed the basic studies in the 1950s and 1960s, and are now resurfacing and influencing current studies in information and communications.
clear evidence to support that a correlation between information and communication existed. In many developing countries democracy seemed to remain out of reach. Countries in Latin America, Africa and the Asia continents continued to have military authoritarianism and were largely unstable. In the 1970s a number of countries in Africa and Latin America continued to have military coups. Economic development did not materialise in the developing regions of the world.

In the 1970s a number of countries in Africa and Latin America continued to have military coups. In other words, greater literacy, urbanisation, greater economic activity and development and social mobility did not lead to democracy but rather to political crisis and instability. The middle classes, seen as necessary to the development of democracy, have largely remained ineffective and divided. Hence, by the mid-1970s, many Latin American countries at this time were under military or quasi-military rule.

Since the late 1970s and in the 1980s the situation, according to World Bank Reports, has changed with a number of countries striving to become democracies, for example the Philippines, Argentina, Ecuador and Venezuela. Countries in Eastern Europe, for example the former Soviet Union, have taken some steps toward more openness in government. In addition, many developing countries have become more urbanised, population more literate, information technology more accessible, industrialisation accelerated. Whether such improvements are substantial to affect the transition towards democracy in many of these countries are questions that remain unanswered. Such recent developments suggest and raise the need to again examine and determine the possible relationship between democracy, information and communication.

In the 1990s developments in computer and telecommunication technologies are influencing the whole information infrastructure. A number of scholars have suggested that such rapid developments in information and communication will

encourage and cause human freedom everywhere. It is suggested that such technologies will overcome political restrictions and allow the free flow of information between countries and societies. It will also improve information collection, storage and exchange internally and externally, thus influencing political development generally. This raises questions of the type of political system that may result. Masuda, for instance, suggests that the political system in an information based environment must be in the "nature of participatory democracy", where all citizens participate directly in decision making. Masuda gives six basic principles for participatory democracy and one of these is that all relevant information must be available to the public. Apart from these principles, there are other basic questions and problems that have to be resolved in adopting this political system.

It would seem that in the past several decades, and this is expanded further in chapters 2 and 3, there has been a very mixed relationship between information needs and use and the possible influence on democracy in the different countries. Political factors have had a profound effect on the nature and the volume of information flows in a society. This control of information can be a force of political power. For example, in China with its Communist Party, the South Korean military, the former Soviet Union and General Pinochet in Chile, information access is restricted and government control of information is strong. However, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War era allowed for the move to democracy in many parts of the world, including Eastern Europe, East and Southeast Asia. Yet, as evident later in chapters 2 and 3, there are countries where there are great advances in the development and use of information technology, for example Singapore, but this has not necessarily led to democracy. Hence, it is not possible to conclude that the equation, greater access to information leads to democracy is correct because greater access to information and communication technologies may not cause a country to move towards democracy. It may be more logical to argue that with democracy comes greater access to information. Whatever the constraints may be that affect the free access to information in different countries, whether by linguistic or technical

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38 Masuda, (1990), op. cit., pp. 81 - 89.
39 Ibid., p. 81.
40 Ibid., pp. 84 - 85. The five other basic principles for participatory democracy considered by Masuda include: "citizens would have to participate in decision-making; the spirit of synergy and mutual assistance should permeate the whole system; each person cooperates and acts from his or her standpoint in solving common problems; readiness to sacrifice one's own interest for the common good, to level out the disadvantages and sacrifices to other persons and/or other groups".
problems, cultural factors, lack of funds or physical location, politics as argued by
Connors, will always shape the degree of access to information in different societies.42

To understand the free flow of information in the different societies, it seems
necessary then, to consider the various conditions that exist including the culture,
socio-economic conditions, politics, traditional institutions and values that may
control the development of a more liberal and open society allowing more access to
information. The question that may be relevant and needs to be answered in this case
is, whether moving towards a more open society is the only way that will allow
greater access to information and greater economic development. If this is the case,
then an assumption can be made that access to information is a manifestation of
democracy and may not be the means of achieving it. If under an authoritarian regime
economic and living conditions are good, will people continue to accept less freedom
of information and speech? Lee argues that the goals of any country should be
economic growth and stability; all other goals are of secondary importance.43

The questions raised in this study may not be able to be answered through published
sources alone as despite the great coverage of literature on information and
communication that is available as evident in chapter 2, limited detailed studies exist
on their direct impact on developing democracies. Studies that focus on the effects
of information and communication on political development44 have been discussed
largely in the context of development and nation building, but not democracy. The
precise role of information and communication, in supporting the emergence of
democracy is ill defined at the present time. Indeed, the whole study of information
and communication is based on the premise that there are effects from information.
However, information seems to be a minor factor as compared to others such as
economic growth, urbanisation, trade, population growth, and literacy when
examining the transition to democracy in different countries.45

The case study will bear this out. It will show that in one country, Fiji, the
Government has not considered the important role information and communication
play in good government, improved economics and development. The Government

42 Connors, M. (1993), The Race to the Intelligent State: Towards the Global Information Economy


44 Covered in detail in chapter 2. For instance, studies conducted by Lerner, D. (1958), op. cit.;
Effects of Mass Communication. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, pp. 3 - 26; Pye, L. (ed.)

has been more concerned with serving social and economic goals. This lack of interest and uncertainty of the impact of information and communication makes it difficult for the Government to formulate and implement appropriate policies. There is also a view shared by academics and professional people that the Government does not wish to develop an informed society as this may threaten its power to control. This view is based on the fact that the dissemination of government information is limited and no policy is in place to regulate and ensure access and the free flow of information. These points will be taken up again in later chapters.

THE RESEARCH ISSUES

The lack of research focusing specifically on information and communication as primary factors in the transition to democracy in developing countries can be attributed to a number of predominant factors. First, there is a general lack of understanding of the potential influence of culture and of intertwined traditional and modern communication information technologies on the flow of information and democracy. Second, the prevailing attitudes of decision makers on the value of information and communication as effective political tools in developing countries make it difficult to get governments to support the free flow of information. Third, the recent rapid developments in information technologies in different developing countries raise difficulties in managing this growth particularly when there are few trained and qualified people. Fourth, the ineffective or lack of government policies to manage the development and use of information and communication technologies has resulted in confusion in development in this field. Fifth, the complexity of studies in democracy and its relation to development makes it difficult to find clear evidence of correlation between information and communication and the different phases of the democratic process. Sixth, the lack of serious research on the impact of information and communication on the transition to democracy in developing countries leaves a gap in our understanding of the development of democracy in general. These key issues will be discussed in more detail in later chapters. These are briefly explained next.

Culture and Information: Individualism and Collectivism

While the impact of information communicated through the radio, television and newspapers has been extensively analysed in the literature as made evident in chapters
In many developing societies, traditional patterns of thinking influence the way people access and use information for political purposes. These patterns are basically communalistic rather than individualistic where the emphasis is placed on the rights and the freedoms of the community, and the duties of a member within the community rather than upon the rights and freedoms of each member of that community. Communal responsibilities, consensus and the willingness to think and act with others thus contribute to the social cohesiveness of the community. Any acts of an individual nature such as exercising freedom of expression and opinion, and accessing information for personal advantage are often regarded as destructive of traditional methods of social control. If individualism were one of the important conditions of democracy then the emergence of democracy in these countries would no doubt be difficult. In a democracy, individual members of society are supposed to be connected by conscious agreements and contracts. Individuals are free to pursue their own wishes, and their own happiness is their immediate concern. Loyalty, contributions, devotion and participation in the larger community are not expected. Triandis, however, argues that individualism and collectivism are not mutually exclusive and can coexist as is apparent in the collective nature of the family and the individual nature of the marketplace and business. Despite this observation, Triandis assumes that all aspects and levels of society are based on the principles of individualism or collectivism.

Furthermore, in many developing societies where the culture of silence is an integral part of life, and where members of communities are regarded as subordinate, and subject to control by customs and leaders who control every aspect of life in the community, seeking information to advance the self is normally considered not the proper thing to do. Whether the development of more open societies will bring about greater access to information is difficult to predict as governments will continue to maintain control on information access, and limits will be placed on information access because of cultural reasons.

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46 This is taken up in chapter 7.
With these considerations, access to information or the freedom to seek and use information, a basic foundation for democratic systems, then becomes incompatible with the traditional way of life. This may partly explain why, in many developing countries, the transition to democracy is slow and difficult. A main challenge, therefore, is to find a possible way that the government can deal with the development of democracy working within Western style institutions integrated with strong influences of indigenous traditions of authority, loyalty, information, communication and social order.

This challenge raises the question of whether it is finding a balance between the traditional and the Western style institutions or, building on one another that will be the best approach to take in trying to get information flow freely through a society. For instance: How can the traditional and the modern information systems that inform be used to their maximum to promote democracy? Can individualistic access to information and collective access exist side by side or should there be a balance? Can Western based political systems with cultural and traditional aspects of information access, loyalties, authority and leadership be adopted and implemented? The politics of information concerns finding answers to these questions. It also concerns resolving the conflict between the universality of communication, of information and the news versus the nationalistic, provincial, religious aspirations of leaders to control the free flow of information and retain local political power. Determining how long and to what degree traditional systems will continue to influence control particularly now when new information technology and systems are encouraging universality of communications is an important consideration of this thesis.

In developing societies that do not have developed, both formal and informal, information and communication systems to support a shift from traditional to modern political forms, the traditional information and communication systems can be used to promote more information access. They can also be used as a development tool for government. Yet, there is a general lack of understanding of how precisely traditional information systems can be effective in the political process of a country. There seems to be a lack of appreciation at the global level, of the dependency between culture, information, communication and politics. It seems to me that while on one hand information and communication play a central role in influencing culture and politics in a society, on the other, culture can mould the character of information and communication systems in the same society. This will be covered in more detail in chapter 7.
Prevailing Attitudes

Attitudes at the global, national and village levels toward information as a political force reflect very much the different social and cultural attitudes that exist in different societies. In many countries people rely on the radio, television and the newspapers to communicate information to them daily. While this is an important social responsibility of those working in the media industry, there is the tendency by different categories of people to dwell on perceptions of the negative impacts and influences of the media. Government officers and leaders are often in conflict with the media workers. The general distrust of government of having information freely accessible and of the organisations that produce and make information public is a historic and social issue.

The general view held by government officials in many developing countries is that more information made available to the people can exacerbate the many problems facing society today. Governments often blame information producers and organisations for inciting people to work against them. In some developing countries this lack of understanding by leaders of the positive role of information and communications in the development process can be a constraint to democracy. The perception of information that leaders have tends to be negative and restrictive, and they look upon the access to information and its communication as a threat to their leadership instead of a potential developmental tool. This attitude is manifest in the many controls in the form of legislation on the free flow of information in a country and the treatment of the press.

Another attitude that prevails and contributes to the low appreciation of information held by government officers and the people is the fact that information is intangible, and it is difficult to place an economic value on it. As governments are more concerned with the economic development of a country, the place of information in the total scheme of things is not very high. Many developing countries cannot accept the idea that information, whatever type, is a commodity. For many of these countries information is not perceived as something that can be bought or sold.

There are, however, examples where the authorities, the press, and information professionals work together to disseminate information with the main objective of trying to mobilise people towards development and participation in government through free speech. There is constructive control from leaders and the government. In such situations, information is used as a tool for development with a good feedback.
system that is responsive, to some degree, to the information needs of the leader.\textsuperscript{51} For instance, as noted by Rogers,\textsuperscript{52} information and communication have assisted in agricultural development in developing countries. McNelly saw the greater and equal access to information and mass communications as "a sort of a magic key to the whole development process".\textsuperscript{53}

**Developments in Information Technology**

New communication technologies have reached many developing countries and are changing the way in which information is processed and stored. The opportunities for equal access to information are improving providing great advantages and positive effects in instruction and education and making the production, transfer and analysis of information for development efficient. However, despite this, the threat to the traditional communication system can be very real resulting in social and cultural change.\textsuperscript{54} Information is unlikely to be distributed evenly among members of any community rich or poor, large or small, developed or developing countries.\textsuperscript{55} Unequal access to information will persist as a result of the wide differences in cultural and economic circumstances between the different countries. The speed of the impact of these developments in many of the developing countries continues to lag behind. This is due mainly to the lack of financial and technical resources, lack of support and commitment of government, as well as the lack of relevant skills in information management in a country.

Reviewing the information environments in many of the developing countries,\textsuperscript{56} the differences between them and within them are great. On one hand there are countries,\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{51} The different positive and negative attitudes can be related to Siebert, et. al.'s theories of the press indicate the potential usefulness of the press in the development situation. Siebert, et. al. had identified the pragmatic-libertarian system (press freedom cannot be considered license), suspicious-negative (authoritarian administrator who is suspicious of the press), and positive control (leader who recognizes the media as a tool of development). The central concern of the press system in a country is understanding the attitudes and potentials of the press system and the role in the development of the nation. Siebert, F. S., Peterson, T. and Schramm, W. (1963), *Four Theories of the Press*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.


\textsuperscript{56} A matter that will be taken up in chapter 3.

\textsuperscript{57} A matter that will be taken up in chapter 3.
experiencing rapid growth of new computers, information technologies and a vibrant media. On the other, there are countries that lack access to telephones, television and occasional availability of newspapers and electricity. There are also countries that have an overall weak information environment, for example Burkina Faso and Chad. Generally, however, developing countries have weak information infrastructures. Libraries are poorly stocked, poorly staffed and lack committed people to ensure the continued support for libraries. In addition, the absence of integrated national information plans in many developing countries has led to confusion and a lack of appreciation of the importance of information to improving the quality of life.57

It can be argued that technical developments have not reduced the gap between developed and developing countries economically, socially, and politically, but rather, have widened development between countries even further, and at a rate faster than ever experienced before. Therefore, to say that people are now living in an "information society" as claimed by a number of international scholars, can be questioned by developing countries. Many developing countries are still trying to come to terms with the idea of the "information society" and question the meaning of the concept. The suggestion, then, that the process of technological development often results in the displacement of the old by the new, in this case new information technologies, may be far from the truth.

This situation further suggests that many developing countries are nowhere near what is being defined or seen as the "information society". If this is the case, information


58 So much has been written on this. This is not the subject of this thesis. However, it should be noted that the term is used very loosely and means different things to different people. There seems to be no common definition. Tadeo Umezao, a professor at Kyoto University in Japan, had forecasted the coming of an information society in 1963. Dordick, H. S. and Wang, G. (1993), The Information Society. London: Sage Publications. Daniel Bell, a Harvard professor, proposed the idea of a knowledge-based post-industrial society in the late 1960s. Bell, (1979), op. cit. In 1970 Dordick suggested a society based on modern telecommunications and information technologies. Dordick, (1993), op. cit. More recently, the information society has been defined in terms of the centrality of knowledge in human activity. Thus Drucker, in 1993, uses the term "post-capitalist society" or "knowledge society" because the basic economic resource "is no longer capital, nor natural resources, nor land. It is and will be Knowledge". Drucker, P. (1993), Post-capitalist Society. New York: Harper Business, p. 8. Writers such as MacDuff, Bell and Post define the information society in purely economic terms and focus on the growth of the information sector and information occupations in the developed countries. Dordick, (1993), op. cit. Yet, Masuda and others argue that the defining characteristics of the information society are represented by the diffusion of computer and telecommunications technologies. Masuda, (1990), op. cit.
technology, it can be argued, will not cause human freedom everywhere as promoted by Sussman. Countries will need the political will to put together policies and allocate the necessary resources to allow improved information services and access.

Information Policy

Information guidelines or policy and information legislation are often seen as providing possible solutions to limited and unequal access to information and developing awareness among the people of the availability and uses of information. It can be argued that in many developing countries the proper and maximum utilisation of information for the democratic process is not fully realised. Many governments in developing countries do not give priority to the role of information in development and do not support regulations that may allow the free flow of information in the country. This lack of a clear policy can result in confusion whereby the people are not certain of their rights of access to needed information. This can also result in governments centralising all decision making processes and thus controlling any policy on the free flow of information to the people. As according to Aucoin, "...standardised rules and procedures are set by central management agencies for administrative practices...in government, this approach has been pursued...As a consequence management authority is centralised".59 There seems to be little incentive for central agencies to delegate to departments as delegation may mean the loss of power and prestige.60 However, despite governments’ efforts to assert their authority in policy and decision making these have been accompanied by efforts to devolve authority and decentralise decision making in the management of government operations.61

In developing countries and their industrialised neighbours alike such decentralisation requires human resources development to manage change. This training has been identified as a priority.62 This has come in the wake of unsuccessful 'top-down' information flow and rapid developments in the information super highways. In many developing countries still experiencing a legacy of colonial administration, communication and educational structures and institutions, there seems to be a

growing need to find ways to involve the people at the grassroots to seek and utilise information effectively for political development.

An examination of policy and government attitude towards information access and control will be covered in chapters 7 and 8.

Development and Democracy

The study of development and democracy is complex. The discussion of the concepts in chapter 2 highlights the many definitions that exist on the concepts. This reflects the inevitability that definitions and boundaries will be culturally and historically based. For example, people living in the rural areas of the Pacific islands will have different views of the concepts than those living in Western Europe. People in countries that recently emerged from colonialism after 1945 will have different perceptions of democracy than will people in long-established countries. Other factors will also influence a person’s definition of democracy and development. Therefore, significant differences exist on what development and democracy mean. These differences in opinion will significantly affect the focus of development.

In this study development is seen as a process of change, or that which pertains to change. This change can be social, economic and political seeking a better way of life. The question that can be asked is, “a better way of life in whose terms?” Generally, it would be logical to assume that all mankind should seek a better way of life, meaning an improvement in the standard of living and growth. This implies an improvement in the distribution and removal of poverty where poverty can be defined as the failure to meet very basic levels of consumption of important commodities such as food, clothing, shelter, education and intangibles.63 The intangibles can include information and the channels of communication.

In effect, such a change on one hand can be change that is seen as desirable by governments, and as such is a demand imposed on a given population. On the other it can also be change that is not desirable by government brought about by external and internal factors in a given country. In the context of democracy and development, the demand by government may not necessarily be a transition to democracy, but nevertheless represents a direction of change posed by the people. Since goals of

development may change during the process of development, it will therefore be important to consider the means of development rather than ends.

Moving towards democracy can be considered a process of change in a political system. Even though different definitions exist for this system, for the purpose of this study the three core features of democracy identified by Dahl\(^4\) will be adopted. First, political competition exists for positions in government, and fair elections occur for public office at regular intervals without the use of force and without excluding any social group. Second, citizens participate in selecting their leaders and forming policies. Third, civil and political liberties exist to ensure there is fair political competition and participation. While this is the basis of democratic systems accepted and found in developed countries, it should be acknowledged that in many developing countries, much debate continues on the principles of "Western" style democracy as will be discussed in chapter 2. So much so, that the concepts of "Asian democracy"\(^5\) or "Pacific democracy"\(^6\) have evolved and increasingly becoming factors for discussion on democracy within the different regions.

Looking at the concept of democracy from the information and communication perspective, democracy can be seen as the individual's right to information and will include the building of the information and communication infrastructure to reach every member of the society. This will mean looking at the channels of information flow and examining them in order to determine whether the direction that has been taken will bring about change and be termed "democratic". To investigate this possibility it will be necessary to examine changes that result from having access to information and how people use this information to participate in politics.

Understanding the relationship between 'development' and 'democracy' can be seen from the argument that economic change or development can lead to or not result in


\(^5\) Asian democracy has been identified by Chan as comprising: the individual is part of the group placing emphasis on common good rather than individual good, and the notion of individual rights is not a high priority; a greater respect and acceptance of authority and hierarchy; an effective dominant party that remains in power for long periods with a centralized bureaucracy as well as a large public sector. Chan, H. C, (1993), "Democracy: Evolution and Implementation: An Asian Perspective", in R. Bartley et al. (ed.) Democracy and Capitalism: Asian and American Perspectives. Singapore: ISEAS, pp. 21 - 24.

\(^6\) A number of Pacific islanders argue that the Westminster-based constitutions are not the only way to facilitate democracy but that democracy has been in the Pacific for a long time. Ravuvu, for instance, argues that in the Pacific decisions made in the community or village had to be discussed publicly and all individuals had an opportunity to contribute. Pacific Island democracy is based on consultation and consensus. On the other hand, there is the contradictory argument that democracy is alien and foreign.
the rise of democracy. Many scholars including Marx, Weber and Schumpeter have noted this correlation. Among the other prominent scholars of development who used statistical methods to national and cross-national data particularly Cutright\textsuperscript{67} and Bollen\textsuperscript{68} as explained in chapter 2, found that there was a strong correlation between economic development and democracy. They argued that economic development brought about better political communication and education among the people. The resulting changes affected the way people approached politics, voted for their leaders and their overall role in politics and development. Other scholars attributed the development of democracy to the middle class as the change agent. Huntington\textsuperscript{69}, for example, argues that economic development produces a middle class that in turn play a vital role in bringing about democracy.

Development need not bring about greater information and communication freedom. It is possible for a country to develop from traditional society to industrial without changing its degree of control over the flow of information to the people. On the other hand, it is reasonable to accept that development with resulting greater political stability and a lower rate of social change, provides the conditions under which greater access to and flow of information is experienced.

The attempt here is to demonstrate that an information and communication approach to the study of democracy need not become entangled with the controversies surrounding the subject of development. Democracies will develop for different reasons as discussed in chapter 2. This study attempts to establish that information is a key factor for the emergence of democracy.

Lack of Research on Information and Communication in the South Pacific

The above issues suggest that there is a need to conduct more studies in the area of information access and its impact on political development in developing countries. Existing studies of information and communications in developing countries covered in chapter 2 seem to share one common characteristic - the lack of information and communication studies on the islands of the South Pacific region. The region, with twenty small island states excluding Australia and New Zealand, and covering a vast ocean area of thirty million square kilometres, is generally considered relatively,


\textsuperscript{69} Huntington, (1984), op. cit.

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politically and economically, unimportant. Many of the countries have small populations ranging from 1,577 people in Tokelau to 3.9 million people in Papua New Guinea; and small economies ranging from gross national product US$500 in Tokelau to US$2130 in Fiji. However, recent developments in information and communication technologies and their impact on these islands for education, business purposes, and small island development in general offer a number of unique cultural, geographical and political focuses to studies.

A review of the literature indicates that studies in this field have been limited to a number of countries - Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Tonga and Samoa. However, the number of studies is still very limited and this calls for the need for more research in this region. It can be assumed that findings would add to our knowledge in communication studies which, up to now, have largely concentrated in the developed countries.

THE HYPOTHESIS

The purpose of this thesis is to test the hypothesis that access to information is a political necessity for democracy, and that the introduction of measures to ensure information access are constrained by cultural, social, political, technical and economic factors.

The thesis will seek to answer the following questions:

- Is there a relationship between information access, communication and democracy?
- What have been the main constraints or deterrents to the free flow of information, and how have these impacted on democratic development?
- How and to what extent do government regulations and socio-cultural factors control information access?
- Are new information technologies facilitators of democracy, or do they have the potential to fragment society?
- How effective are the existing forms of communication - traditional and modern - in influencing the flow of information in society?

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• Can a balance be found between the use of the traditional and the modern information systems?
• Is access to information a manifestation of democracy or the means of achieving it?
• Does information and its communication play a significant role in the political life of the Fijians?
• How does the flow of information affect democracy in Fiji?
• What are the prospects of democracy in Fiji?

FIJI AS A CASE STUDY

As one of the specific concerns of this study is to examine the impact of information access on democracy, Fiji provides a unique example of how political events and considerations may over-ride any rational plans or activities that seek to make information freely available to the people. From evidence, both historic and current, it is possible to link the information environment to the state of democracy in Fiji's history: the colonial period, 1874 to 1970; period of independence from the British in 1970 to the 1987 coups; and post 1987 coups period. A close examination will provide possible highlights to some of the wider social, cultural, economic, political and administrative issues that affect the people's participation in political development, as well as the policies and legislation, or lack of them, introduced to control the free flow of information in Fiji. This will provide some new insight into the pattern of use of information by the people and how this affects participation in decision making, development in general, politics and everyday life in a small and developing country.

Fiji has a population of 715,375\textsuperscript{71} as at the last reported census of 1986. It is a multi-racial society where the indigenous population, or Fijians, since 1987 controlled political power but not economic power. Largely the Indo-Fijian population controls economic power. While the information environment is characterised by both the rapid growths of new computers, telecommunication technologies and active media, a relatively weak information infrastructure with poor financial resources to support libraries, information services, rural communications and human resources development in information exists. These are some of the issues considered when reviewing the experience of the Fijians in their use of information for political purposes. No doubt, wider social and political issues will be raised.

The study focuses on the indigenous population of Fiji, the Fijians. There are a number of reasons for focusing specifically on the Fijian population. First, no detailed study has been undertaken on the impact and use of information and communication channels within the Fijian community. Existing research on the subject focuses on the development of the Indo-Fijians, particularly the work by Brenneis and Siegel. Second, the role of socio-cultural forces including the Fijian Provincial Administration, culture and traditions of the Fijians, the church and the army in influencing the Fijian people through the information they communicate to the people is little understood. Third, the effect of the "Fijian way of life" on the flow of information in the country is not covered anywhere in the literature. Fourth, the Fiji electoral system now organised on provincial and ethnic lines, becomes an important factor in Fiji politics today. With this system, only those registered in the Vola ni Kawa Bula or VKB are eligible to vote in the provinces. This registration also assures all the Fijians of their land and fishing rights. Being registered in the VKB also gives the Fijians other opportunities in line with the Protection and Enhancement of Fijians and Rotuman Interests included in the 1990 Constitution of the Republic of Fiji.

Generally, the Fijians are less involved and less critical of the free flow of information to them. In the rural areas, information is received by way of the Fijian Administration as well as the media - radio and newspapers mainly. In 1990, the Government reintroduced policies and legislation on the "traditional" way of life for the Fijians. This has drawn criticism from many sectors of the community arguing that this is taking Fiji back to the colonial days. Criticism has also been levelled at the speed in which changes are to be implemented without first identifying and analysing the effectiveness, in this case, of various traditional systems of information and communication within Indo-Fijian communities during the late 1970s and 1980s. Their work in this area is continuing.

72 D. L. Brenneis and J. Siegel have conducted numerous sociolinguistic studies on communication within Indo-Fijian communities during the late 1970s and 1980s. Their work in this area is continuing.
73 Discussed in detail in chapter 7.
74 Discussed in detail in chapter 7.
75 A register of Fijian births, VKB, maintained by government through the Ministry of Fijian Affairs. This ensures all Fijian traditional land and sea rights. Only those registered can be called a Fijian. In recent years there have been lively discussions on who can be called a Fijian. The advantages of being listed are many as it opens up opportunities for education, business and development, generally. With the new system of voting where provinces elect candidates and where voting is done on provincial and communal lines, this list becomes very important, as only those who are entered on this list are eligible to vote for their provincial candidates.
77 In 1984, the operation of the Fijian Provincial Administration was reviewed and the resulting report recommended the reinstatement of the Fijian administrative system operating in the colonial times. In 1990 the recommendations were accepted and endorsed by the Great Council of Chiefs.
communication as well as the modern. An argument made in this thesis is that both the old and the new infrastructures in information and communication may have positive effects on political development.

Moreover, the thesis will examine the effects on the Fijians of being under two information and communication systems as opposed to one to which the Indo-Fijian is accustomed. In this regard, the study will examine whether the situation where one sector of the community is under one system of government and information and the other under two (central and provincial), affects the different communities' ability to access the required information to participate more fully and effectively in politics.

THE RESEARCH APPROACH

Democracy is analysed through the conceptual framework of information and communication. The political transformation is explored by reviewing the major communication theories drawing on the political and cultural systems approaches relating to information access at the global, national and village levels. Following upon the work particularly of Easton,78 Deutsch,79 Westley and MacLean,80 Rogers,81 and Vusoniwailala,82 I propose an approach which explores the ways in which the different forms of communication influence the flow of information, and how the different degrees of information communicated and accessed, influence the political system of a country.

In undertaking this approach I was aware that it could be ambitious suggesting that a study of any movement towards democracy could be analysed in terms of the degree of access to and effect of information on societies. This would require a study of peoples' political interaction and perceptions of information and the political environment. It would also require an analysis of the infrastructure of political systems and how these systems controlled information access.

In this study, an attempt is made to link the traditional and the modern information and communication systems. The different levels of analysis, from the national to the

78 Easton, (1965), op. cit.
79 Deutsch, (1966), op. cit.
80 Westley and MacLean, (1957), op. cit., pp. 31-38.
village level where possible, and to use the different degrees of access to information at these levels are identified to produce interpretations of the national and village picture of the state of political development in a developing country, in this case, Fiji. To be able to get the most accurate picture or reality, it is necessary to obtain different types of information by using different types of methods and multiple information sources. This method of combining different research strategies and techniques in different ways is triangulation, advocated by Buhner as "an attempt to strengthen the validity of empirical evidence in social science by reliance on more than one approach". Hence, a combination of interviews, participant observation, group discussions and literature review was used to observe and record the dynamics of the impact and uses of information on political activities of selected people in Fiji. A more detailed discussion on the methodology used is given in chapter 4.

The collection of data and interviews with people were conducted in the major urban areas in both Viti Levu and Vanua Levu and in a village. In the urban areas both Fijians and Indo-Fijians were interviewed. Many urban Fijians still maintain strong links to their villages even though they are now living and working in urban areas. The Fijians in the urban areas, normally, are very active in assisting with community development projects in the village such as the building of a church, drains, houses, meeting hall, and the supply of electricity. Their influences in development have largely gone unnoticed. Where it is relevant, comparisons between the Fijians and Indo-Fijians are made, for example, in considering the definition of concepts and political ideologies and in the discussion of perceived value of information and reality.

The idea of proceeding at the three different levels of global, national and village is supported by some of the comments made by the people interviewed. For instance, a village elder from the village of Levukana, had this to say about the need for information in the village:

We don't need information here in the village. The information provided through the Fijian Provincial Administration and the traditional system is sufficient for many of us. We trust and believe in the information we get from the top.

This raises the question, Does information and its communication play a significant role in the political life of the Fijians?

84 The village where the study was undertaken.
The elder's view can be contrasted to the comments made by a religious minister I interviewed, Reverend Kamikamica, for the district of Lomaloma, of which the village Levukana is part. When asked about the need for information at the village and national levels with the strengthening of the operations of the Fijian Provincial Administration, Kamikamica commented,

I believe that the present system of information flow from the top down is becoming insufficient for our needs. Going back to an administrative structure used during the colonial days way back in the late 1880s is a retrograde step for the Fijians. The Methodist Church principles advocate the wide distribution of information and the need to keep every member of the church continually informed. We have to progress and the only way to do this is to go forward not backwards. I have served in the rural areas for many years and I can feel and know that the Fijians are constrained in many ways. Government does not seem to realize that in trying to protect the Fijians from the evils of liquor, money, sex and so forth, they limit the Fijians' creativity and motivation. Instead of trying to help, they (Government) become a hindrance. Then we hear people say, Fijians are lazy. That we don't want to help ourselves. We wait for money or the Government to help all the time. This is far from the truth.

These two comments can be further compared to a comment made by Professor Baba when asked about the role of information and communication in Fiji society today. Baba saw the whole communication and information process as being a universal global system, of which Fiji is part,

This is an inescapable fact. Development will have to continue. Modern information technology will increasingly be seen to be part of our information and communication infrastructure. What needs to be done, and analyzed, is how much of this new development can be incorporated into the traditional information and communication system to aid in political development. Do the systems complement or compete with each other? I see the two systems complementing in many ways and this is where the focus of analysis should be.

The competition will not only be at the national level between traditional systems of information and communication and the modern, but there will be competition from external sources as well through the impact of new information technologies.

THE PURPOSE OF THE THESIS

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the relationship between information, communication and democracy. More specifically the study will attempt to establish whether access to information is a political necessity for democracy, and whether and

85 The work and impact of the Fijian Provincial Administration is discussed in detail in chapter 7.
86 Professor of Education and Psychology at the University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji at the time of writing this thesis.
to what extent cultural, social, political, technical and economic factors influence the
degree of accessibility in a country.

To meet this purpose the thesis first examines the impact of information access on
democracy at the global level, derives some generalisations and then examines the
research problem in one country, Fiji. In using Fiji as the case study it was apparent
that this would require an understanding of how Fijians generally perceive
information in relation to government and politics. It was also necessary to know how
Fijians access, select, use and communicate information so as to be able to engage
effectively in politics. An examination was undertaken of the traditional structure
through which information is communicated and decisions made, and how this
overlapped with the modern information communication channels such as the
newspapers, radio and television to keep Fijians informed. It was necessary to
determine at which level and under what circumstances Fijians used the traditional
structure to access information for political purposes, and under what conditions and
to what extent, they used the modern.

Using Fiji as a case study is relevant because of the lessons that can be drawn from its
pattern of use of information. While caution should be taken from the outset as to their
universal applicability, it is apparent that the impact of new information technologies
is experienced by many other developing countries, irrespective of the extent of
influence and degree of use. The control of the free flow of information in many of
these countries is constrained by government in many different ways, and like Fiji,
culture and tradition play a central role in the control and dissemination of
information to the people. The resulting and continuing conflict between traditional
information systems and modern in Fiji is similar to that which may be experienced
by many developing countries. Furthermore, many developing countries have
characteristically the same information environment as that of Fiji with low value
placed on information and information work. As governments are more concerned
with the economic development of a country, information development and use are
not the focus for development.

It can also be assumed that Fiji's political experience in the different periods in its
history is relevant to other developing countries. Fiji is an example where in the
period from the colonial government era beginning in 1874 to the most recent free and
democratic elections in 1994, it has gone through different phases of political
development and experienced different modes of information access and control.
Apart from the issue of economic value of information, there are a number of
developing countries that face similar internal political conflicts and tensions as Fiji, resulting from a process of rapid social and economic change, ethnic mix of the population, rival political groups and religious factions, for example Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Trinidad and Tobago, Mauritius, Solomon Islands and New Caledonia. In these countries, the debate on free access to information and democracy continues.

It would be correct to admit right from the beginning that not all the conclusions drawn in this study will equally apply to all developing countries, as Fiji is not a typical developing country. However, the findings of this thesis may be relevant to many countries which have been affected by and experienced the impact of culture and traditions and new developments in information technology on the flow of information. These countries also share the common problems of trying to deal with the growth in the use of information technology and desire for more open government in the absence of a good national information infrastructure and policy.

It is in the context of Fiji that this thesis must be viewed. It establishes the premise that while information and communication are necessary for countries on the road to democracy, the impact of information on the participation of the Fijians in politics is still unclear. The participation of Fijians in politics is important for maintaining social and political stability in the country. The political crisis of 1987 suggests that unless the Fijians control political power, control land and are assured of their destiny, continued national political stability will be difficult to attain.

STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The thesis consists of nine chapters. Chapter 1 is the Introduction, and provides an overview of the study including the research hypothesis. Chapter 2 defines information, communication and democracy, and reviews the major theoretical approaches in information and communication studies and in democracy. It examines whether there is a causal link between information, communication and democracy, and following upon the work of Easton, Deutsch, Westley and MacLean, Rogers and Vusoniwailala proposes a theory of information access and use. This should address how the different degrees of information influence the political system of a country. The subsequent chapters analyse the relationship between information,

87 In this study The World Bank definition of developing countries is used. These are countries according to the 1990 World Development Report with gross national product (GNP) per capita levels between US$500 ("low-income economies" - 42 countries) and US$2,200 ("lower middle-income economies" - 37 countries). These countries can also be referred to collectively as Third World Countries or less-developed countries (LDCs). These capital levels are current today. In 1993, Fiji had a GNP of US$2,130 per capita and a literacy rate of 91%.

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communication and democracy in terms of this approach at the global, national and village levels. Chapter 3 looks at information and communication as essential features of political development by undertaking a global comparison of information and communication in selected developed and developing countries, focusing on the newspapers, radio and television. This chapter will first, examine this link at the global level by applying the theoretical framework to the developed and developing countries of the world. Second, it will undertake a comparative assessment of the intra-societal penetration of information/communication systems based on the degree of authority existing in a country. The process of trying to link access to information and different political systems globally may draw out potential complexities which will need to be looked at in greater depth, hence the case study. Chapter 4 explains the methodology used for the case study.

Chapter 5 provides a historical and current account of information and communication and establishes the essential link to the development of democracy during the different periods in Fiji's development: colonial - 1874 to 1970; post independence - 1970 to 1987; and post coup - 1987 to 1997. Throughout this chapter influences of culture, government regulation, religion, the military, policy as well as technology in controlling the flow of information in the different periods will be examined. Chapter 6 discusses the information needs of and use by Fijians in both selected urban and rural village areas. Their information sources and the communication channels used to access the required information will be examined. In chapter 7 the impact of cultural factors on information flow and the links to the attainment of democracy will be explored. In exploring this relationship, the focus is on a number of traditional institutions that affect the livelihood of the Fijians and which control their access to information. The socio-cultural and political forces include the "Fijian way of life" and its impact on information access, related containment issues, and the role of the Fijian Provincial Administration including the chiefs in information dissemination and political participation.

Chapter 8, reviews the government's control of the free flow of information in Fiji through existing legislation and no policy. The chapter discusses the control by government as a reflection of a number of desires. These include the desire to manipulate and retain power, the need to keep people ignorant, the fear of insecurity and to legislate for this, and to introduce new laws to accommodate the rapid developments taking place in the information and communication sector. However, it is becoming apparent that the role of the press as a watchdog for the public may be threatened unless reporters accept responsibility in reporting. Total freedom to publish
and disseminate without control of any kind has never been institutionalised. While on one hand the government has a duty to protect its citizens against the abuse of use of stored information. On the other, it has an interest in ensuring that the channels of information and communication operate effectively in its interest. At this point, it is difficult to know which direction or action government will take regarding information control.

Chapter 9 reviews factors examined in earlier chapters, and the possibility that Fiji society is making a significant comeback to democracy amidst growing influences of new information technologies, a change in constitution and possible new information and access legislation. It links the global, national and village themes into a coherent whole, explains the main findings, and draws some conclusions on the central question of this study which is to examine whether there is a correlation between information, communication and the development of democracy.
CHAPTER 2

INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND DEMOCRACY:
THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In general, access to information is fundamental to a democratic system.¹ Within this system, as established at an early stage in European history, there is substantial freedom of expression and freedom of the individual to access information. This principle of free access forms the basis of information legislation in developed and democratic countries of the world today, where access is taken for granted to a large extent. In countries where democratic principles are undeveloped or are absent, government ownership and control of information are common. There are controls over distribution and transmission of information and controls on what can be published. Restrictions on broadcasts are common.² Overall, information flows and access tend to be more restrictive in non-democratic regimes than in democratic governments.

In the past four decades many studies³ have been undertaken to establish whether there is a relationship between the free access to information, open communication channels and political development generally, for instance, those studies utilizing the psycho-sociological perspective pioneered by Lasswell⁴ and Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet⁵ and the more socio-political perspective of Lerner⁶ and Schramm⁷ in the 1950s and 1960s. Few, however, have focused on the interrelationship between information, communication and democracy. In the 1970s dissenting views on the role of information and communication emerged. Since the 1980s there are a number of theorists who argue that there is a possible relationship between access to information, communication and the rise of democracy in a country. However, the precise nature of

³ Discussed later in this chapter.
this relationship, and the exact cause and effect of information on democracy remains unclear.

Chapter 2 will present the theoretical framework of this thesis examining whether there is a causal link between information, communication and democracy. I will proceed with this examination by: first, defining some of the concepts used in this study; second, reviewing the dominant and alternative development paradigms; third, taking stock of the major theoretical perspectives on the relationship between information access and democracy; and fourth, following upon the work of Deutsch, Easton, Westley and MacLean, Rogers and Vusoniwailala, address how the different degrees of information communicated and accessed influence the political system in a country.

The Concept of Information

Before presenting the theoretical framework of this thesis, it is necessary to define and clarify a number of concepts used. These include: information, access, communication and democracy

Any discussion of information, its communication, accessibility, its role in bringing about change in society, and its economic value raises the need for a definition of the concept. From a review of the literature, it would be fair to say that it is difficult to define what information 'really' is. It can mean data, figures, news, stories or messages which can be used to reduce a person's state of ignorance and uncertainty making the person 'become informed'. It is a concept that is frequently described in both qualitative and quantitative terms. According to Buckland, such a range of definitions makes the term "information" itself ambiguous.

In the 1940s the study of cybernetics as the science of communication and control developed a concept of information which saw it as:

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what is transferred in telephony or television: it is not events as such, but a patterned relationship between events. Information has physical "material" reality; it is carried by matter-energy processes...information can be erased and wiped out...it can be analyzed into discrete units that can be measured and counted.14

In 1949 attempts at defining information were made by mathematicians who tried to develop cost effective transmission channels for information. The mathematical theory of communication developed by Shannon and Weaver15 defined information as a measure of organisation and structure. In this model the information source produces a message to be communicated. The message may consist of spoken or written words, music, pictures and other forms of messages. This message is converted to a signal suitable for the channel that will be used by a transmitter. The channel is the medium that transmits the signal from the transmitter to the receiver.

In 1955 Schramm16 defined information in terms of a system. A system comprised an information chain that is capable of existing in one or more states or in which one or more events can occur. Systems include the channels of information including sources, transmitters, receivers and destinations. In order to transfer information, systems must be coupled with one another. If the coupling is broken, information is not transferred. Human communications contain many coupled systems.

In the 1970s, studies on information emphasised "becoming informed". Ritchie, for instance, defines information as having "to do with the way an act of communication tells something or informs someone of something. The concept of information is embedded in the concept of communication".17 Information can also be a message. This message can take the form of interpreted, organized, relevant and communicated data that have been organized and communicated. While information may be defined as a "message" other factors that are usually taken into consideration include the origin, nature, content and context of the message. The retention of the message by the receiver which enables people to make good political decisions18 may also become an important consideration.

In recent years, information has been increasingly being defined as a resource or a commodity. Originally, a number of economists working in the early 1970s saw information as being a readily available resource which is costless. This view was quickly changed in the mid-1970s when economists recognized that information was costly, and this made access to information difficult and unequal. This affected the capacity of various sectors of the community to use information effectively for development as information had a price tag.

Over the years the economic importance of information has grown steadily and it will continue to grow, according to Beniger. This growth has been attributed to the rising "economic demand for control" as developments in information technology increase the flow of information internationally. The value of information to the user, however, as Arrow states, is usually not known until the information is in the hands of the user, and it can be used. Even then, finding a way to measure the value of information is just too difficult. This view has been promoted by writers including Bell and Arrow and is an important one for understanding how information will continue to influence development in the future. According to Masuda, "the production of information values and not material values will be the driving force behind the formation and development of society".

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21 Ibid., p. 435.


23 Ibid., p. 9.


25 Ibid.

Faced with the many meanings that exist for information, I had to establish which particular definition would be appropriate to use. I approached this problem by accepting that there may not be one satisfactory definition of information. I found the approach used by Buckland useful and relevant. Buckland had identified three aspects of information: information as process, information as knowledge and information as thing.27 Information as process deals with "becoming informed" or "the action of informing..., communication of the knowledge or 'news' of some fact or occurrence; the action of telling or fact of being told of something".28 The process of receiving or accessing information does not necessarily mean that the individual will become informed as the individual receiving the message must be able to understand the information that is communicated. In addition, the individual must also be able to decide whether to accept the information accessed or reject it as misinformation.

Information that is imparted in information as process is information as knowledge. It is the "knowledge communicated concerning some particular fact, subject or event; that which one is apprised or told; intelligence news".29 Where information is accessed and used to reduce uncertainty it can be seen as a case of information as knowledge. How much uncertainty is reduced and how much is accepted by an individual will depend on the person's beliefs. In other words, "becoming informed" can be viewed as resulting in some change in belief. If there is no change in belief despite the availability of information, then it will be difficult to say that the person is more informed. It might be argued, however, that the information as process can provide information that may not be "true" and will therefore be misinformation. Asserting the truth in information disseminated "can only be derived from data that is accurate, relevant and unexpected".30 Wishing something to be true cannot make it true. Similarly, to say that information is true if an individual believes in it may also be difficult to accept. But as evident in chapters 6 to 9 of this study, some information can be held to be true as people believe in and accept information that is communicated from accepted higher authority despite the fact that this information filters through some other person(s) or organisation(s).31

27 Buckland, (1991), op. cit., p. 3.
29 Ibid.
Information as process may bring about a change in knowledge and a change in belief as discussed above. While information as knowledge is intangible, it can be recorded or preserved and presented in another form. This, according to Buckland, is "information as thing, which can be used to derive new knowledge". Information as thing then refers to tangible material such as documents, papers, books, data, computer discs, records. These contain information and thus are referred to as informative physical objects "having the quality of imparting knowledge or communicating information; instructive". To further establish what falls in this category of information as thing, it may be possible to ask people to say how they are informed. An expected response would be, that they are informed by a variety of sources including the news, messages, data, events, documents or just by observation and hearing things from other people and sources. It is through information as thing with which information systems can deal directly.

Information as thing can be collected and housed in a library, archives, museum, special collections, schools, and business houses. Through the print and broadcast media information as thing can be accessed as news and entertainment through the newspapers, radio and television. The collection of information as thing is important for any information and retrieval system where access to information is an important aspect. If access is denied to the public, then information serves no useful public purpose. The next section briefly looks at the term, "access" and explains the importance of access in any information system.

Access to Information

Access to information can be defined in a number of ways. It can mean "having access to information in any form, in order to know what government is up to". This definition can also be applied to "freedom of information" which can be defined in other ways and linked to other topics such as freedom of speech, censorship, and freedom of the press. Access can also refer to what and how information can be accessed and who makes this information available. In a political system there are people who have access to political resources or information and who use these resources to participate in the decision making process. Access here would mean the opportunity for individuals and groups to take part in the political process through the information and communications network. Individuals become a political factor to be

considered as far as the flow of information is concerned. Access to information is, therefore, a means to also reach other political information resources.

Access in this sense would be related to social mobility, expressed in terms of changes in institutional affiliation, residence, occupation, personal behaviour and expectations. Social mobilization according to Deutsch is a "name given to the overall process of change, which happens to substantial parts of the population in the countries that are moving from the traditional to modern ways of life". These changes have political consequences. Indicators of social mobility such as urbanisation, education and income are good predictors of political mobility. Individual political mobility means entry into the political system.

Any workable and functioning information system should be concerned with providing access to information by a wide range of users. In other words, the system should provide the means for any individual or group to access information as things, and to acquire the knowledge desired. A central issue, therefore, of an information system would be to ensure that information is easily accessed in many ways, bearing in mind that it may not always be possible to provide a high degree of access in many developing countries. There are often barriers to accessing information which need to be overcome. These barriers are related to lack of awareness, costs, government control, culture and traditions, and the availability of technology. In the case of awareness, many people in developing countries generally do not know where to look for information that they may need. For the serious research type information there are the indexes and bibliographies, computerized databases, documentation centres, global networks and the Internet. People in developed countries would generally have access to these facilities and know where to go to access information, but not so for many in developing countries where database costs and links through the Internet, although available technically, may be inaccessible because of the high costs of telecommunications. However, this situation is quickly changing and more and more developing countries now have access to Internet services and various information technologies.

Costs of documents can be prohibitive particularly for developing countries, for example those in the South Pacific which are far from the central publishing centres of

the world. In this case, cost then becomes a barrier to access. The provider of the
document or the information service may need to charge a fee to recover all costs, or
to limit access to certain types of information. Charging a fee may be totally against
the philosophy of free service which the provider may have adopted. Hence balancing
the cultural and social value of free service to all on one hand, and limiting access
because of national security and personal interests on the other, becomes a challenge.
Such nonmonetary cultural and social values have the same effect as restrictions
caused by shortage of financial resources. As Machlup comments,

How strange it is that for most liberal thinkers - academics as well as statesmen -
knowledge is almost always good and worthy of wide diffusion, although history is
full of attempts by governors - political, moral, and religious leaders and well-
meaning parents - to discourage the spread of 'dangerous' or 'unwholesome'
knowledge.37

Transforming information into a commodity will limit its availability to the public.
Only those who have the ability to pay will purchase and have access to the required
information. This immediately changes the goal of information access from one of
egalitarian to a privileged condition creating a "knowledge gap". This would seriously
affect the freedom to access information. This outcome can be expected if information
continues to be commercialised.38

In traditional information systems information is generally free but access, and the
type and volume of information made available, are controlled by government or
traditional organisations. How people use information and for what purpose are
limited by the information provided to them or they are able to obtain from various
other information systems. It is often assumed that in poor countries socially and
politically weak people have little reason to absorb or demand more information.
Much of the information needs of this sector are provided by government. This may
affect the people's development and their way of life. As Scott39 notes that "in the
Third World, it is rare for peasants to risk an outright confrontation with the
authorities over taxes, ...development policies, or onerous new laws; instead they are
likely to nibble away at such policies by noncompliance".40 Such behaviours may also
affect the people's desire for information and their non-participation in political
affairs, thus creating their own information and political barriers. For instance, in

University Press, p. 12.
Yale University Press.
40 Ibid., p. xvi.

35
developing countries generally, people living in the rural areas would vote for whichever government is in power, irrespective of whether the government is good or bad; democratic or undemocratic. Information on the government and candidates, if available, become irrelevant.

The rural informal sector has been seen as representing largely the poor and the passive; a sector considered to be unproductive to a country. But this universal view can be challenged. According to Chickering and Salahdine the informal sector may be seen as entrepreneurial, creative and hardworking. If provided the opportunities for development this sector can be integrated into the economic, social and political mainstream development. They could have more say in decision making and feel that their views and traditional practices in the rural areas such as village meetings, communal responsibilities, and shared responsibilities may be considered democratic. If this argument is accepted, then it may mean that those in the rural areas are not as passive as one is led to believe in terms of political efficacy. People in the rural areas are beginning to question the actions of those in authority and decision making level. People want to have more say in their own affairs and are quietly demanding accountability from their leaders.

In contrast to the traditional society, information systems in developed countries can be extensive, and are generally open with some controls by government. The modern system can create a need for information by the people who generally have greater access to information through the normal channels of communication - newspapers, radio and television. Many developed countries have taken advantage of new technology to improve and expand information services and provide instant information - information as knowledge and information as thing. A number of developed countries, for example Canada and Sweden, have legislation and policies allowing for the access to information as thing - government documents, reports, discs and data, for instance. There are some limits to this access and usually this includes information and data that is related to the country's security or confidential personal information. But, generally, information is becoming more accessible. In developed countries, the difficulty is not lack of access but rather finding ways and means of dealing with information overload. As according to Haywood too much information is paradoxically leading to too little. Because of cost and time constraints what is available cannot be collected together, and even if it could the

41 Ibid.
interference and recall limitations...would severely limit the ability of most humans to remember and process it.\(^{43}\)

Furthermore, the huge amount of information and its continued supply, irrespective of the quality reaching the public, is also counterproductive in terms of the public's ability to understand messages that are imparted. Jean Baudrillard calls this "implosion of meaning where there is a hyperreality of communication and meaning, more than the real. Hence the real is abolished."\(^{44}\)

The problem that arises from the two extremes of information, from the scarcity and information overload described above, is how to produce mechanisms that will provide the information needs of people in different countries. How can equality be ensured without restricting liberty when the claims of one group will always be likely to prevail due to their importance in society? It seems that the poor will remain far removed from various forms of information technology unless government makes an assitive effort to bring them into mainstream development. Some countries have decided that many of their rural people of the informal sector are poor and a financial burden to the government. Governments do not seem to realise that if this sector is given the appropriate assistance in education, more information, rural loans and a philosophy of benign development, it can be transformed to be more productive and active.

Whatever status one has in the social structure, whether in developed or developing countries, there is a growing awareness of the need for information, and what it can and cannot do. The reasons for a growing demand for access to information today can be attributed to a number of reasons. First, in many developing countries there is a growing need for a more open society and good government. Second, the need to allow for a more informed society is gaining support with the realisation of the rights of taxpayers to information resources paid for with their tax dollars. Third, the people are demanding for their right to be informed in the wake of growing corruption and the lack of accountability of the governments. One way to observe the degree of autonomy in a political system is to observe access. When access is very low, the political system can establish its network without regard for the needs of individuals. This is when, for example, leaders use the traditional communication network and system to disseminate political messages. The globalization of information and

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communication processes could lead to more open access raising the desire by the people for more open societies and more accountability of public and government officers. Changes in Central and Eastern Europe support this idea.  

The desire for accountability has been linked to access as raised by Apter, who sees access as a "function of the political system", where the political system is formed as the result of a relationship between the norms of a society and the prevailing patterns of authority. Apter refers to access as the degree of accountability of leaders or those in position of authority to those led. Often, those in authority determine and control the means to collect, use, share or disseminate information. The degree of access can range from very low, low, medium to high and very high where each level relates to or defines a different type of political system. For instance, a high level of access is related to democratic systems, while a low one to authoritarian politics. The possession of, capacity to manipulate, and to control access to information in society become critical aspects of political power.

In the 1930s, Walter Benjamin had argued that people's attitudes and the attainment of power were influenced and controlled not by the media but by those who controlled the media and controlled access. Those who controlled and manipulated information generally represented the interests of the ruling class and had privileged access to those who owned the media. Positively, at the individual level people networks can be developed, and access be promoted. On the other hand, governments can react negatively and introduce legislation which limit access to information. For an open society, there is need for new educational approaches to this overall question of accessibility and selectivity, as well as the need to know how to utilise information and manage the impact that this brings to the society. The same could be said of closed societies where culture and tradition as well as government dictate the extent to which the population can access information.

Information and Cultural Research

The significance of traditions in influencing and explaining behaviour and social systems has been recognised and explained in a wide range of literature but especially

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47 Ibid., p. 131.
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in the work of Shils, in the work of Hofstede, and Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck. In the literature, however, the importance and historic roots of the traditional ways of knowing and information and their impact on society have not been recognised. For too long the wisdom of the old people, their beliefs, their ways of knowing, including that of the world of the shaman – the ancient healer, the medicine man – have not been given the prominence they deserve. Scientific rational explanations have often guided our conceptions and rule of life. People who grow up in two worlds – that of the traditional and modern – generally have had the opportunities to a better education and social and economic lifestyle. These have influenced their outlook on life where anything local is regarded as of lower quality than that which is imported, where, according to Weber, tradition has no place in modern society.

To explore the relationship further between traditional ways of knowing, information and communication, values become important factors in influencing development. It is necessary to identify the mechanism by which values at the macro global level are linked to values at the micro village level as these latter values will likely influence directly the direction development a country will take. A model of this process is proposed by Hofstede. Hofstede recognised the importance of culture and the use of oral and traditional information, and communication systems to effect political development in societies. Hofstede identified four underlying value dimensions. These are: power distance from large to small or defined as the extent to which members of a society accept that power in institutions and organisations is distributed unequally; uncertainty avoidance from strong to weak, defined as the level of anxiety within members of a society in the face of ambiguous situations; individualism with its opposite, collectivism. On the individual side individuals are supposed to take care of themselves and their families. On the collective side individuals through their lives remain integrated in groups which protect them in exchange for loyalty. These values are normally stable over time but have evolved and respond to changes and external factors.

Hofstede's model emphasises the potential impact of cultures, in terms of high levels of individualism or collectivism, on the political process. The individualistic societies as found in Western Europe foster individual values and choices which are characteristic of the Eurocentric democratic process. Over the past twenty years this individual value and democratic process has been introduced in many developing

countries by ex-colonial powers. However, as discussed in chapter 1, because these countries have collectivist cultures and values the transition to democracy has not been easy. This becomes evident in the case study discussed in later chapters.

The Meaning of Communication and Information Flow

Being able to access information is one thing; communicating information or transmitting information as thing at the different levels of the community to be used is another. The receiving of information can be seen as a part of the general communication process, and may be a necessary condition of "becoming informed". This section attempts to examine how people receive information through the communication process and identify the various methods used to communicate information in the community. In this study, communication is the process of passing information through a channel or medium between individuals, groups or institutions.

Communication has several dimensions. Communication can have a personal and private dimension such as the interaction between individuals. It can have a socio-political as well as economic dimension. In its broadest sense, communication can be seen as an individual and collective activity of exchanging facts and ideas within any given social or cultural system. Communication also has a number of functions. In its information function, this includes the collection, storage, processing and dissemination of news, facts and opinions to the public or to any individual to raise the understanding of individual, community, national or international organisation situations so as to take action or appropriate decision on a matter. In its socialization role, communication can build up a common core of knowledge and ideas which may favour social and cultural cohesion so that individuals and groups can become more involved in public affairs. This knowledge gained can be transmitted to further develop the individual and increase knowledge within a community. This educational role of communication is important. So too are the motivational and discussion roles of communication. Through communication individuals and groups within a society can be motivated and stimulated towards individual and collective activities. Through discussion communication presents available information in order to clarify issues of local, national and international importance.

As discussed by Westley and MacLean the basic elements in the process of communication are sender, information medium and receiver. Technical links are integrated with human links. Such links include the print and broadcast media including newspapers, radio, television and telecommunications network such as Internet. The traditional communication system links various sources of information originating in government and village institutions with the people. The communication link can be carried out by traditional units, and can be part of a separate traditional information system or organization. For instance, in 1951 Harold Innis wrote that

...the medium of communication has an important influence on the dissemination of knowledge over space and over time and it becomes necessary to study its characteristics in order to appraise its influence in its cultural setting.\(^{53}\)

Innis suggested that we are compelled to be biased to the period in which we work and live. Looking at old civilizations Innis supported the use and the strength of oral tradition as an effective medium of communicating knowledge. These, for many developing countries today, still form the main communication links between people. But the bias of modern civilizations will change according to the systems and technology available at the time. There has been a bias towards radio, newspapers, and telecommunications.

In 1948 Lasswell\(^{54}\) advanced a model of linear one-way communication. This assumed that the communicator has some intent to influence the receiver, and the system was seen as a persuasive process. This linear model was taken up in 1949 by Shannon and Weaver\(^{55}\). There was still no feedback in information. In 1954 Schramm\(^{56}\) developed the circular model of communication which Schramm later modified recognizing the importance of feedback. Deutsch tried to construct a general theory of political system as a "communicative network" by relying on empiricism, elements drawn from system theory and cybernetic theory.\(^{57}\) For Deutsch, "communication is the ability to transmit messages and the ability to react to them."\(^{58}\) Government was analysed as a state through its communication and control system.


\(^{54}\) Lasswell, (1948), op. cit.


\(^{56}\) Schramm, (1954), op. cit.

\(^{57}\) Deutsch, (1966), op. cit.

\(^{58}\) Ibid., p. 77.
Other social scientists including Rogers59, DeFleur60 and Ball-Rokeach and Noelle-Neumann61 recognised different types of communication flow. First, the “downward communication” where information flows from positions of higher authority to those of lower authority. In this model there are two concerns: the kinds of information that are disseminated from the top, and how this information is provided. Second, “upward communication” whereby information flows from lower or subordinate levels to higher levels. But where it exists, upward flow may take different forms. In Fiji, for instance, many times communication from the village people to the top is communicated by a matai or messenger, or by the Roko or village administrative head. What is communicated could be anything political, social or financial, and relates to village and provincial activities. There are many positive advantages in “upward communication”. It keeps leaders or those in authority knowledgeable about what their subordinates think of them and their work. Third, horizontal communication is the sharing of information among people who are neither subordinate or superior. Such a method of communication is effective in work situations, in problem solving, in negotiations, and in coordinating work programs.

Three forms of communication can, therefore, be identified. There is the direct communication which involves getting information communicated directly from source to the recipient as in a face to face conversation. The sender is in control of the message getting communicated to the recipient. For indirect communication there are two parts. Information can be stored and a message forwarded to the recipient at any time. Another is to store and retrieve a message or information as thing at the recipient’s choice, as is usually the case with electronic mail. Normally, when a sender of a message communicates this message to a recipient it is difficult to know whether the message will be received as the message is controlled by the provider of the communication and storage system.

The multi-step flow of information saw various information flow patterns. The hypothesis is that information does not flow directly or indirectly through a leader but flows through various sources and channels. There seems to be no well defined paradigm of the multi-step flow of information.

In studying the information flows in developing countries, Vusoniwailaha identified a number of patterns. Where there is a two-way information flow controlled ecologically and structurally and determined by culture this can be linked to egalitarianism, characteristic of societies in the pre-European contact period. For example, in the social organizations of Pacific Islands Vusoniwailala argued that interpersonal communication was the only available channel through which information was transmitted. It was highly organized with low information load and little, if any, information from the outside cultures. Such a system was referred to as the "isolated communication environment". While Melanesian communication environment was egalitarian and leadership attained through achievements, Polynesian communication environment was ranked with hereditary leadership. Melanesia and Polynesia traits are found in Fijian culture and organization.

Where there is a one-way flow, vertical communication of information and no feedback, the environment will be controlled and the political system will be closed. Such a political system can be considered to be hierarchical, traditional and authoritarian. In this situation the sources of the type of information to disseminated is politically determined through persuasion or coercion, the channels of information flow are politically designed by the controller and the information load is increasing slowly. In this controlled system, the environment space begins to change and social relations are influenced from outside by an intervening social system. It is suggested here that the controlled environment of the Pacific islands, and this includes Fiji, covers the period from early contact with European cultures, through colonialism, to the gaining of independence of most of the islands. In Fiji, for example, the new information flow was designed and controlled by the colonial and native administrations being staffed by chiefs especially those from the favoured Bau/Tailevu province recognized by the British to be at the top of the Fijian hierarchy. In this controlled situation, the Fijian, for example, becomes unaware of alternative systems of information and accepts what information is communicated to him and the communication channels as the formal and the one that should be accepted.

63 Part of the basic evolutionary phases referred to by Fried who hypothesized that political societies develop through four stages: egalitarian, rank, stratified, state. Fried, M. H. (1967), The Evolution of Political Society. New York: Random House.
65 Ibid., p. 8.
Where there is a free flow of information, the old information systems often conflict with the new. There is generally an open environment where information production, dissemination and access are encouraged. The focus here is not on control or the supervision of the information environment or the pattern of information flow but on the difference in development ideology - a more open and democratic system of information accessibility and flow. Many channels of communication are encouraged. The use of new information technology was seen as making information accessible to all sections of the community. Information, both from internal and external sources, was seen as a precondition for economic development.

In the Pacific, economic change marked the evolution of the Pacific societies toward stratification and divisions. On one hand, there are those who prefer to maintain the controlled environment and therefore do everything in their power to retain the status quo in information control. On the other hand, greater access to information through information communication infrastructures increases general mobility, knowledge and participation of people in politics.

Where there is a multitude of information flow, people are able to choose and are free to participate in any information flow they wish. They may listen to a radio session, watch television, receive information from another individual or obtaining information from only one source. In this dynamic environment there is freedom to do what people desire without interfering with others. There are one-way, two-way and vertical communication channels. There are also two-way systems through the use of new technology or other information systems. The dynamism here is of a system that enables both electronic and personal or human links channels to serve human communication and information needs as shown in the concept of information structure adopted in this study. Information load in the dynamic environment is high but there is a freedom to select information in order to participate and make informed political decisions. There is freedom to express an opinion on any matter without fear of being victimised. In such an open communication environment, this can be linked to democracy where there is freedom of speech and freedom to access, select and use information as it is desired.

From a receiver's perspective, there are various options in receiving information. Receiving usually involves physical access - hearing, seeing, or reading. A person can ask for information; search for information; order the retrieval of certain bits of information; sense information and create information. The use made of the communicated information will depend on the recipient's objectives and beliefs.
depending on the information received and the situation. The person may not wish to react to the information and may play a passive role. However, what seems clear is that information is of little use if it cannot be communicated and accessed directly or retrieved through hearing, seeing or sensing.

**Linking Information, Communication and Development**

Can the study of information and communication be separated seeing that the two processes are so interlinked? Based on the above definitions and descriptions it could be argued that the relationship between information and communication is so close that the study of information, need not be coextensive or combined with the study of communication or vice versa. This study, however, attempts to show that the study of information alone may not be able to explain information as an agent of social change. Its effectiveness and impact on change and development cannot be understood clearly unless the process of its communication is also understood. The presence of information does not induce social or political change; communication technologies make a difference to the extent people make use of these technologies and information as tools for development. According to Deutsch, communication transmits messages that contain quantities of information. The effect of information thus cannot be understood if its process of communication is not known. Physical access to information through hearing, sensing or seeing, for instance, forms part, and can be the result, of communication.

**Systems and Systems that Inform**

Any human communication consists of a series of systems coupled into chains. A system is defined as any part of an information chain that is capable of existing in one or more states or in which one or more events can occur. A communication system can be a telephone wire, sound waves, a human nerve. Systems include the channels of information which also includes sources, transmitters, receivers, and destinations. Two or more systems may be coupled with one another so as to transfer information. The state of an information system will depend on the state of all the systems adjoining it. If there is a break in the system, then the information is not transferred.

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67 Deutsch, (1966), op. cit.
For example, human communication contains many coupled systems. Interfacing between two systems is a gatekeeper point. A gatekeeper determines what information is relayed along the chain. A gatekeeper may be an editor, commentator, reporter, a radio station or government officer who decides on what information can or cannot be passed on.

Shaw and Culkin\textsuperscript{69} had argued that if we took a broader view of information systems, where the concern will be explicitly with “becoming informed” or information as process and not only concerned with access to information as thing, then we could use the phrase “systems that inform”. This reflects more appropriately the extended task of an information system to include cognitive access as well as physical access to information as thing. Generally, what an individual needs to know is not only information found and provided in documents and information through formal information systems, but also information through cognitive access concerned with social, cultural and personal interests. In other words, “information needs are situational and cultural”.\textsuperscript{70} The process of imparting information to the people may be undertaken in a number of ways reflecting cultural and social practices.

In essence, the use of traditional and oral communication channels and infrastructure to assist in the democratic process emphasises the importance of interpersonal communications and the central role of balancing the old and the new forms of communication to aid in the democratic process. Questions\textsuperscript{71} have been raised whether the use of such traditional media would affect the role of information and communication in political development. The simple answer is that synchronising the old and the new forms of communication, and building on the traditional administrative structure, would be the best approach forward in many developing countries where traditional information systems are still strong and effective. Modern information and communication channels should not be used in place of the


\textsuperscript{70} Buckland, (1991), op. cit., p. 91.

traditional. They should complement each other. There should be strong support generally for this process of information and communication synchronisation.72

It would seem logical to advocate and support both the traditional and modern information systems to function alongside each other within government regulations and law to ensure greater degrees of access to information. By following this route people in developing societies may develop a confidence and knowledge to deal with freer access to information, the ability to find new methods of accessibility incorporated within its traditional system of information and the knowledge to use the information accessed. The traditional and modern information systems should be encouraged to complement and not compete with each other. It is in this regard, that the blending of the modern and the traditional to provide systems that will inform, is the concept of information systems used in this study. With selective combination of the traditional and the modern information and communication systems countries should be able to expand their information and communication sector to some degree.

This study looks at both the potential of traditional and modern information systems. The traditional information system in this study will include those systems that are available and provide information for the Fijians in the village, and also accessible to the Fijians in the urban areas. This includes the formal Fijian Provincial Administration system and the various processes and channels of communicating information and assisting people in the villages in “becoming informed”. This would include mainly oral forms of communicating through the messengers and village meetings. This should not be confused with UNESCO's consultation of experts who in 1986 referred to traditional media as including the radio, newspapers, television, books and magazines, which in my study is referred to as modern media. New media, according to UNESCO, include videotext, cable, satellite television, video, and teletext.73 The blending or the synchronisation of the use of the modern and the tradition is being advocated in this study.

72 Hamelink’s notion of cultural synchronisation is where many developing countries, import foreign culture in the form of computer technology, satellite communications, for instance, and these dominate. In small dependent countries the importation of information and communication technology, programmes, skills has meant that the countries will continue to be dependent on foreigners. Many developing countries have found it difficult resisting synchronisation. But there are some countries where some traditional forms of carriers of messages or information such as dance, plays or songs are successfully combined with the modern information and communication channels to convey a message. Hamelink, C. J. (1988), Cultural Autonomy in Global Communications. New York: Longman.

A diagrammatical representation of how I perceive systems that inform used in this study is provided in Figure 2.1.

**Traditional and the Modern Ways of Knowing**

The traditional way of knowing and modern ways of accessing information to explain what we need to know will operate side by side. The traditional way tend to see the world as a whole, where everything — the earth, water, animals, plants, insects, birds and man — are all interlinked and all have a life. Destroy one you destroy the other. Land for instance, is an extension of life in most developing cultures. It engulfs traditions, customs, social status, hierarchy and other social factors. In the Western world land is not perceived in the same terms. Land means money, development and is a commodity.

Information is also transmitted alongside histories in a number of ways. In the local village community for instance, there exist traditional informants who guard certain information that is handed down through the generations. This can be information on any subject related to everyday life. It can also be on what people need to know about village control, social obligations, ceremonial activities and responsibilities. The pattern of thinking is on the collective level involving members of the community and not the individual. Not all knowledge is shared with the group as some of the knowledge is protected.

Other transmission modes include local village family members. Family tradition requires the family to remember the historic past and this is undertaken by either recording or by passing the history through members of the family. Also through the family healing gifts and knowledge of medicinal plants, fishing methods, massage and healing are passed on from one generation to the next.

Other modes of transmission is found in chants, songs, dance, drama, poetry, lullabies and stories. For instance, there are chants about fishing, planting, ancestors, life, people, the village and growth. Many of these form some link to the past and the present. These function alongside the modern day radio, television, written word, the teacher, films and video. In fact when children in the village start school, their whole world is transformed. From here on information and all that is learned, so it seems, is by way of the written word and often detached from the normal or traditional way of knowing things and acquiring knowledge.
There is a necessity to learn the new ways of acquiring information. This means that people have to become literate. Literacy then becomes desirable and the lack of literacy is a sign of backwardness. Similarly today, the written word is considered above the oral, the written sources generally accepted and much preferred as evidence to oral tradition. Generally, written sources are taken more seriously than oral ones, even when the written sources are derived from the oral. This is questionable but it would seem that we assume and are led to believe that the written word would help develop a person and it is something that is essential to modernisation and liberal democracy. I believe that more often, no matter how important we conceive oral traditions, literacy and oral communication are usually kept separate. We rush and strive to get everyone literate because we are now conditioned to believing that with literacy comes progress, and illiteracy is a bad thing. People also have to learn to become more aware of the importance of information to decision making and development. Knowing how to acquire information requires skill.

In this study I am proposing that any plans for development must take into consideration the traditional ways of knowing and information as key factors. Some ways must be found to integrate the traditional ways and the modern communication modes and information systems to ensure greater success in promoting and getting development messages across to the people.

To what extent and in what ways do information and communication influence politics? The important relationships here are between communication, information and government and between information, communication and freedom.

In this next section I will provide an overview of what selected information and communication theories say about development, examine the ways in which the different forms of communication influence the flow of information, and explore the interrelationships between the different degrees of information communicated and accessed and democratic development.

In Figure 2.2, I have listed some of the theories on information and communication developed over the years and referred to in this study. There are many other approaches identified in the literature and these cannot all be included here. The purpose of this figure is to give some idea of the expansive nature of the work that has been undertaken in this field. It provides an indication of the rapid developments and changes taking place in information and communication technologies, and related theoretical discussions.
Figure 2.1: Information flow and systems that inform

Information

Information as a process
- becoming informed
  Personal Knowledge
  Personal Values
  Cognitive Skills

Information as Knowledge
- knowledge
- beliefs
- traditional

Information as thing
- data, electronic and manual
- document
- record/knowledge

Systems that Inform

Traditional Information System
- Human links
  - oral
  - verbal
- Communal Institutions
- Culture

Modern Information System
- Print
- Broadcast and recording
- Tele-communication

Synchronised Information System
The study uses this overview to address the discussion of the dominant and alternative paradigms. It should be noted that a comprehensive account of this diverse body of literature is not possible. This discussion serves to place the study of information and communication in context.

THE DOMINANT PARADIGM

In development communication literature the use of the term "paradigm" is common and has been associated with the work of many scholars including Lerner, Schramm and Rogers. In 1962, Kuhn had advanced the idea of a "paradigm" in the book, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. This view was that all science, both natural and social, are basically an irrational process. Scientific change does not come about by the gradual accumulation of knowledge and understanding but rather by a shift of scientists' acceptance of an existing paradigm or set of ideologies and presuppositions to a new one. The history of science from this point of view, represented a shift from one set of premises or paradigms to another. A paradigm is, therefore, a premise or a presupposition. In the 1970 edition of this same work Kuhn defined "paradigm" to mean shared examples of successful practice used to solve problems. A paradigm is the entire collection of beliefs, values, techniques shared by the members of a given community.

To Hall's "problematic" is the term used instead of paradigm. This meant that "all empirical work and indeed theoretical work is done within a particular field of concepts having relationships with one another". According to Guba and Lincoln, a "paradigm" is "a set of basic beliefs...It represents a world view that defines for its holder, the nature of the 'world', the individual's place in it, and the range of possible

75 Lerner, (1958), op. cit.
78 This is a revised definition. Thomas Kuhn had earlier advanced a definition of the term "paradigm" where he recognized that in the development of an individual science that "paradigms" were achievements to legitimate problems using scientific research methods. Such achievements were "open-ended" allowing further opportunity for redefinition if necessary. Kuhn, T. (1962), The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago.
relationships to that world. A "paradigm" would therefore mean a model, a pattern or an approach to solving or explaining a problem.

Studies in information and communication are dominated by a paradigm that depicts the effects of information in a linear causal way. This can be seen as an individual A tells someone B something with X effect. The source A transmits the information. The information is received by the audience through a medium of communication which may be an individual, the newspaper, the radio, the television or another form of communication. The effects of the information communicated on the receivers are studied, as, for example, in the case of studies conducted by Lerner and Schramm. The information becomes important to the receiver. Subsequent media studies showed that information may be broadcast but may not be received. The sender-receiver model was subject to the effects of other factors that limit the influence of the information communicated. Beltran observes that in the case of feedback, the view was to revise the information in order to influence the receiver as intended by the sender. In this context, the receiver plays a passive role in the decision making process. Such action also accounts for the lack of political involvement by the people in many developing countries.

The most prominent of scholars whose work was associated with the dominant paradigm was Daniel Lerner who, in 1958, published a landmark study titled, The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East. Lerner saw traditional society becoming modernised through a number of "steps": urbanisation leads to increased literacy, this leads to increased media exposure, which in turn leads to wider economic and political participation. This process involved changing people's attitudes, in particular, qualities which Lerner termed "empathy" and "psychic mobility". The ability to see oneself in another person's situation was regarded as "empathy". The ability to imagine oneself in another universe was "psychic mobility". Mass media became the "multiplier effect" of these qualities which helped in the modernisation process.

83 Lerner, (1958), op. cit.
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<th>Researcher</th>
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<th>Discussion</th>
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<td>No feedback</td>
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<td>Persuasive receiver</td>
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<td>Shannon and</td>
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<td>Political development</td>
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<td>Lerner (1958)</td>
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<td>Communication, information</td>
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<td>as innovators, mobilisers or multipliers of change</td>
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<td>Deutsch (1966)</td>
<td>Complementarity</td>
<td>Processes of communication are the basis of coherence of societies,</td>
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<td>Efficiency in communication</td>
<td>cultures, individuals</td>
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<td>Frank (1969)</td>
<td>Dependency model</td>
<td>Based on inequities that exist between developed and developing countries</td>
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<td>Fall of the Dominant</td>
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<td>Newman (1972)</td>
<td>Interdependence</td>
<td>Information and institutional characteristics are interdependent.</td>
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<td>Institutional perspective</td>
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<td>Noelle-Neumann</td>
<td>Spiral of silence</td>
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Boyd-Barrett (1977)  
- Media imperialism  
- Media domination  
- Flow of information  
- Few developing countries own and influence international information one-way flow of information

Rogers (1978)  
- Dominant paradigm  
- Self-reliance model  
- Modernisation  
- New technologies  
- Communication-effects gap  
- Proposed new alternatives with new technologies affecting approaches to development

Smith (1978)  
- Control by government  
- Dependency  
- Manipulation  
- Accessibility and selectivity  
- Government control and all decisions controlled and made by governments Manipulate receivers Access as aspect of political power

Bell (1979)  
- Information society  
- New technologies  
- Information as resource  
- Information society dominated by new technology

Narula & Pearce (1986)  
- Modernisation  
- Dominant paradigm  
- New paradigm  
- Basic needs model  
- All-inclusive, Model still unclear and vague

Servaes (1989)  
- Modernisation  
- Dependency  
- New paradigm refers to multiplicity of cultures

Melkote (1991)  
- Dominant paradigm  
- Dependency paradigm  
- Alternative paradigm  
- Focuses on development happening in the field and more relevant to developing countries

Hills (1991)  
- Political choices  
- Self-reliance  
- New technologies  
- Policies  
- Propose new technology promote freedom and democracy Role of policy and politics in determining control

Connors (1993)  
- Technology dimension  
- Info. Tech. penetration  
- Information a dynamic commodity  
- Information Access Index  
- Political factors affect information flows Greater access to info tech, better chances of moving towards democracy

Haywood (1995)  
- Global information system  
- Advanced computer and telecommunications  
- Information gaps despite info tech Accessing, sharing and valuing info Democracy and info tech, give greater information equity

Castells (1997)  
- Sociological theory of Information Age  
- Information revolution  
- Globalization  
- Development and Information Rise of the Fourth world Capitalism, poverty Democracy/information
Schramm\(^{84}\) also contributed a great deal to understanding the role of mass media in the process of social and economic development. In the development of industry or the agricultural sectors in developing countries, these required the mobilisation of human resources. Schramm maintained that mass media could promote education and other developments which directly affected the process of social and economic change. The mass media was a key factor and the "mover" in the development process.\(^{85}\) But the media had its limitations. But despite this, Schramm advanced the idea that the mass media was a powerful development tool.

Rogers was one of the key scholars who advanced the diffusion of innovations approach which had as key ideas: (1) that innovation is any idea considered as new by the recipient; (2) this is communicated through certain channels; (3) to members as a social system; (4) over time.\(^{86}\) Diffusion studies confirmed five stages: awareness, interest, evaluation, trial and adoption. The paradigm highlighted the impact of communication of new ideas from external sources through the media and interpersonal, and are accepted and used by the rural village and local population to bring about social and economic change.

Pye,\(^{87}\) for instance, had pointed out that communication systems are important to structuring the political process of a country and in determining the future of a developing nation. In many developing countries much promise was placed on what information and communication could do for their development in general. On one hand, there have been great expectations, in theory, concerning the benefits and value that can be obtained from information and communication, yet on the other, there seemed little applied research to show what is happening in reality.\(^{88}\)

Development planners and project co-ordinators in developing countries looked to information and communication to help accelerate development in various fields. Information infrastructures were strengthened in developing countries and given more financial assistance. Different approaches of the "dominant paradigm" emerged and


\(^{86}\) Rogers, (1983), op. cit.

\(^{87}\) Pye, (ed.) (1963), op. cit,

\(^{88}\) McQuail, D. (1992), *Media Performance: Mass Communication and the Public Interest*. London: Sage Publications, p. xvi. McQuail argues that a central problem in the study of the theory of communications and society is the "gap between the normative social theory of the media and applied research." He further argues that theoretically, there are great expectations concerning public benefit from the media but few studies have actually tried to balance this with reality.

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three areas which developed that helped in the understanding of the foundations of the communication in general and their role in development theory in particular included: the communication effects approach; diffusion of the innovations approach; and the mass media and modernisation approach. The communications effects approach was associated mainly with Lasswell who advanced an innovative conceptualisation of mass media whose model suggested the question: Who says what, in which channel, to whom, and with what effect?

While rapid developments in communication occurred, in many developing countries the flow of information was dominated by the powerful nations. There seemed little balance in the free flow of information. In the 1970s criticism and radical alternatives emerged in response to the "dominant paradigm" of development that was seen as promoting and advocating cultural and information dependency on Western nations. Frank, Schiller and others led such criticism. A sixteen-person Commission headed by MacBride reviewed the complaint of domination and control of information by the industrialized nations. It also looked at the reasons that developing countries failed to develop an independent national press, and the barriers to the free flow of information between the developed and developing countries. On one hand, there were press and media outlets that were free to gather facts and to report and interpret these as they wished. On the other, in some countries the press was seen as an instrument of the government in power. The Report of the Commission was published in 1980 and made over eighty recommendations to cover, generally, various aspects of information access, flow, democratisation and development.

89 Lasswell, (1948), op. cit.
92 Gauhar, A. (1979), "Free Flow of Information: Myths and Shibboleths", Third World Quarterly 1(3): 53 - 77. In this article, Gauhar had listed a number of reasons why the developing countries failed to develop a national press. (1) Political structures in the developing countries are elitist oriented and the mass media in these countries are seen by the ruling classes as a threat. Governments tend to control the media and use these to their advantage against their opposition; (2) there is considerable importation of foreign technology and programmes which encourage and sustain foreign lifestyles and discourage local initiatives; (3) rapid developments in technology are allowing different media techniques to be used with greater availability of programmes coming in from external sources resulting in greater impact on the society; (4) unequal developments in technology and communications have resulted in unequal distribution of information with weaker communication and information states asking for more positive information on themselves; (5) communication resources are still controlled by the developed countries.
Since the 1980s, changing geopolitical circumstances have created the need to review the situation again. The dominant paradigms seem inadequate in addressing this issue of reality and fail in practical application to back up theory. As Fair explains, such studies fail to build on past research increasing the fragmentation in this field of study. For many of the developing countries expectations have not materialized. However, as shown by Servaes, despite these shortcomings there are some components in preceding paradigms, both old and emerging, which can help decision makers when addressing some of the controversial issues of technology transfer and use, and these components have strong potentials for future applications.

THE ALTERNATIVE OR EMERGING PARADIGMS

As mentioned earlier, in the 1970s questions on the viability of the dominant paradigm emerged. There were many criticisms of the dominant paradigm where it was argued that far from improving the situation in developing countries, the dominant paradigm had worsened the situation with inequities developing between and within nations. Hettne, for instance, argued that there has been a lack of political and government support for change. Frank argued that any relationship between advanced economic countries and those that are backward economically would leave the backward areas or countries more underdeveloped. These countries are pushed out to the periphery and in many cases are marginalised. The dependency paradigm was developed and was primarily concerned with the inequities that existed between the developed and developing nations. Dependency relations created situations whereby developed countries gain in negotiations, in expanding and promoting capitalist trade and investment and in their growth generally. To a large extent,
development served more the needs of the developed countries. As Lee\textsuperscript{101} argued, "national development" and "modernisation" are American ideas that are created as tools of modern imperialism. And true national development is seen as "liberation from dependency".\textsuperscript{102} From a dependency perspective, the role of communication is basically that of media imperialism.

There were other criticisms of the dependency approach focusing on the inability of finding solutions to the problems of development in developing countries. There seemed to be more emphasis on causes rather than on methods of solving problems. But what of the receiver? The receiver plays no active role in this paradigm. The dependency model assumes that the receivers are passive. This may explain why, in a number of developing countries, the dominated receivers remain dependent on their leaders who, with manipulation and control mechanisms maintain the support of the grassroots population. The receivers are viewed as passive receivers with little ability to respond.\textsuperscript{103} In some instances, as this study will show in chapters 6 to 9, such passiveness is by choice and design influenced by culture and the way of life of the people. The important issues in this model, then, become not only the transmission and source of information but also the manner in which information is received and how this influences political behaviour. Hence, there is a mixture of dependency and autonomy.

In reality, it would seem that the dependency approach offers no real answer to the development problems of the developing countries. This does not mean that the inequities are not real. From my observation and review of the literature it would be fair to say that for too long many developing countries have been preoccupied with developments taking place abroad and continue to transplant technology and ideas to the local scene without first testing how new ideas and practices will affect development. Too often the idea or technology from abroad is still held as "better or superior" than that available locally despite all the available local expertise, local knowledge and traditional infrastructures. Leaders supporting this view will unconsciously affect the continuation of the dependency syndrome.

Primarily, dependency theorists viewed the problem in terms of external forces which create or maintain underdevelopment in many developing countries. The multinational and transnational corporations, international trading links and markets, and the

\textsuperscript{103} Scott, (1985), \textit{op. cit.}
infiltration of new information and communication industries and political objectives of the developed world were seen as the primary agents of dependency. Internal forces such as the military, elites and local businesses could consolidate further the dependency situation within the developing countries while external forces maintain their influence over these forces. Narula and Pearce maintained that dependency theorists advocated more education and not so much development. Education would "enlighten the oppressed to the horrors of dependency".

In recent years, various alternative and new approaches continue to emerge trying to respond to particular needs of the different developing countries. A number of these alternative theories had strong cultural bias and a basic human needs approach to development. Also known as the "culturist" approach, this was supported by people such as Melkote, Hall, Schiller and Mowlana. They supported the notion that culture and values of a country are significant variables in models for development. If culture refers to the ways of life which are modified and passed on from one generation to another, then culture should be an important variable in any development model. Robertson had defined culture as the entire way of life of a society. It includes both material aspects such as a home, clothing, or tools, and nonmaterial aspects such as languages, beliefs, ideas, rules, customs, myths, family patterns, traditional skills. These aspects of culture have often been overlooked by many development theorists.

Hall and Schiller identified various aspects of information and communication imperialism in third world countries with their focus on the role of power relations of global information systems. In other words, information and communication processes were seen in terms of an audience being manipulated. Consequently, cultural studies have tended to define information and communication as instruments of social control and not social change. This cultural aspect explains how certain

108 Schiller, (1976), op. cit.
information and communication institutions act as "gatekeepers" and maintain a "one-way flow" from top-down of information instead of freely disseminating information.

Cultural studies seem to be gaining some importance, and they promote the "basic human needs" concept of "another development" which appeared in the 1970s and was promoted by the World Bank. The main objective of this basic human needs approach included the provision of adequate food and clean drinking water, decent shelter, education, security of livelihood, adequate transport, assisting people with decision-making, and having self respect. The need was to make the alternative or emerging paradigms to be relevant to the country, and that development must happen with people as the key participants and beneficiaries.

Various development models exist. While their appropriateness and relevance continue to come under criticism, the transferability and universality of concepts and methods, particularly that of the Western models and pattern of development, raise many issues, and are not new concerns. There is now a growing need to understand more the culturally-specific character of research methods and findings and the need to indigenize both, if non-Western cultures are to obtain a valid and adequate understanding of themselves. A diversity of approaches instead of adopting only one approach from the West seems to be what was being encouraged by Easton. The suggestion made was that researchers could move beyond the limits of their origin when undertaking studies, a point that was suggested by Mannheim way back in 1949. However, did not support this view and argues that it is only by invoking indigenous ways of thinking can people in non-Western cultures hope to understand their own cultures, behaviour and institutions. Further, non-Western researchers need to "decolonize" their minds and develop their own tools and methods.

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112 Streeten, P. (1979), "Development Ideas in Historical Perspective", in K. Q. Hill (ed.), Toward a New Strategy for Development. New York: Pergamon Press, pp. 21 - 52. Also called the Basic Human Needs Approach (the emphasis is my own) (BNA), developed in the 1970s arguing that economic growth did not necessarily eliminate poverty. Instead, economic growth in developing countries seemed to create more poverty. In response to this, the proponents of this approach suggested a direct approach or a straight relationship between development strategy and elimination of poverty rather than wait for the "trickling down" effects of growth.


of research appropriate to a consciousness of their own culture. Similarly, Ito\textsuperscript{117} identified the areas of language and culture as significant in making the point that non-Western cultures are different from the West and that concepts and theories that are developed in the West cannot be universally applied. Ito argued that Western theories reflect Western cultural characteristics and often do not fit non-Western situations.

While the idea of developing indigenous models of development to reflect local needs, customs and traditions is understandable, a number of questions can be raised. For instance, when talking about indigenous models for development it must be made clear which indigenous models and elements are being discussed as in many developing countries many of the indigenous institutions were destroyed or moulded to something new by colonialism as is the case of some Asian, African and Pacific countries, of which Fiji is an example. Hence, the search for indigenous models may not be realistic as there may be no indigenous institutions on which to build. Second, a number of countries which have based their development on indigenous strategies have not been successful either. For example, the indigenous way of development in Mexico did not quite succeed, according to Eckstein.\textsuperscript{118} Third, the globalization of world economies, markets and structures may not allow countries to develop their own models as they will be influenced by what Wallerstein calls "world systems" of development, and are now no longer isolated.\textsuperscript{119}

Further, an important consideration is that not all indigenous intellectuals or people in the middle class may wish to follow the indigenous development model. Depending on the country, the influence of colonial history and state of development, many of these people may not wish to go backward, a view they link with traditional and indigenous models of development. But at the same time, these same people may not wish to give up completely the indigenous model. Examples are India, Kenya, countries in Latin America and the South Pacific. As Wiarda says (of Latin America), "Latin America has made some remarkable transitions to democracy...Its transition from its authoritarian past on a democratic course...is still incomplete, and that what we are witnessing...is a partial blending of modern democratic with more traditional


and historical features." In the end, it must be recognised that developing countries are in a process of rapid change and transition.

THE EMERGENCE OF DEMOCRACY

What, then, are the reasons for the emergence and non-emergence of democracies? The literature on this subject is well documented. There are a number of existing theories which correlate the emergence of democracy to a number of socio-economic factors, and to the choices of political leadership. According to Huntington, one approach is based on the preconditions for democratic development - the "correlation theory" linking various socio-economic factors to the emergence of democracy. There are other approaches. However, before I discuss the preconditions for the emergence of democracy, it is necessary to provide the definition of "democracy" I use in this study.

The literature on democracy is massive and this continues to grow. The concept is not easy to define, and remains highly contested. Democracy means different things to different people in different societies with different structures and values. Weiner's definition, for instance, emphasised elections and parties, neglecting some of the major issues of equity and distribution. For Leftwich, democracy was seen as not only desirable but essential for development in all societies. Democracy was a necessary prior condition of development, not an outcome of it. Democracy is also not easy to sustain in societies divided by ethnic, cultural or religious factors where perceived material inequalities exist. These inequalities do not help democracy.

123 Weiner, M. and Ozbudun, E. (1987), Competitive Elections in Developing Countries. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Myron Weiner's definition of democracy has four elements: (1) government leaders are chosen in competitive elections in which there are opposition political parties; (2) political parties have the right to seek public support through access to the press, freedom of assembly and speech; (3) a government that is defeated in an election must step down; (4) elected governments and leaders are accountable to the electorate and not to the monarchy, military, bureaucracy or oligarchy.
125 Ibid., pp. 615 - 617.
In this study, I use Dahl's definition of democracy. Dahl had defined democracy as a political system with three essential conditions: competition, political participation and civil and political liberties. In this political system all citizens have the right to vote and be elected in regular free and fair elections. The main characteristic is the continuing responsiveness of the government to the preferences and choice of all its citizens. All citizens, including the minority groups in a country, have freedom of speech, information, worship, and assembly and are equal before the law. There is also freedom of the press.

According to Dahl, the application of this definition may not be easy. Not all societies will be able to fulfill these qualities. This is the reason why Dahl preferred to call them "polyarchies". Countries that do try and meet these criteria do so to different degrees. This makes it difficult sometimes to categorise countries as democratic or non-democratic. This ambiguity is further complicated by constraints of free access to information and free expression practiced that may make a country less democratic even though there are free and fair elections on a regular basis. Countries such as Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and Turkey are examples of this difficulty of whether they should be treated as full democracies or not. For those governments that cannot fulfill these criteria laid down for democracy, political mechanisms should be in place to change a government that is no longer responding to the needs of the citizens.

Linz and Stepan also highlighted the importance of free and fair elections in their definition of a democracy. So too did Schumpeter. In their view, a country is not a democracy if free and fair elections cannot be held, and citizens cannot have their rights protected effectively by rule of law. Although a country can have free and democratic elections, such elections are not sufficient to complete a democratic transition. They went further and added that no regime should be called a democracy unless its rulers govern democratically. This means that if freely elected executives infringe the constitution, violate the rights of the individuals and minorities, impinge upon the legitimate functions of the legislature and do not rule within the bounds of the state of law, then the regime is not a democracy.

In preparing the list of democratic states to test the correlation between democracy and the degree of access to information in chapter 3, the following checklist based on

Derbyshire and Derbyshire\textsuperscript{129} will be used: evidence of free elections for assemblies and executives; active presence of more than one political party; accountability of the government to the electorate; freedom of expression and evidence of the protection of other personal liberties through constitutional guarantees; evidence of an independent judiciary; evidence of stability in government; evidence of checks and balances among the three elements of government - executive, legislature and judiciary.

Preconditions of Democracy

In the 1960s it was widely assumed that democracy was an outcome of socio-economic development, not a condition of it\textsuperscript{130}. Democracy would result if the following existed: high level literacy; communication and education; an established and secure middle class; a vibrant civil society; relatively limited forms of material and social inequality.\textsuperscript{131} Arguments tended to link democracy to economic and social factors. It has been argued that a well organized working class was important for promoting and defending democracy. The struggle for democracy was best seen as the struggle for power.\textsuperscript{132}

In 1970, Rustow\textsuperscript{133} looked at the causes of democracy and argued that democracy was an outcome not only of economic, social, cultural and psychological factors but also of political and environmental factors. Similarly, Leftwich\textsuperscript{134} identified six conditions for democratic politics: geographical; constitutional and political legitimacy; governmental restraint on the extent of policy change undertaken by the winning party or parties; a rich and pluralistic civil society; absence of threat to the authority and power of the state such as the army. Leftwich identified a number of factors which brought about the emergence of democracy: higher levels of economic status; the absence of inequalities in wealth and income; a market-oriented economy; greater social pluralism; a culture that is tolerant of different ethnic groups.

According to Huntington, the various arguments that exist on the preconditions for democracy can be grouped into four broad categories. These are economic, social,
Specifically, the factors that can help bring about the emergence of democracy in a society would include: high levels of economic growth; the absence of inequalities in wealth; income and services; a strong and autonomous middle class; a market-oriented economy; a culture tolerant of diversity. Not one of these conditions is sufficient to lead to democracy. A combination of some of these factors is necessary for democracy to emerge. However, some factors may prevent the development of democracy. For instance, in some societies, tradition and culture may include some form of authoritarianism which predominate and cannot be expected to be removed or reformed by having elections. Similarly, extreme poverty and inequalities are prevalent in some countries in Africa, can have the same effect.

Paths to Democracy

A question that can be raised is why is it so difficult to attain democracy in many developing countries? While many difficulties are cited in the literature, one difficulty that has not been highlighted is the desire to continue to operate within Western type institutions intertwined with traditional concepts of authority and leadership. The recurring economic, cultural and political issues make it difficult to determine which way the government will shift. The whole future seems uncertain. Linz and Stepan had argued that research "should now be given to the analysis of the conditions that lead to the breakdown of authoritarian regimes, to the process of transition from authoritarian to democratic regimes, and especially to the political dynamics of the consolidation of postauthoritarian democracies". One could possibly argue that with the increased access to information brought about by improved technology, and more open government legislation on information, people will demand to have more say in government decision making and accountability of government officers.

Another difficulty is trying to decide how to examine whether a correlation exists between information and democracy without a possible measurement. Trying to draw correlations between the availability of information and the degree of political change in a country is not an easy task. Too many indicators exist reflecting the complex process of political change and concept of democracy surrounded by controversy and ambiguity. These include factors such as the rate of economic growth, ethnicity and class, literacy, socio-economic development, inequality, human rights, discrimination, freedom of expression, freedom of the press and the role of the military.

Similarly, the data and measures for democracies are numerous. For example, there exist a number of measurement indices for democracies which can be applied to different countries: Cutright's\textsuperscript{138} index of political development; Gastil's\textsuperscript{139} index of democratic political freedom; Jackman's\textsuperscript{140} index of democratic performance; Taylor and Jodice's\textsuperscript{141} political and social indicators with interest in issues of inequality and rates of change; and Bollen's\textsuperscript{142} index of political democracy and fairness of elections. These are all very complex.

The vigorous measurement of the environment in terms of the access to information by the citizens of a country can also be a formidable task\textsuperscript{143} as data on the wide range of variables as noted above which determine the quality of the information environment are not easy to collect for all countries. The information-rich environments on one hand have too much data available, while on the other, the information-poor environments have little information available altogether, particularly for the South Pacific countries. This makes comparisons at the national country level very difficult. However, I have collected selected relevant statistics from various sources which offer some perspective on the research issues.

In testing the hypothesis, those factors having a causal link with the polity will be examined. This will take into consideration the impact of the newspapers, radio, television, telephones and traditional communication methods on democracy. In this examination, I have adopted the commonly made distinction between the origins, transition and consolidation phases of the democratic process when examining the impact of information on the political system in a country. While the boundaries between these stages may be unclear and different for different countries, in my view, these are the most applicable criteria available for the purpose of this study.

The different emphasis used in different studies on democracy and the different outcomes reflect the differences in ideas on transition which exist. For instance,\textsuperscript{138} Cutright, P. (1963), "National Political Development: Its Measures and Analysis", \textit{American Sociological Review} 28: 253 - 264.
Rostow, in 1960, had suggested a series of growth stages of development basically distinguishing tradition and modernity. Rostow had conceived development as a number of stages through which all developing societies had to pass. The five stages were linked to capital growth and included the traditional society, the pre-take-off society, take-off, the road to maturity and the mass consumption society. These stages were seen as a component of political development. Hence, the content of political development was identified with institutional differences between the Western democracies and various traditional political systems.

In another study on transitions to democracy detailed in Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy, the difficulty in making any concrete conclusion as to which was the ideal form of government was highlighted. The study supported the participatory social and economic democracy and concluded that,

Transition toward democracy is by no means a linear or a rational process. There is simply too much uncertainty about capabilities and too much suspicion about intentions for that. Only once the transition has passed ... can one expect political democracy to induce a more reliable awareness of convergent interests.

The study noted that what was important is that there is social change, altering the life of people in a country where there exists inequality, oppression and injustice. The path to achieving democracy was difficult to determine.

In a study by Booth the emphasis was on linking the electoral process to democracy, and this makes sense for this study. Booth notes, there is little empirical evidence that proves that the election process itself actually results in democracy, but it helps in the understanding of the concept. Democracy was viewed as "participation by the mass of people in a community in its governance". Democracy was not constant but a variable, with participatory dimensions as it is in any given system.

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146 Ibid. (1986), Vol. 4, p. 72.
Furthermore, the role of participatory mass protests against authoritarian regimes can offer some understanding of why and how other paths to democracy are taken in developing countries. For instance, the case in the Philippines which forced Ferdinand Marcos' retreat, and the ousting of Jean-Claude Duvalier in Haiti have raised the view that identifying transitions to democracy or some other form of government is not simple. As Sundhaussen points out,

In the end, we have to dismiss as unsupportable any notion that there is only one path to democracy, only one form of democracy, and only one group or class which can bring about democratic polity. Which path is taken, at what point in time, and with what result, depends on a number of circumstances, such as historical, geographical, cultural and ideological factors and, of course, support groups.

EXISTING THEORIES ON INFORMATION AND DEMOCRACY

Based on the foregoing discussions, it can be argued that there are a number of theories that can explain the dynamics of the emergence of democracy. In the case of establishing a relationship between information, communication and democracy, it can be argued that a correlation does exist. However, the degree and level of this correlation remain unclear. How, then, should the problem be approached and a clearer correlation established?

I approach this problem from a number of angles. First, I correlated the “Information Access Index” developed by Connors (see Appendix 1), to the political systems of countries of the world. By doing this, I am able to determine generally, to some degree, whether there is a link between free access to information and flow in a country and the type of political system. Based on findings some suggestions can be made that a correlation exists. On one hand, it may appear that in non-democratic regimes there tends to be more restriction of information flow and more control on access. On the other, in countries where the essential conditions of democracy as defined in this study exist, analysis could be made as to whether there is a high degree of freedom of expression, access to information, including a high degree of freedom of the press. This approach should be able to conclude that a certain level of information access is necessary to attain the different stages of democracy - origin, transition and consolidation.

Second, while this approach is good for the global application, determining the impact of information on people and how information is used for political purposes at the national level is complex, hence the case study. I will examine the correlation at the national level, with the expectation that this may provide some answers or understanding of whether and how there is a correlation between information, communication and democracy. This approach will adopt an analysis in communication terms including the application of a number of theories. This model is outlined in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Information and communication components in the transition to democracy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. General prerequisite: common and environmental factors</th>
<th>Social integration, social interaction, nation-building, educated population, urbanisation, secure middle class, cohesion (correlation theory - Huntington)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Democracy (political system)</td>
<td>Political network (institution, control, culture - Deutsch, Easton)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information flow (horizontal, vertical and diagonal, islandic communication environment, synchronised information system - Vusoniwailala, Westley and MacLean)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information channels (penetration - Westley and MacLean, Deutsch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access (equity theory, political efficacy - Deutsch, Apter, Easton, Westley and MacLean)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Political participation (Easton, Deutsch, Rogers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feedback (systems theory, elite theory, policy making - Deutsch, Easton, Huntington)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this table, the general prerequisite are factors necessary for the emergence of democracy. The components that are evident in political systems are the political network, information flow, information channels, and feedback. The components of democracy defined in information and communication terms will focus on access, participation and feedback.

Correlation Theory

As discussed earlier, "correlation theory" has been advocated by a number of theorists who argue that certain preconditions are necessary before democracy can emerge.
Huntington categorised the preconditions into four types: a wealthy economy; a highly developed social structure; pressure from external forces; and a favourable political culture. In the case study, the impact of information and communication as a precondition for democracy will be analysed.

**Political Efficacy Theory**

Better communication and information can bring about greater political awareness and participation. Political efficacy refers to the person's belief that political and social change can come about or be maintained (status quo) through personal efforts in response to political actions necessary, such as voting. The individual is given the opportunity or right to access information, and this spills over into the political behaviour of a "modernized" people having free access to information and free expression. In a society where a large part of the voting population live in the rural area and is not so well educated, the people would be likely to be passive about this right that they have. The person's feelings of efficacy can be conditioned by groups, by leaders, and also by the media and communication channels, both formal and informal, as findings of this study hope to show.

**Elite Theory**

This is divided into two perspectives, one puts the emphasis on the choices of political leadership to bring about change in the polity, and the other stresses the contribution of the ruling educated elite in lobbying for democratic reforms. According to Huntington, however, the expansion of political participation is seldom the goal of political elite. Political leaders will support political participation if they see that this expansion will promote and maintain their political power. Political leaders mainly in developing countries, however, can promote political stability by restricting political participation rather than expanding it. Using this theory in Fiji, it will be noted how the chiefs play an important role in influencing the political decisions of the people, and in political leadership. While it can be argued that the authoritarian role of the chiefs may limit the freedom of the people to vote freely for their leaders, it nevertheless, can also be argued that the chiefs may also push the country towards the path of democracy.

150 As in a village setting, the control of the clan conditions the people to vote the same way.
151 Where leaders are the chiefs, the people vote as influenced or directed by the chiefs.
152 Covered in later chapters, 6 to 9.
Political Participation Theory

Participation is important in the development process. In 1964 Schramm discussed local decision making as participation. More recently, the idea that participation has many meanings and dimensions have been advanced by a number of scholars. In 1980 Cohen and Uphoff identified four dimensions of participation: (1) participation in decision-making which involves a bottom-up process where people who are affected by proposed programmes make the decision; (2) participation in the implementation of development projects; (3) participation in the distribution of benefits; and (4) participation in the evaluation of a project. Coombs added two other dimensions: participation where people accept information in a top-down approach without getting too much involved or asking any questions, and active participation where people are involved in activities. Participation can also be constrained and be less effective and meaningful as noted by Melkote. These constraints can be due to poor leadership, inadequate government information and inadequate government support, unequal access to information and communication, authoritarian structure that affects democratic decision making, unstable government and political instability, and alienation of the poor and the powerless. As Hedebro observed, participation in decision-making increases people's interest in a problem of development.

Similarly, Vanek noted that it is important that local people are sensitised to become more receptive and responsive to political development. The desire of people to participate in activities that directly and indirectly affect their lives is "one of the most important socio-political phenomena of our times". Narula and Pearce had argued that participation fails to take into account status differences, and this poses obstacles to popular participation. For the purpose of this study, participation refers to the behaviour and the actions people take in the selection of their leaders which may include voting, information seeking, communicating with different representatives, contributing financially to community development, meetings and discussions on community and political matters.

155 Coombs, P. H. (1980), Meeting the Basic Needs of the Rural Poor, New York: Pergamon.
156 Melkote, (1991), op. cit., p. 244.
159 Narula and Pearce, (1986), op. cit.
In a democracy, people need to participate in decisions that affect their social and political lives. However, there are people who fail to participate in decision making and development not because they do not wish to, but more so because they are not given the opportunity to participate, and also may not know what to do. They refrain from asking questions or obtaining information to assist them in making a decision, and therefore remain silent on many issues of national interest. Also, participation, I believe, can only be effective if the people involved who are asked to participate in a development programme, know what they want. Ineffective participation is just as bad as not participating at all in decision making.

Equity Theory

As argued by McQuail, in accessing information through various communication channels, both formal and traditional, equity must be a major concern. In many societies, the widening of the information and cultural gaps poses difficulties of access to information on equal terms. While there seems to be more and better developed information systems now than in the past, the actual distribution of information does not seem to be equitable. One of the promises of an "information society" was greater equity in accessing information for reasons of efficiency and justice. However, this promise, it seems, cannot be realised yet.

On the side of developing countries the introduction of new technology such as telecommunications has also meant the widening of the gap between the information-rich and the information-poor, between those in the rural areas and those in the urban areas where they are accessible to main information and communication systems, between the educated, and the less educated, and between those who are employed and those who are not. These gaps have meant that there is inequality in the degree of access people have to information and the use of communication channels. They would also have limited access to senders of information as well as to television and computer networks where they are available.

Finding solutions to this equity problem is not easy. Works by McAnany and Rogers discussed this problem and have offered some answers, but these do not seem effective as the problem lay with trying to reach people who were in isolated places, and it would cost a great deal of money to get information and communication

162 Rogers, (1976), op. cit.
channels reaching them. As noted in chapter 1 there would be problems of physical access, of infrastructure building, of resources, of trained and skilled staff and a problem of getting the people to be aware of the importance of information and communication in development.

Systems Theory

The idea of systems analysis was used by Easton\(^{163}\) and Deutsch\(^{164}\) in their analysis of political systems. The model of political system developed by Easton was designed to be applicable to all societies, whether traditional or modern. The "system" approaches to political analysis, support the interdependence of variables within a political system where a change in one variable contributes change in the whole system. This approach sees all elements of society as being related to information and communication and these tend to develop together. When the means and capability of information and communication change, the social and political systems in society change as well. This approach is one of the reasons, according to Schramm, "for believing that our societies really behave as systems".\(^{165}\)

Easton\(^{166}\) had stated that, "...in its elemental form, a political system is just a means whereby certain kinds of inputs are converted into outputs".\(^{167}\) Easton saw a system as fundamentally a set of relationships or patterns of human interaction. In other words, a system may refer to empirical or observable reality or set of theories which identify and explain the observable behaviour. The inputs of a system are environmental raw materials from which the outputs are manufactured. A system has spatial dimension and is affected by various environmental factors. It embodies the idea of a number of components which interact with one another with a certain degree of order and regularity.\(^{168}\) The persistence of the system is dependent on its capacity for continued conversion of inputs into authoritative outputs in the face of internal stress. Stress develops when certain essential variables are displayed beyond their normal range of function.\(^{169}\) The outline of a political system will include the way power and authority

164 Deutsch, (1966), op. cit.
166 The literature on the nature of the political system is substantial. This study does not intend to discuss this subject in detail, however, the following provide useful references to the theory of political systems. Easton, D. (1965), op. cit.; Easton, D. (1953), *The Political System: An Inquiry Into the State of Political Science*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press; R. A. Dahl (1992), *Modern Political Analysis*. Englewood Cliffs, N. J: Prentice Hall.
167 Easton, (1965, op. cit,, p. 112.
168 Ibid., p. 111 - 118
169 Ibid., p. 92.
are generated, allocated, influenced and changed in society. The links between these take the form of flows of various forms and enabling the system to maintain its organisation. This will allow it to adjust to changes in its environment.

Easton saw that the impact of the system on society would then depend on whether the system is open or is responsive to the intrasocietal supports and demands as well as to extrasocietal demands and support. Such responsive situations lead to an effective exchange process between the environment and the system. This process may be referred to as feedback. The impact of this feedback in an open system reflects the type of support and demands input into the system. The output of the political system thus has a direct effect on the society. In a closed political system it is more difficult to assess the degree of responsiveness and therefore the type of output. In the truly closed system - totalitarian states - the system is unresponsive. Power here is held in the hands of the few - either an elitist group or an individual. The impact of such a system is pervasive and unacceptable in terms of the values associated with open societies and systems. Feedback, if it exists, is itself direct involving compliance or rejection.

In the Nerves of Government, Deutsch had suggested “to look upon government somewhat less as a problem of power and somewhat more as a problem of steering, where steering is decisively a matter of communication”. Deutsch saw the state as a communication system. Steering in such a system implied guiding and controlling the future of the nation on the basis of known information taking into account external forces, goals and objectives. Deutsch identified four ways of achieving goals: first, was a good and efficient feedback process; second, the environment was an important consideration in the operation of the system; third, that goals may change over time in response to changes in the environment; fourth, setting strategic plans to achieve goals but at the same time to be able to change these tactics or plans if necessary. Deutsch further assumed that with greater access to new information technologies and greater access to information, people will become more informed and the question that will be raised concerns social mobilization.

INFORMATION FOR AND AGAINST DEMOCRACY

There are many factors that bring about or hinder the development of democracy in a country. In this next section, discussion of whether information can work “for” or “against” democracy will be made.

The importance of information and communication in the democratic process lies in their use as "tools" to facilitate democratic development. Information and communication can wield power or can be used to manipulate people. As Fye points out:

No leader can rise above the restrictions of the specific communications networks to which he has access, and at the same time none can escape the consequence of being surrounded by a communications system.171

Deutsch, for example, tried to construct a general theory of political system as a "communicative network" by relying on empiricism, elements drawn from system theory and cybernetic theory.172 Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet studied the effects of journalism, radio and cinema on electoral behaviour. They found that the effect of electoral propaganda reinforced voters' original political views and did not bring about any political change from one political leaning to another.173 They concluded that people are selective in their receipt of messages. People tend to take those messages that correspond and support their beliefs and discard any information that is not. People were found to be more influenced by people than the media, particularly for decisions on political candidates. In the early 1960s, Joseph Klapper advanced the "limited effects" thesis.174 Klapper concluded that the receivers of information were in a position to manipulate the effects of communication instead of being manipulated by it. It was argued that in democratic regimes citizens or receivers of information are not passive. The citizens are active, aware and critical with regard to the messages they receive through communication. These studies, however, came under criticism as they failed to address the long term effects of the relationship of information, communication and democracy. Zolo175 suggested that it is the press and electronic media that now mould and influence political attitudes and a more "holistic", multi-disciplinary approach to investigation of the relationship between the media and the social system is necessary. It is through the press that the people can access information to effectively make choices. As Catlin puts it, "Freedom of the press...is a civil liberty under law, logically justified for the specific purpose of...the development of an objectively informed or intellectually vigorous democracy...".176

172 Deutsch, (1966), op. cit.
173 Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet, (1944), op. cit.
For many developing countries, adequate information and efficient communication channels to enable people to realise the state of democracy or government would be important. The introduction of an information guideline or policy and information legislation is often seen as providing greater access. This idea, however, has not met with strong support. A number of developing countries argue that information policy or legislation on information access will have limited effect on their economic and political progress. While some regard a policy as restrictive, others see no tangible advantages in having such a policy as economic and social development have progressed notwithstanding. They argue that their main concern is with economic development and good government. Concentrating on the right to information is not a development priority. Furthermore, they believe that it is not necessary to formalise information strategies and plans as economic progress is guided by other development strategies in areas such as education, technology, agriculture and fisheries.

However, a speech of the United States Vice President at the opening of a conference on telecommunications in Buenos Aires reflected great optimism in the possible role of information in democracy,

...Representative democracy relies on the assumption that the best way for a nation to make its political decision is for each citizen to have the power to control his or her own life. To do that, people must have the information they need. And be allowed to express their conclusions in free speech and in votes. The Global Information Infrastructure (GIIP) will not only be a metaphor for a functioning democracy, it will promote the functioning of democracy by greatly enhancing the participation of citizens in decision-making. It will greatly promote the ability of nations to cooperate with each other.

Whether having greater access to information and improved communications will, in reality, bring about change or cause more democratic development is difficult to predict. Such rapid developments in information and communication have led to


178 Good government, according to Lee Kuan Yew, will depend on values of a people. In his definition this is characterised by caring for the people, where their food, housing, health and employment are assured. There is no discrimination between people; education is recognised as a high priority; there are high moral standards for the government and the people; a growing economy; continued progress; good physical infrastructure and supporting personal freedom. Generally, in his view, a good government is one which is honest, effective and efficient in protecting its people and allowing opportunities for all to advance themselves in a stable and orderly society. Lee Kuan Yew. (1993), "Democracy and Human Rights", *Australia and World Affairs* 16(Autumn): 5 - 15.

number of scholars including Sussman, Bell, Hills to be very optimistic about what new information and communication technologies can do for political development. Sussman believed that these technologies may encourage and cause human freedom everywhere. Such technologies could overcome political restrictions and allow the free flow of information between countries and societies. It will also improve information collection, storage and exchange internally and externally. Availability of information to citizens will enable them to make well-informed decisions, and to participate in political development more effectively.

While information and communication have positive effects on the attainment of democracy, there can also be negative aspects. One of the negative effects noted by Schramm, is that information and communication can be used by those in power to manipulate people's minds and views to maintain political control. Cooley, as early as 1909, had advanced the view that the distribution of information among the people could influence public opinion and hence the type of government. Various forms of political power can be characterised in terms of degrees of information distribution, controls of communication channels, and how and to whom information is made available.

In a number of countries in the developing world information and communication channels, both interpersonal and electronic, are used for negative purposes including destabilization and disinformation. This would mean disseminating inaccurate data, suppressed facts, and propaganda to disinform and destabilise the population.

It would seem that Sussman has high expectations in new technologies. From a reading of the literature, many developing countries do not have such developed information infrastructures and will not be able to do all the good things that are being suggested here. Unless resources are directed at building and developing information and communication networks and infrastructures, as well as skills, the chances of information reaching the village in the rural areas may be remote. A number of scholars have other concerns. Hills, for example, believed that a number of

governments will attempt to develop, organise, monopolise and control information
technology, telecommunications and broadcasting, and will use these resources to
gain political and economic advantage against other countries.

Despite the availability of information for positive economic development these may
not bring about any transition to democracy for purely political reasons. Authoritarian
regimes, for example Singapore and Malaysia, will capitalise on their economic
success and may harness any democratic development. There are countries on the
other hand which have experienced rapid development in the economy but fail to
establish or consolidate a democratic regime because of non-economic reasons. One
of these reasons is culture. Lipset had claimed that culture was one of the most
important reasons that explains the success or failure of democracy. Certain
indigenous cultures in the developing world obstruct the democratic process. The
availability of information may not be effective in moving a country towards
democracy.

Racial-ethnic divisions that exist in many developing countries also hinder the
democratic process. Indeed, many developing countries suffer from racial, linguistic,
religious and ethnic problems irrespective of the availability and accessibility of
information as the case study will show.

Countries are also influenced in their transition to democracy by external factors such
as the collapse of the Soviet Empire, the end of the Cold War and the global economy.

With the developments in Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia it is not conclusive to
equate greater economic growth and political stability to democracy. It also cannot be
concluded that the equation increased information will result in democracy, can be
fully established. We could assume, however, that information accessibility is
necessary for the different phases of the democratic process from the early phase,
transition and consolidation. The degree of access needed at the different phases is
something that is difficult to ascertain. As explained by Randall, in the early phase,
authoritarian regimes clamp down on the media as governments recognise the
subversive potential of the media. The relationship between the media and
government is distant. Governments will not tolerate criticisms. Repressive measures
are placed on the press.

186 Lipset, S. M. (1992), "The Centrality of Political Culture", in L. Diamond and M. Plattner (eds),
14(3): 625 – 646.
In these circumstances the influence of the press and the radio is limited. This situation can be related to a controlled information environment which can be equated with a more closed information system described earlier. The indigenous media is able to maintain a critical tradition and question the government on various aspects of interest to the population. This contributes to the beginnings of preparation for democracy, culturally and ideologically. Examples are Uganda, Uruguay, Kenya and Nepal where there is direct pressure for the availability of information and communication contributing towards democracy.

INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND CHANGE

These two opposing trends of positive and negative effects of information and communication can lead to shifts of power and change. As observed by Gerbner, the changes are brought about by communication where

The ways we reflect on things, act on things and interact with one another are rooted in our ability to compose images, produce messages, and use complex symbol systems. A change in that ability transforms the nature of human affairs. We are in the midst of such transformations... New media of communication provide new ways of selecting, composing and sharing perspectives. New institutions of communication create new publics across boundaries of time, space and status.

These changes have profound implications particularly for countries striving to be democratic. Coupled with these changes are the basic different attitudes that exist in some developing countries in trying to accept the importance of information to political development. These attitudes are reflected in the lack of understanding on the part of the leaders on the general meaning of information and its importance to political development.

Information and communication are seen as being great factors of change and it is important to consider how to get information to the rural people where seventy five per cent of the world population live. If the rural people are to participate actively in politics, able to vote for their leaders, and are free to make their own decisions, then they must accept some degree of change in how information is communicated and used in the communities. Ginsberg had identified factors that may explain social change. These factors include: the conscious desire and decisions of individuals to change and to want change; individuals' behaviour influenced by changing conditions.

structural changes; external influences; influence of groups; common purpose; and different elements from different sources. When applying Deutsch and Easton's system approach and the elements identified to explain the changes taking place, it may be found that there are distinct limitations in the performance and the power of the information and communication in enhancing the development of democracy. On one hand, the impact of information and communication will depend on the degree of control by those in power, while on the other hand, there are qualities which information has which can be beneficial to the people in promoting a more informed and educated population, mobilising them to seek and work towards achieving a better quality of life, political equality and freedom.

Rogers\textsuperscript{191} had distinguished five main differences in the media between the less and more fully developed countries. These are: (1) The media in less developed countries reach smaller audiences than those in more developed countries; (2) Certain categories of elite users in developing countries have levels of access to information which are just as high as the elites in more developed nations; (3) There are more users and listeners of radio and broadcast media than the print media such as the newspapers; (4) Media messages in less developing countries are of low interest and relevance to villagers because of the strong urban orientation of the media; (5) There is greater control over the media in less developed countries as compared to the developed countries.

Twenty years ago McLuhan's "global village"\textsuperscript{192} concept was introduced to foresee the global organisation and sharing of resources, including information resources. Almost in all areas of society from financial markets to small employers people are confronted by different information repositories and retrieval systems linked through global networking and various information and communication media such as television, radio, teleconferencing and Internet.

Much of this discussion reflects the notion of change or "modernization" as it applies in the Western sense, which often results in what has been termed as the rising expectations of people in these countries. Pressures to change have been linked to the growth of information and communication facilities and opportunities in developing

\textsuperscript{190} This is defined in terms of the "basic human needs" approach of "another development", and includes the provision of clean drinking water, decent shelter, education, security of livelihood, adequate transport, assisting people with decision-making and self respect.


countries. Pye recognised the Western influences working in “traditional” societies as outlined in a typical change model:

The first level of change we can call modernization. This is the process of profound social change in which tradition-bound villages or tribal-based societies are compelled to react to the pressures and the demands of the modern, industrialized, and urban-centred world.\(^{193}\)

This process:

...might also be called westernization, or simply advancement and progress: it might, however, be more accurately termed the diffusion of world culture - a world culture based on advanced technology and the spirit of science, on a rational view of life, a secular approach to social relations, a feeling for justice in public affairs, and, above all else, on the acceptance in the political realm of the belief that the prime unit of the polity should be the nation-state.\(^{194}\)

In this context, then, the move towards the development of a new nation-state to replace the traditional forms follows patterns of preconceived ideas of change being made implicit in Pye’s explanation of the “continuous process of extending the nation-state system to all societies”.

In the dominant paradigm and the alternative or dependency theory approach to development, both assume that change is desirable but fail to examine why and whether people may want this change. Dependency scholars criticise the dominant paradigm for trying to eliminate the traditional order only to replace this with more confusion and no development. But has the dependency theorists approach offered something new? Both the dominant and dependency paradigms seem to fail in that they do not define what type of society they may need to replace the current one that is to be changed. It is simply assumed that change is needed and that change will come about. The needs of those who are being “changed” have not been taken into account. The passivity of those who are dominated also cause a problem as they tend to be silent actors in this change thus consolidating further their dependency on external forces, in this case former colonial powers and new business conglomerates.

Hence while the dominant paradigm can be rejected, the dependency approach does not provide any realistic alternative either. That is, the dependency approach has not been able to offer an approach that will try and solve the present international inequities in development.


\(^{194}\) Ibid.
Transferring developed country models of government to other countries, especially developing countries, must be viewed with some scepticism as discussed earlier in this chapter. Economic, political and social systems, the media structures, as well as the establishments of the principle of the right to information do not happen overnight. To introduce Western based development models alongside the traditional system is not easy. There have been attempts in some developing countries to shut out the new modes of communication to promote information as process, information as knowledge and information as thing, for example Cuba and some countries in the South Pacific, for instance, Tonga. Despite existing controls on information access in some developing countries, the changes that would be brought about by new technologies and greater access to and use of information and communication technologies would seem inevitable. Mowlana brought this point out clearly in a study of Western concepts of information and civil society on Islamic society. In this study Mowlana recognised that while the introduction of new information technology has potential in revitalizing oral culture which has been displaced in the Islamic world to almost the same degree as in the Western cultures, at the same time, the use of new information and communication technology may erode Islamic culture, an outcome of development that is inevitable unless efforts are made to develop a stronger sense of identity throughout the Islamic world.

Political factors have always had a profound effect on the nature and volume of information flows in a society. The control of this information flow can be equated to political power. Whatever constraints exist that may limit access to information such as physical, linguistic, or technical difficulties, politics has always shaped the degree of access in many countries. In countries where democratic principles are absent, government ownership and control of information are common. Licensing, controls over broadcasting and controls over transmission or dissemination are also common. In these situations, it is quite common for all print, electronic broadcasting media and information to the rural people to be controlled by the government. Where information is not under any direct political control and no legislation exists, vague ordinances are put in place to achieve the same effect.

Pye, in explaining the collapse of the Soviet Union, provides an explanation of the democratic transition in the developing countries. Pye believed that once a country reaches a stage of maturity where highly educated technocrats or professionals

constitute a large part of the system, a crisis will emerge if such a country is governed by an authoritarian government. I believe, in the case of Fiji, this argument may have merit.

Hence just as it is argued that economic development alone does not set the process of democracy in motion, it can also be argued that information and communication alone cannot lead to democracy. There may be other factors that are responsible, together with information and communication that will bring about democracy. Another factor is the stage of development or maturity a country has reached that may affect any move towards democracy.

CONCLUSION

From a review of the literature it would seem that the concept, "information" is not easy to define. I have used Buckman's definition of information as process, information as knowledge and information as thing in this study. Nevertheless, the term remains ambiguous. This ambiguity leads to a difficulty in setting parameters for information as well as assessing its impact on democracy. However, despite this difficulty, much research conducted in the 1950s and 1960s focused on the effects of information and communication in a linear causal way trying to establish correlations to political and economic development. Despite these studies and their findings, the slow development experienced in the developing countries in the early 1970s raised many questions on the appropriateness of the information-based development programmes and approaches that promised to bring about a better quality of life for the people of the world. Criticisms centred on approaches which lack practical application\(^{197}\) and coherence resulting in the failure to build on previous research, failure to adopt paradigms which would produce benefits and meaningful change,\(^{198}\) and the failure to address the main causes of poverty.

Since the 1980s, however, developing countries have made various attempts to put in place appropriate information and communication infrastructures to help in development. The outcomes have been different for the different countries of the world. First, while access to information has improved in some countries, in others,  

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\(^{197}\) McQuill, D. (1992), op. cit.

\(^{198}\) Fair, J. E. (1989), op. cit.

governments have continued to maintain control of production, management and information dissemination. Second, the pace of the development and use of new information and communication technologies is notably faster in developed countries than in developing. Consequently, there is a relative increase in the volume and an oversupply of information and a corresponding increase in dependence on their use in both developed and developing countries. Third, the introduction of an information guideline and policy that would ensure some form of information access and use is not easy to formulate and introduce in many developing countries despite the growing need for such a guideline. Governments in developing countries have tended not to support this development for a number of reasons, the main one being the need to maintain control over what information is disseminated to the people with the aim of maintaining power. Fourth, the problem of access is affected by the limited financial resources, high costs of information, and lack of trained personnel and these force the goal of access from one of equality to a privileged position affecting the basic value underlying a democratic system. Fifth, the globalization of markets and structures may not allow countries to develop their own models as they will be influenced by global trade regulations and tariffs. This development may widen the gap further between the developing and developed countries in terms of trade and the free flow of information.

For many developed countries information access is an integral part of their economic and political development. Over the years, the level of information provision has continued to improve. In these countries developments are the result of rapid growth and use of new information technologies in the production, storage and dissemination of information generally. This has had tremendous impact on the life-styles of the people, their knowledge, decisions, values and behaviour. For some developing countries, however, the influence of information has resulted in countries placing restrictions on access, as those in authority believe that more information will have negative effects on traditions and customs of the people. Leaders in these countries cannot recognize the links between information, communication and development and faced with the slow developments in their respective countries question the various development models that exist in their countries. There does not seem to be a clear consensus emerging as to which is the right or the best approach to take in the move towards democracy. The appropriateness of Western or developed countries' development models continues to be questioned. However, this chapter raises the point that developing indigenous development
approaches may not be easy to implement either as the conditions that exist in different countries are too diverse. Further, in many developing countries, indigenous leaders and intellectuals may not wish to follow the indigenous development model and there seems to be a lack of political will to develop anything new. A number of Asian countries, for example, Singapore, Japan and Malaysia have demonstrated the realities of following their own indigenous principles and style of management in business and government and are recording success.

Such success raises the question of development approaches adopted that are still emerging. Some of these approaches include the elements of: more participation of grassroots people in political, economic and social development; self-reliance; utilization of local resources; and culture as a mediating force. Rogers\textsuperscript{200} saw the merged traditional and the new communication systems, equality of distribution and popular participation as important elements of development. Narula and Pearce\textsuperscript{202} had included the use of traditional information and communication channels and decentralized participation as important elements of development. Other elements which I believe are important, but which have not been highlighted in the literature include: a lack of understanding of the social interaction process at the individual and collective levels; containing influence of old colonial systems; controls by culture; speed of technology transfer and ability to absorb this; globalisation; informal education; and silence. While the blending of the traditional and the modern communication systems is a possible solution to slow transition to democracy, the effects of this need to be analysed at the various levels: national, village community and urban levels for instance and not only global.

The link between the availability of information and communication and national development is crucial. As argued in this chapter, the likelihood of a correlation between indices of development and availability of information and communication is high. The more developed the nation the higher the availability of access to information. But the opposite is also true. The lesser developed a country the lower the availability of information and communication. Information continued to be considered the missing link in the development chain. While it can be assumed that adequate information and its efficient communication would bring about more

\textsuperscript{202} Narula and Pearce, (1986), op. cit.
development generally there is still no clear evidence that information and communication alone can be correlated to the different phases of the democratic process in the different countries of the world. An examination of the intra-societal penetration of information/communication systems at the global level may enable such a correlation to be made. This is discussed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 3

INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND DEMOCRACY AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL: THE COMPARATIVE FRAMEWORK

Major theoretical perspectives on the relationship between information access and democracy examined in chapter 2 point to information access as an essential feature of political development. This chapter will first, examine this link at the global level by applying the theoretical framework to the developed and developing countries of the world. Second, it will undertake a comparative assessment of the intra-societal penetration of information/communication systems, and correlate this to the level of authoritarian and democratic regimes. Along this horizontal axis different political systems that have emerged in the course of European political history will be situated. A broad analysis on the relationship between levels of authority and the degree of access to information will be attempted. The process of trying to link free access to information and different political systems globally may draw out potential complexities which will need to be looked at in greater depth or at a national level.

METHODOLOGY: GLOBAL LEVEL

At the global level, a number of factors are correlated to the degree of availability of information and communication. These factors include economic growth, literacy, social development, inequality, freedom of expression, freedom of the press and the role of the military. For the information field, statistics for newspapers, radio and television are used. The statistics used are provided by the UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, published in 1995 and 1996. It is important to note that both the Unesco Statistical Yearbook and the United Nations Yearbook have tended to group the countries in broad geographical groupings based on continental regions and strict consistency is not possible. The groupings are Africa, America, Asia, Europe, Oceania, and the Former Union of the Soviet Socialist Republic (U.S.S.R.). The Former U.S.S.R. is not included in this study as statistics are not comprehensive in 1978 and 1996.


looking at statistics for countries and regions, this study used only those countries and regions for which statistics were available.

Using the statistical sources available, the study examines the penetration into the different countries of the use of the radio, television, telephones and the distribution of the newspapers, and related this to the development of democracy. No examination of the accessibility of information through modern information technology was undertaken as this information was not readily available. This chapter focuses on those factors reported to have a causal link with the characteristics of a polity: democracy and the media. Here, I refer to the use of the newspapers, radio, television, and telephones.

In the absence of an internationally accepted information access index, the Information Access Index (Appendix 1) developed by Connors was used to identify the different stages the countries have reached in terms of information access. Connors' crude measure used five data sets - literacy, newspapers per 1000 population, radio sets per 1000 population, TV sets per 1000 population and telephones per 1000 population. The raw data is taken from UNESCO figures for 1990 to 1991 and other sources. On the basis of this, Connors ranked 136 countries according to intensity and quality of their information environment. It can be argued that the penetration of electronic media, as well as gross national product, population and urbanisation should also be considered when developing an information access index as these are factors recognised by Lerner and Rogers as bringing about change. Nevertheless, the index developed by Connors will be used in this study, as it is relevant and applicable.

The different political systems of the countries correlated to the Information Access Index are based on Derbyshire and Derbyshire. These systems are then checked against the Political Handbook of the World 1994 - 1995. This enabled the study to establish whether there is definitely a link or not between the penetration of information/communication systems, and authoritarian regimes that exist. A correlation of these relationships was developed. As the Pacific islands are totally

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5 Ibid., p. 15.


excluded from Connors' list, I will develop an Information Access Index for the Pacific islands using Connors' formula and then link these to the political system that exists for each country.

In reporting the findings of the overall perspectives of world information and communication, it is important that some base or standard is used to measure development in this area. In this case, UNESCO's recommended minimum standard developed in the early 1960s is used. UNESCO had recommended: 20 television sets; 50 radio receivers; 100 newspaper copies for every 1,000 inhabitants.8

THE DISTRIBUTION OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION GLOBALLY

The most comprehensive report that has focused on the state of information and communication in the world was published in 1980 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), Many Voices, One World, and is commonly known as the MacBride Report.9 The report highlighted the numerous communication disparities existing in the different regions of the world in 1978. Such disparities led the MacBride Commission to seek changes for balancing the inequities in communication structures and information flows. Apart from these highlighted inequities the report also focused its attention on different communication philosophies and ideals, press freedom and the flow of information between the developed and developing nations. It made over eighty recommendations covering the various areas of literacy, book publishing, broadcast media, telecommunications, television, the press, press freedom and democratization of information. In its report the Commission emphasised that:

Communication, necessarily, reflects the nature of the society in which it operates - a society that may well be inegalitarian and undemocratic. Thus inequalities in wealth distribution inevitably create disparities between those who are well served and those who are deprived in communication; a gap between a cultural elite and illiterate or semi-literate masses is a gap between the information-rich and the information-poor; and an undemocratic political system cannot fail to have adverse effects on communication.10

8 Established in 1960 by Unesco.
10 Ibid., p. 166.
The report further added that:

There is surely a necessity for more information from a plurality of sources, but if the opportunity to reciprocate is not available, the communication process is not adequately democratic. Without a two-way flow between participants in the process, without the existence of multiple information sources permitting wider selection, without more opportunity for each individual to reach decisions based on a broad awareness of divergent facts and viewpoints, without increased participation by readers, viewers and listeners in the decision-making and programming activities of the media - true democratisation will not become a reality.  

In examining the distribution of information at the global level, I have taken the situation as identified by the report and compared this to the situation in 1992 using data drawn from the publications noted above. An examination of the current information situation is based on information available. The purpose is to identify the areas of information that have improved or declined in service, and how these may have an impact on communicating information for political purpose.

Newspapers

Not all countries have attempted to report circulation of newspapers for 1978 and 1992. Only 142 countries have reported for both 1978 and 1992. The statistics given in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 give some idea as to the changes that have occurred over time within the different regions and a number of countries respectively.

The growth in newspaper circulation in regions for countries reporting showed a very high increase for the Asian region. African countries show the lowest circulation in 1978 and 1992 but have improved slightly in 1992 by 2.23% in circulation per 1000 inhabitants. Other regions of Europe, North and South America report fairly constant circulation in contrast to Oceania that shows a decline from 1978 to 1992 by 4%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Mean 1978</th>
<th>Mean 1992</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>15.48</td>
<td>17.71</td>
<td>+ 2.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America</td>
<td>209.03</td>
<td>217.29</td>
<td>+ 8.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>86.09</td>
<td>147.06</td>
<td>+ 69.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>285.85</td>
<td>295.62</td>
<td>+ 3.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania</td>
<td>151.55</td>
<td>145.50</td>
<td>- 4.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Circulation of daily newspapers per 1,000 inhabitants 1978 and 1992: Major regions.

11 Ibid., p. 174.
12 Almost 200 countries are listed in, Banks, (ed.) (1995), op. cit.
For many developing countries, realistic comparisons cannot be made between the period 1978 and 1992, as statistics are not available.

Table 3.2 gives the daily newspaper circulation per 1,000 inhabitants in ranked (by UNESCO) top and bottom twenty countries. What is evident, is that in those countries where the per capita income is high - over US$5,000 - circulation has increased constantly. Also evident is the distinct high increase in 1992 of newspaper circulation in the Asian countries. This can be contrasted to the twenty countries at the bottom of the list, which have a per capita income of less than US$1,000. While a number of countries in this group have reported slight increases in the number of newspapers circulation per thousand population between 1978 and 1992, the increases nevertheless, are negligible. Many of the countries in the bottom twenty are in the African continent.

Table 3.2: Daily newspapers per 1,000 inhabitants ranked by top and bottom twenty countries; 1978 and 1992

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank - Top 20 Countries</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>GNP in USD</th>
<th>Newspapers circulation per 1,000</th>
<th>1992 Rank</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>GNP in USD</th>
<th>Newspapers circulation per 1,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>3600</td>
<td>615</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>16567</td>
<td>819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>10680</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Liechtenstein</td>
<td>24607</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>11190</td>
<td>555</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>26331</td>
<td>606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>7340</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>29387</td>
<td>576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>14458</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>25436</td>
<td>519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Liechtenstein</td>
<td>21756</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>28520</td>
<td>511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>9740</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>5270</td>
<td>407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>5270</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>6721</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Monaco</td>
<td>7094</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>23725</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>11520</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>35666</td>
<td>387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>11610</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>31343</td>
<td>384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>11885</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>18182</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>5070</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>16621</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>N. Antilles</td>
<td>7100</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>27626</td>
<td>332</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>9220</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>21935</td>
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</tr>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>8730</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
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<td>304</td>
</tr>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>6980</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>21130</td>
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</tr>
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<td>18</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>3500</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>N. Antilles</td>
<td>9010</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>10550</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Monaco</td>
<td>23082</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>4310</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>16715</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottom 20 Countries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116</td>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>655</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>117</td>
<td>Togo</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119</td>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>Madagascar</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>Zaire</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>1152</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Radio

The MacBride Report had noted that the radio has played and will continue to play a very important role in the developing countries. It is the only medium that can reach a large percentage of the population, particularly those in the rural areas. This holds true to the present in many developing countries including Fiji. The advantages of the radio are that it is relatively cheap, battery operated, and portable, and literacy is not required. As Table 3.4 will show the use of the radio has increased or remained constant for all the regions of the world with Asia reporting the highest increase in the use of the radio.

In this section an attempt is made to examine the shift in the ownership of radio receivers in the different countries between 1978 and 1992. As noted earlier, while comparisons in the ownership numbers may not say too much about the impact of radios on political development what can be assumed, however, is that with the increase in the availability of radios there is bound to be more people having access to more information.

Table 3.3 shows that in those countries which have a high GNP per capita, the distribution of radios is very high. Western nations led the use of radio per thousand in 1978 and still do in 1992.

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N. Antilles: Netherlands Antilles; CAR: Central African Republic.

Table 3.3: Radio receivers per 1,000 inhabitants ranked by top and bottom twenty countries: 1978 and 1992.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>10250</td>
<td>1096 (1)</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>23332</td>
<td>2118 (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>7539</td>
<td>1039 (2)</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>81764</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Bermuda</td>
<td>7900</td>
<td>1034 (3)</td>
<td>Bermuda</td>
<td>16715</td>
<td>1273 (3)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>7100</td>
<td>1023 (4)</td>
<td>N. Antilles</td>
<td>27811</td>
<td>1260 (4)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Azoren, Samoa</td>
<td>4550</td>
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</tr>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>11885</td>
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<td>1146 (6)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>UK</td>
<td>2270</td>
<td>906 (7)</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>23082</td>
<td>1126 (7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>3070</td>
<td>885 (8)</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>27620</td>
<td>1033 (8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Sweden</td>
<td>11190</td>
<td>842 (9)</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>20600</td>
<td>1030 (9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>11920</td>
<td>838 (10)</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>35606</td>
<td>843 (10)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Monaco</td>
<td>7094</td>
<td>820 (11)</td>
<td>Monaco</td>
<td>6721</td>
<td>1002 (11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>7340</td>
<td>810 (12)</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>21756</td>
<td>997 (12)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Greece</td>
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<td>Greece</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Japan</td>
<td>7130</td>
<td>775 (14)</td>
<td>Japan</td>
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<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>21130</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Malta</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Canada</td>
<td>14961</td>
<td>833 (18)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2920</td>
<td>731 (19)</td>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>25856</td>
<td>788 (19)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>2540</td>
<td>730 (20)</td>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>21935</td>
<td>769 (20)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bottom 20 countries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>152</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>39 (152)</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>87 (152)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>153</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>36 (153)</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>82 (153)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>154</td>
<td>CAR</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>34 (154)</td>
<td>CAR</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>80 (154)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>155</td>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>27 (155)</td>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>69 (155)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>156</td>
<td>Lesotho</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>25 (156)</td>
<td>Lesotho</td>
<td>1071</td>
<td>66 (156)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>157</td>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>920</td>
<td>24 (157)</td>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>64 (157)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>158</td>
<td>Niger</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>24 (158)</td>
<td>Niger</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>62 (158)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>159</td>
<td>Zambia</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>22 (159)</td>
<td>Zambia</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>61 (159)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>22 (160)</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>49 (160)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>161</td>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>21 (161)</td>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>47 (161)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>162</td>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>20 (162)</td>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>44 (162)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>163</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>19 (163)</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>44 (163)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>164</td>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19 (164)</td>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>42 (164)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>165</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>17 (165)</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>38 (165)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>166</td>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>16 (166)</td>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>34 (166)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>167</td>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>16 (167)</td>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>33 (167)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>168</td>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>15 (168)</td>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>29 (168)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>169</td>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>15 (169)</td>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>715</td>
<td>28 (169)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>170</td>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>14 (170)</td>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>27 (170)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>171</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>14 (171)</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>25 (171)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>172</td>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>4 (172)</td>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>16 (172)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. Figure available for American Samoa is 1985. Pacific Islands Yearbook. (1994), Suva: Fiji Times.
CAR: Central African Republic; N. Antilles: Netherlands Antilles; AS: American Samoa.
The United States was ranked first in 1978 and remained so in 1992. In fact, the twenty countries that showed high availability of the radio in 1978 continued to show high availability of the radio in 1992. The countries showing low availability of the radio in 1978 remained so in 1992. Many of these countries are in the African continent with reported low GNP per capita. Generally, it can be said that little has changed in the past years in the use of the radio and the disparities that exist. The rich countries have continued to expand their use of the radio while the poor countries remain poor in the use of the radio even though some improvements have been made. In other words, while the developing countries have improved their position and their use of the radio, they still lag behind a great deal relative to the developed countries.

Table 3.4: Users of radio receivers per 1,000 1978 and 1992 inhabitants: Major regions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Mean 1978</th>
<th>Mean 1992</th>
<th>Percent Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>101.3</td>
<td>167.9</td>
<td>+ 65.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America</td>
<td>529.3</td>
<td>696.6</td>
<td>+ 31.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>146.9</td>
<td>385.6</td>
<td>+ 162.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>659.9</td>
<td>733.0</td>
<td>+ 11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania</td>
<td>494.9</td>
<td>621.2</td>
<td>+ 25.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, despite this increase it should be noted that in 1992 thirteen countries had not reached the UNESCO minimum of 50 receivers per thousand inhabitants. These countries include Angola, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Bhutan, Lesotho, Mali, Mozambique, Somalia, Tanzania, Haiti, Bangladesh, Nepal and Yemen. This can be compared to 1978 when eight countries were reported to be below the UNESCO minimum standard for radio receivers. There seems to be no distinct improvement in the provision of radio since 1978.

The figure for radio use for the Pacific is high as it includes developed nations of New Zealand, Australia and Guam. These countries record high use of the radio, newspapers and television.

Television

This section will look at the use of television in the different regions and countries of the world comparing use in 1978 and 1992. The MacBride Report raised and

14 Data collected from *Unesco Statistical Yearbook* (1981), Paris: Unesco. These were Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mozambique, Tanzania, Somalia, Angola, Mali, Yemen.
discussed the growth and the use of television in developing countries highlighting the related problems of cultural domination and threats to cultural identity. While television was seen as being a very influential and effective medium for communicating information, there were constraints such as available power supply, availability of television to the rural areas, and the lack of local programmes. These are some of the reasons why television has not had the same impact and wide usage as the radio in developing countries. The distribution of the use of television in the major regions is given in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5: Number of television receivers per 1,000 inhabitants: Major regions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Mean 1978</th>
<th>Mean 1992</th>
<th>Percent Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>+ 141.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America</td>
<td>292.5</td>
<td>449.2</td>
<td>+ 53.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>71.6</td>
<td>190.5</td>
<td>+ 166.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>276.1</td>
<td>342.6</td>
<td>+ 24.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania</td>
<td>233.3</td>
<td>332.9</td>
<td>+ 42.65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general there has been an increase in the use of television throughout all the regions of the world with Asia reporting the highest increase from 1978 to 1992 with 166.1%. While the increase in the actual number of televisions used per thousand inhabitants in Africa is low compared to other regions of the world, the overall increase for the region is high. The Oceania numbers are high as the region includes Australia, New Zealand, Guam and American Samoa reporting 95% of the use of television. Table 3.6 also shows the disparity that exists between the poor and rich countries as reflected in the numbers of television receivers per thousand inhabitants in the top and bottom ranked twenty countries of the world in 1978 and 1992 with GNP.

Table 3.6: Television receivers per thousand population ranked by top and bottom twenty countries: 1978 and 1992.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank 1978 Rank - Top 20 Countries</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>GNP</th>
<th>Television receivers per 1000</th>
<th>Rank 1992</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>GNP</th>
<th>Television receivers per 1000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1       USA</td>
<td>10250</td>
<td>633</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bermuda</td>
<td>27381</td>
<td>923</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2       Monaco</td>
<td>7094</td>
<td>627</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Monaco</td>
<td>23082</td>
<td>820</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3       Malta</td>
<td>2800</td>
<td>579</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>23332</td>
<td>815</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4       Guam</td>
<td>5100</td>
<td>487</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>7536</td>
<td>744</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5       Canada</td>
<td>9350</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>7051</td>
<td>730</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6       Kuwait</td>
<td>15580</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Guam</td>
<td>6167</td>
<td>658</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7       Denmark</td>
<td>10210</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>20680</td>
<td>640</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8       Bermuda</td>
<td>7000</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>29387</td>
<td>614</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The bottom twenty countries are mainly in the African continent. They also still fall below the UNESCO minimum standard of 20 television sets per 1000 inhabitants while the developed countries surpass the minimum standard many times over. Hence, the disparities that existed in 1978 between the rich and the poor countries in the distribution and use of television remain in 1992. America and Europe together still account for a high percentage of the use of television. One can argue that television is the medium for the rich and not for the poor despite the view that television brings with it many benefits such as education.
Developments since 1992

The development in the newspapers, radio and television can be said to follow the same pattern as noted in 1992. Growth in the Asian countries continues, as well as the slow negligible growth in the African countries. Growth in the Pacific countries continues steadily with a notable expansion in the use of electronic information technologies as an effort to catch up to the developed countries. The same could be said of the African and Asian countries where the use of new information technologies is expanding fast.16 While the developing countries are largely the buyers or recipients of this new technology, rather than the creators of it, the leading-edge technology is in the developed countries particularly the United States of America and Japan. These two countries and a number of other developed countries have, in recent years, been concerned with developments in new information technologies. Expansions in the use of the Internet, for instance, and the use of new information technologies to transfer and disseminate information over great distances, and instantly will add a new dimension to the value of information itself as well as to information as a resource for political development or competition.

In the creation and the development of new information infrastructures in the developing countries as a result of the penetration of new information technologies, information will have to be considered a strong factor of change. If we accept this fact, then the details of these changes can be gauged by the developments and changes in the type and speed the information technologies are being adopted and used in various countries. In other words, it may be possible to predict the effect and pattern of change information technology may have in a country in the areas of economic and social structure measured against the degree of penetration information technology has had in a country. It is however, more difficult to gauge the impact of information technology and the volume of information that is disseminated within a country on political change, as this thesis will show. Information technology may be described as providing a great leap forward in the accessibility of information for the developing countries as well as resulting in many benefits, however, with the undeveloped national information infrastructures and the lack of information policy in many of these countries, the future could be uncertain.

The analysis above suggests that developments in communication and access to information have been a highly uneven process not only between the developed countries and developing, but also between the countries of the developing region as

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16 Connors, (1993), op. cit.
well as between urban and rural areas. With the availability of cheap battery operated
and wound-up radios, many countries have achieved the recommended diffusion of
radio receivers set by UNESCO. The figures for newspapers as compared to the
UNESCO standards put newspaper diffusion at the medium level. In many isolated
areas in developing countries, newspapers are often not received till a few days or
weeks later. In this case, it would seem that the use of newspapers to communicate
information might have minimal effect compared to the radio, which communicates
information directly to the people. As far as television is concerned, the disparity
between the developed and developing countries is great. Table 3.6 bore this out,
where after almost fifteen years, the number of television sets per 1,000 population in
developing countries remains low. Despite this, the global expansion of electronic
media is remarkable, and will have an impact on development and the process of
democracy as is being suggested by a number of scholars noted in chapter 2. It will be
dangerous to assume that the new developments in information technology will be the
main driving force in political development in the developing countries as there are
other factors that influence change, such as culture, traditional communication
systems and government regulation. It will also be naive to suggest that with
information technology it will be possible for poor countries, as well as the
populations in the rural areas, to have equality of access to information.

INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND THE ORIGINS OF
DEMOCRACY

The origin phase represents the early stages where the status of democracy in a
country is still uncertain and a point where the attainment of democracy is official, or
the transition phase. In examining the role of information and communication in this
phase, a number of characteristics emerge. First, free access to information is
constrained. Second, the national media - the newspapers, radio and television - face
pressures from government authorities towards some form of self-censorship. Third,
available privately owned information outlets such as newspapers and radio stations
are limited but are growing steadily. Fourth, the people are free to voice their views
on matters of interest to them.

By accelerating views and awareness of activities of government, these bring pressure
on the authorities. Demands are made of government to be accountable and to allow
greater freedom for the people to access information. By being critical, newspaper
journalists and the media workers have contributed in making the people become
politically aware and make demands for more open government. According to
Cardoso, in Latin American countries, for instance Brazil and Paraguay, the emergence of an independent press and radio did help in triggering off moves towards democracy. Through the radio stations and newspapers, criticisms would be raised against political parties, new constitutions and legislation. These would lead to massive protests and demonstrations giving rise to possible change of leaders and the beginnings of democracy.

Huntington had recognised the importance of the "demonstration effect" in the emergence of democracy and links this development to the expansion of global communication, satellites and transportation. Through global communications, countries can learn more from each other cross-culturally. For instance, countries living under authoritarian rule can learn about democracies in other countries through the international information and communication channels. Similarly, through the radio, television and newspapers, these countries can learn more about themselves through the international media. Huntington suggests that the demonstration effect will be likely to grow and could be a very important factor in the move towards democracy in the origin phase.

In the African countries, the situation is different. Here, information and communication are constrained and are always under pressure from government. Global communications and information dissemination are also very restrictive. Governments continue to monopolise the ownership of newspapers and radio stations. In this environment the development of democracy will not be easy.

In the Pacific region, radios penetrate the rural areas thus enabling the people to be informed about matters of government. The newspapers have limited penetration to the islands in the rural area but those which are privately owned have played important roles in Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu in exposing government corruption and inefficiencies. International communications have enabled Pacific islands to know what is happening internationally on various political issues and the development of democracies in other countries in the world.

INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND THE TRANSITION PHASE

The number of countries that are in the transition stage, according to Derbyshire and

These are countries that are emerging democracies. While they share many of the characteristics of democracies, there is evidence of instability in their political systems. These countries have had at least one change in political status either through a coup or change of government at some time in the past two decades. Some of these countries enjoy democratic government for a period only to revert back to other autocratic rule. The three prominent examples in Western Europe are Spain, Portugal and Greece. By contrast, the principles of democracy and civil freedoms have barely been established in countries such as Afghanistan, Liberia, Nicaragua, and Pakistan. In these states the military remain influential. The existence of multi-party politics, however, warrants their inclusion in this category.

It is significant to note that all the countries in the emerging transition phase of democracy have low access to information and a substantial number are situated in the developing regions of Southeast Asia, Central and South America, and the Middle East and North Africa. (See Figure 3.1) In recent years, popular support for multi-party regimes has shown signs of strengthening. For example, in Thailand and South Korea rapid development suggests transition to democracy. The countries are homogeneous in racial and ethnic terms. Once ruled by the military or authoritarian regimes, the pro-democracy movement in the two countries adopted wise, moderate yet forceful strategy towards the development of democracy.

In this phase the newspapers, radio and television would seem to be freer, despite the low access to information of many countries in this phase. These information outlets have the crucial role of informing the people of various matters; in particular on candidates in an election if this is to take place. At the same time, the media provide information on international matters and political developments in different countries. So, despite the continuing national constraints placed on the radio and the press in Latin America, Africa and the Pacific regions there is transition to democracy. A continuing concern, however, would be the question of guaranteeing continued freedom of the press and the radio in new and developing democracies.

INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND THE CONSOLIDATION PHASE

The role of information and communication in this phase is just as important as in the origin and the transition to democracy for a number of reasons. Information is

19 Derbyshire and Derbyshire, (1989), op. cit., p. 32.
required to ensure that the people continue to be well informed through the various systems of communication. This should enable people to make the correct political decision and guide against sliding back to authoritarianism from a democratic position. In countries where there is a weak opposition in government, such opposition may have to come to the information providers and disseminators, in this case, the media. How effective the media can be in the various developing countries is dependent on a number of factors.

First, in many developing countries the fears of moving back to authoritarianism is always there. Governments, for instance, usually prefer to maintain control over broadcasting even in democratic countries, for example in Fiji before the coups, and many countries of the Pacific. In former communist states in eastern and central Europe, the broadcasting stations tend to be still under the control of the authorities in government, and the media act as their mouthpiece.21 Similarly in Latin American countries, for example, Uruguay, despite public criticism, the governments have been able to retain some degree of control over the media in keeping with the government's policy of "protected democracy".22

Second, those newspapers, television stations and radio which are not controlled by the government may still feel less able to be completely free of government as time goes by unless there is the political will to continue to disseminate information as freely as possible to all the people. In addition, some newspapers may feel the rising production costs a constraint, particularly in developing countries where running a broadcasting station and producing a daily newspaper need good financial backing. Furthermore, in countries where the economy is poor, it will be difficult for the people to spend money on buying a newspaper, thus raising a problem of a commitment to democracy that may be influenced by the market.

Third, there are consequences for democracy of the concentration of media ownership. The fears are based on ownership or control of the media in a few hands either of government or big business and the implications for democracy and its consolidation. In Brazil for instance, there has been criticism of the concentration of information in a few hands, generally conservative families like the Marinho family who run and own the Globo. In the Western nations, concentration of the media in a few big business men, and their influence on democracy in the various countries is also a concern. If the newspapers, television and radio can make full contribution to democracy, there

needs to be democracy within the media, dispersal of control, greater access to the
media by various sectors of the community including minority groups, the rural
people and the poor. This democratisation of the media is a theme that has been
highlighted in the MacBride Report.

A COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT OF INTRA-SOCIETAL PENETRATION
OF INFORMATION/COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

As evident in chapter 2 and the foregoing discussion in this chapter, there is a mass of
historical evidence which suggests that countries that have information systems that
allow greater access to information results in great advantages to people in a society.
In these circumstances people become well informed, are more literate and take active
part in politics. The opposite is also true - where there is limited freedom to access
information, there is limited advantages in that society. The general trend so far in
access, as can be seen in the distribution of the supply and use of television,
newspapers and the radio in different regions of the world, has been totally uneven. If
information and its communication is seen as important in developing an environment
with well informed people who can make clear political decisions, it becomes
important that information access systems are developed. In other words, it would
seem reasonable to infer that a prerequisite of democracy must be the free access to
information for a large part of the population.

It can also be argued that in countries where democratic principles are strong there is a
substantial freedom of expression and a high degree of freedom of the press. In
countries where democratic principles are undeveloped, government ownership and
control of the media are common. It follows that non-democratic countries tend to be
more restrictive of information flows. In order to become more democratic, it would
seem that the development of the information infrastructure in a country is
fundamental.

In the next section, I will try and examine whether there is a link between access to
information and the type of political system in a country. I will do this by taking the
Information Access Index measure developed by Connors for 136 countries, and link
this to the degree of authority that exists within these countries. I will also link the
Information Access Index and the measurements provided by the Polyarchy Scale to
determine whether a correlation exists between information, communication and
democracy. Figures 3.1 and 3.2 will highlight the possible link.
The types of political systems identified are those showing the least to the greatest authority and include democracy, emerging democracy, communist system, national socialist, authoritarian, military authority, and absolute monarchy. These are the systems that are being used to explain the possibility of a correlation. The term political system is taken to mean a network of communication that absorbs potential political human actions into the polity

Table 3.7: The Information Access Index and political status in selected countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Index*</th>
<th>Political status**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bermuda</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany***</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>248</td>
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23 Democracy has been defined in chapter 2. Emerging democracy has been defined earlier in this chapter. I will define the other terms here based on various sources including Derbyshire and Derbyshire. According to Marx communists is an ideal which is eventually reached when all private property and class distinctions have been abolished. In countries which are categorised as communist, the bulk of economic activity is under state ownership and subject to central control and planning; one party, the Communist Party, dominates the political scene and constitutionally ascribes a leading role in the nation's affairs. National socialist countries display many of the characteristics of communist states but in a less developed and structured form. A key feature is the existence of one political party supporting socialist principles promoting nationalism and opposing imperialism. A characteristic of these countries has been the presence of a "charismatic leader" such as Kadifal of Libya and Nyerere of Tanzania. In terms of rights restrictions, national socialist countries do not have a good record. Authoritarian states subscribe to the ideology that restricts all political parties allowing one undivided and unrestricted ideology, an authoritarian personal or collective executive, and the absence of an assembly or if an assembly is present it acts as the 'servant' of the executive. In military authority states a military regime is always in control. It can be regarded as a form of authoritarian nationalism whereby the military leaders impose a government on the people, claiming this to be in the public good. Countries said to adopt the system of absolutism are those where there is an absence of any constitutional form of government, or, a popular assembly or judiciary to counter executive power. Such countries also deny the establishment of political parties or other forms of organized interests. These countries have a monarch. In a number of these countries there are signs of emerging democracies, for example in Bhutan. In Jordan and Tonga, the democratic movements are making an impact.
<table>
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<td>Emerging Democracy, The military still a political force, Democracy</td>
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Note:
*Index calculated by indexing raw scores for literacy, newspaper, radio, television and telephone diffusion for each country against the average score for the item, then totaling the scores for all items and indexing the total against the average for all countries' total scores.
***Estimated figures for unified Germany

The Information Access Index for Selected Pacific Islands and Their Political Status

Connors index does not include any of the small island states of the South Pacific. Using Connors formula, a calculation of the index for selected countries of this region for which statistics are available was attempted.

The index for the Pacific Islands rates thirteen countries based on available statistics. The value of the index can be compared to the index developed by Connors for the rest of the world. For instance, Fiji with an index value of 79 would be on a par with Jamaica with an index value of 79. Fiji could be ranked 65 or 66 according to

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24 The index is formulated by calculating the percentage score for literacy, newspaper, radio, television and telephone diffusion for each country against the average score for the item, then totaling the scores and dividing by 5. Take Australia as an example:

(a) Literacy

\[
\frac{106/122*100}{100}=138.8
\]

(b) Newspapers per '000

\[
\frac{253/112*100}{100}=196.8
\]

(c) Radio sets per '000

\[
\frac{1260/590*100}{100}=212.5
\]

(d) TV sets per '000

\[
\frac{484/183*100}{100}=264.4
\]

(e) Telephones per '000

\[
\frac{431/169*100}{100}=255.0
\]

Index \( \frac{138.8+196.8+212.5+264.4+255.0}{5} = 235.7 \)
Connors index. Similarly, Cook Islands would be on a par with Taiwan and could rank 44; Papua New Guinea would be on a par with Turkey and could rank 69; Samoa would be on a par with Saudi Arabia and could rank 71. What the Pacific Islands Index indicate is that the range of information penetration in the one region is wide with Guam, a US territory, recording an index of 316 can be ranked third according to Connors index, and Solomon Islands ranked a low 112 in an index for 136 countries.

Table 3.8: Information Access Index and Political Status: Selected Pacific Islands

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<th>Literacy %</th>
<th>Newspapers per 1,000</th>
<th>Radio sets per 1,000</th>
<th>TV sets per 1,000</th>
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A further test of whether there is a correlation between information, communication and democracy is to apply the Polyarchy Scale as devised by Coppedge and Reinicke. Indicators used include freedom of expression, freedom of organisation,

Coppedge, M. and Reinicke, W. F. (1991), "Measuring Polyarchy", in Inkeles, A. (ed.) (1991), On Measuring Democracy: Its Consequences and Concomitants. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers. pp. 47 - 68. Coppedge and Reinicke developed the Polyarchy Scale based on Robert Dahl's concept of polyarchy. The scale measures the degree to which national political systems meet the minimum requirements for political democracy. It provided ranking for 137 states in the world of the 170 independent nations in 1985. Thirty-three countries were difficult to rank. The scale is from 0 or perfect scale to 10 which represents countries where there is no meaningful elections, organisations and media are controlled by the government, no public access to official government information.
media pluralism and participation in free elections, to different countries listed in Table 3.7. This will give some idea to the performance or extent of democracy in these countries.

Table 3.9: Information Access Index, political systems and country ratings on the Polyarchy Scale, 1985.

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27 In the Polyarchy Scale FAIRELT means fair elections and has three categories: 1. elections without significant routine fraud or coercion; 2. elections with some fraud or coercion; 3. no meaningful elections, no elections at all, elections without choice of candidates or parties, Ibid., p. 49.

28 In the Polyarchy Scale FREORG or freedom of organisation has 4 categories: 1. Some trade unions and other groups may be harassed or banned but there are no restrictions on political groups; 2. Some political parties as well as interest groups and unions are banned, but membership to some alternatives to official organisations is permitted; 3. the only independent organisations allowed to exist are nonpolitical; 4. no independent organisations are allowed. All organisations are banned or controlled by government, Ibid., p.50.

29 FREXT or freedom of expressions has three categories: 1. Citizens express views on all topics without fear of punishment; 2. dissent is discouraged but marginal control. There is some freedom of private discussion and meetings; 3. All dissent forbidden and suppressed. Citizens are afraid to criticise government, Ibid., p. 50.

30 ALTINF is a measure of the alternative sources of information. There are four categories: 1. alternative sources exist and protected by law. The media is free and owned by independent or multi-party bodies; 2. alternative sources of information are available but government versions are presented as the preferred. There is government-controlled media, selective censorship, harassment, punishment of publishers, broadcasters, journalists; 3. government dominates the dissemination of information and restricts by routine censorship. Strong punishment for dissenting reporters. Foreign media alternative sources exist only for nonpolitical purposes, media are controlled by the government or available to very few; 4. no public alternative to official information. The media are government controlled and used for propaganda and foreign publications and programmes are not available. Ibid., p. 50.

31 SUFF has the following characteristics: 1. Universal adult suffrage; 2. Suffrage with partial restrictions; 3. Suffrage denied to large extent of the population; 4. No suffrage.
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Note:  
D - Democracy; ED - Emerging Democracy; C - Communist; NS - National Socialist; A - Authoritarian; MA - Military Authority; AM - Absolute Monarchy (Absolutist)  
* Estimated figures for unified Germany

Referring to the scales and their explanations, it would seem that from this scale, countries that have a rating of 1, 1, 1, 1, 1 have fair elections, full freedom of expression and political participation, and the media is not controlled by the government. Countries with this rating are democracies. Emerging democracies have a combination of 1s and 2s. On this scale Singapore, although categorised as a democracy according to Derbyshire and Derbyshire, has a rating of 2, 2, 2, 2, 1. This would mean that there are fair elections, limited freedom of expression and political participation, and government controls the media. Similarly, Malaysia, Mexico, and Malta have ratings of 2, 2, 2, 2, 1. Communist states, absolute monarchy and a number of authoritarian and national socialist countries have ratings with a combination of 3s and 4s. In these countries there would be limits on freedom of expression and political participation. The media is very much controlled by the government. Therefore, it can be said that there is a link between the free access to information and the political system of a country.

According to Derbyshire and Derbyshire, many of the Pacific islands are democracies, emerging democracies, and one absolute monarchy, Tonga. In the Polyarchy scale, Tonga has a rate of 3, 3, 2, 3, 1, indicating limited freedom of expression and organisation, as well as limited freedom of the media. The other democratic countries have a rate of 1, 1, 1, 1, 1. These countries include Samoa, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Nauru, and Papua New Guinea indicating that elections are fair, the media have more freedom than in Tonga, and that there is freedom of expression and organisation.
Solomon Islands has a rate of 1, 1, 1, 2, 1 indicating that there is some restriction on the media. Vanuatu also has placed restrictions on its media and has a rating of 1, 1, 2, 3, 1. Fiji's rating of 2, 1, 1, 1, 1, is the rate before the 1987 coups.

Interestingly, under the measurement by Gastil, based on a survey of freedoms from 1975 to 1989 in countries of the world measuring especially levels of political rights and civil liberties, the rating system for these consist of a seven-point scale. The freest rating is 1 and the least is 7. For the freedom rating, this is the sum of the political and civil rights rating. This rates from 2 for the most free to 14 for the least free. Fiji's rating in 1978 for political rights was 2 and civil liberties was also 2. Freedom rating was 4. The rates in 1988 were 5 for political rights in a 7-point scale and 4 for civil liberties. For freedom rating this was 9 in 1988. This compares to Indonesia, Chile, Bangladesh, Hungary, Nicaragua, - all with a rating of 9. None of these countries are stable democracies. This indicates that since the military coups in Fiji in 1987, freedom and civil and political rights have deteriorated. In 1996, the media is still restricted and controlled in Fiji despite its planned move back to a democratic constitution. This is discussed in later chapters.

However, in a study of democracies in the South Pacific, Peter Larmour argued that there are a number of countries in the South Pacific that cannot be classed as democracies if the indicators of democracy he uses are applied. Larmour set to compare island nations in terms of three indicators that include: an executive responsible to an elected legislature; universal adult suffrage; freedom of speech. Larmour recognised freedom of speech as important in informing and making the electors aware of happenings in government, who to vote for in an election, and also the alternatives that may be available to the individual in the process of choosing a leader. For Larmour the political role of an independent and non-government press was important in a democracy. Similarly, the right to access government information was also important. Larmour noted that in this study of democracy in the South Pacific about twelve countries in the region cannot be classed as democracies because of the absence of privately owned news media and the absence of freedom of speech. These countries include Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Pitcairn, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Wallis and Futuna, and Samoa.

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34 Ibid., p. 143.
Information Access and Authority

From Tables 3.7 to 3.9 an attempt will be made to correlate the level of authoritarian and democratic regimes and information access. Along an horizontal axis the different political systems identified will be situated. These are: D- Democracy; ED-Emerging Democracy; C-Communist; NS-National Socialist; A-Authoritarian; MA-Military Authority; AM-Absolute Monarchy (Absolutist). Theoretically, as shown in Figure 3.2, where information access is high, and authoritarian and military regimes control low, democracy exists (case 1). Where information access and authoritarian control are either high or low, there is some move towards democracy (cases 2 and 3). Where information access is low and authoritarian control high, authoritarian and military authoritarian regimes exist (case 4).

The relationship applied globally as shown in Figure 3.1 supports the arguments that in: (1) countries that have greater access to information, democratic principles exist; (2) countries where there is limited access to information, generally, democratic principles do not exist; (3) countries where there is limited access to information, these can also be democratic in terms of the definitions adopted in this study. In categories (1) and (2), the correlation seems quite clear. In the category (1) where high information access equals democracy, all developed countries mainly in Europe and North America fall in this category. In category (2), all countries that have a low information access index are generally non-democratic regimes. Category (3) poses some difficulties. Of the 136 countries, 19 are listed as democratic but access to information is below the half way mark of 200 in the Information Access Index maximum of an arbitrary 380. From Figure 3.1, it can be said that these countries are borderline cases. For example, in Mexico, Singapore and Malaysia, the opposition movements are weak. There is greater emphasis placed on common good rather than individual good and the notion of individual rights does not feature highly. There is greater acceptance of authority and an effective dominant political party that remains in power for long periods. It can be argued that these qualities are not democratic. The qualities that are democratic include: a greater recognition of individual rights; an ability to resist authority and to reject hierarchy for more equality in status; the dilution of power concentrated in the hands of a few. Hence, if access to information was used as a variable in measuring democracy, this may help categorize countries better.

Figure 3.1: Intra-Sectoral Penetration of Information/Communication Systems

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Note: 1. Democracy: DL (Democratic); EM (Emerging); AT (Absolute); 2. Capital: MA (Major); AB (Absolute); 3. Country names in English and Chinese.
Malaysia and Singapore can be considered to be both authoritarian and democratic, where the emphasis is towards a strong state but free economy. Where does information falls in this formula is a problem as it can be argued that to have a stable, strong and free economy, free access to the right information is imperative. The present day 1997 currency crisis and the crisis in the economy in Thailand and Malaysia can be attributed, among other reasons, to the lack of the right information made available to the business community and the people to assist with planning.

Figure 3.2: Information Access and Authority

Note: (1): High Access: Low Authority - Democracy
(2): Low Access: Low Authority - Emerging Democracy
(3): High Access: High Authority - Emerging Democracy
(4): Low Access: High Authority - Communism/National Socialist/Military/Monarchy

For the Pacific Island countries, a number of countries are borderline cases also. In Samoa, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands which are listed as democratic, the governments still control the press and the radio, and frequently threaten these information outlets with closure and censorship. Fiji, listed as an emerging democracy having experienced two coups, has faced mixed experiences regarding information access. At different periods in its history, access to information has gone through periods of no access to greater access. However, at all times, there is always the uncertainty of what can and may happen to the freedom of information and expression.
in the country. To establish why constraints are introduced and how these affect the political development in a country cannot be determined easily. Hence the case study.

As noted in chapters 1 and 2, the precise role of information and communication, in this case the newspapers, radio and television in supporting the move towards democracy is unclear at the present time and seems to be a minor factor as compared to others such as economic growth. The relevant question that can be asked about the effects of the newspapers, radio and television is what factors of political change are associated with exposure to these media?

Lerner had posited the following: that, (1) only after a country reaches 10% of urbanisation does its literacy rate begin to rise significantly; (2) thereafter, urbanisation and literacy increase together in a direct, monotonic relationship until they reach 25%; (3) once societies are about 25% urbanised, the highest correlation of media consumption is with literacy. Literacy was seen as an important factor in moving from traditional to modern forms of political systems. Rogers had also concluded in his studies based on peasants in India, Nigeria and Colombia, that for a country to modernize it was necessary that the peasants were persuaded to change their traditional ways of life.

The process of the impact of information and communication by Lerner and Rogers is provided in Figure 3.3. The primary variable here is the availability of newspapers, and the penetration of radio and television, that is, sufficient numbers, and adequate distribution. For the use of the newspaper, until literacy is attained, minimum access to the printed news is possible. News, however, can be passed on by word of mouth or by means of a reader.

Combining the Traditional and Modern Communication Systems in the South Pacific

What should be asked at this point is where does the role of traditional information and communication fit in all this. In chapter 2, reference to the importance of traditional information systems was addressed noting that in the emerging traditional

information systems and communication channels are effective political tools used by politicians during election time and when administering. For many developing countries in Africa and some in the Pacific, these traditional systems are influential and active components of politics in the country, for example the chiefly system in Fiji and Tonga. Hence, when considering the appropriateness of democracy and its development in developing countries, a study of the traditional sector, in this case, the traditional information and communication system will be appropriate. As noted by Wiarda, "the rejection of the Western model of development and its various forms is widespread throughout the Third World"38 and the need to look at other alternatives and options, as in this case, the fusion of the traditional and the modern, is again gaining strong support by many scholars in developing countries.

Taking the South Pacific as a whole, we could divide arbitrarily and broadly information and communication history into three main eras. The first is the traditional past and the evolvement of traditional knowledge and beliefs. The second era is that which comes from colonial experience. The third is the post-independence period and the struggle for raising aspirations. There is a strong common belief in the relationship of the past tradition, the present and the future. The past traditions serve the Pacific communities in a number of ways and are still part of the social structure today. For instance, in Polynesia at least, a person's name, village of origin, and clan are indicative of the person's status, role and economic and social function in the community. People know their places in society. This establishes the line of communication, and in ceremonial occasions, seating. Such traditions place visible bonds on the character and nature of communication that is permitted. The social structure also means that people, in most cases, do not have the opportunity to ask questions and accept information as given.

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In such cases, individuals may provide a link. The role of the orator or the village crier performed by the Turaga ni Koro in a Fijian village, for instance, serves as the link communicator between the administration or village elders and the people. This same hierarchical structure has rendered the chiefs or nobles out of reach of many people. Messages and information are also transmitted by word of mouth using runners or messengers. These messengers often travel by boat or walked if in the rural areas.

A traditional attitude that gives some understanding to the information seeking habits of the people is the belief that goodness or greatness is measured by what a person gives away and not what the person achieves. These affect the communication process directly as the concern will not be whether the information received was manipulated, changed or biased as the important point will be the source of the information. If the message or information is from the village chief, generally no questions are asked. If the message that is received directs the people to do communal work this will be accepted and the people will share the responsibilities and ensure that the task is achieved. Such communication style is alien to the West. This system forms part of the daily life of the people and it cannot be isolated from what seems to take precedence over the modern system: radio, television and newspapers.

The colonial era brought with it many changes and influences in the communication style and processes. Many of the Pacific nations were former British colonies and the British introduced telephones, transport and communication links, new political structures and a new philosophy of life and culture. The missionaries advocated these philosophies which were in many ways incompatible with the existing traditional cultures of the countries such as magic and communication with the ancestors. These new philosophies were supposed to modernize people but the new only clashed with the old in many cases and the old ways were forced to be abandoned.

With the introduction of the new communication systems the old was usurped in some areas. Television, radio and the newspapers have become popular voices of both the people and the government. The drums are gone and the messengers are not used often. Despite this, in many villages in Fiji for instance, the traditional system of communication still run side by side with the modern.

In the post-independent South Pacific, nations want development badly. While traditional customs and institutions have been given clear and distinct roles in politics in some countries in the region, for example Fiji and Tonga, this is not the case in some of the other countries in the South Pacific. Many of the countries are finding that
they are part of the big global community and that external forces affect their entire economic, social, cultural and political plans and development.

Overall, the South Pacific communication modes and information have affected the pace and extent of political and economic growth throughout Pacific history. While information has been relatively easy to access, it will be important to ensure that this remains and governments in the region do not place too many controls on access and use. In addition, oral traditions have and will continue to play an important role in disseminating information. With this potential, and as this study suggests, traditional information and communication techniques should be developed and made part of the national planning and development processes. In this regard it will be important that the countries seek, develop and use low cost communication systems that will ensure that the right messages reach the majority of the people in the rural areas.

The Case Study

As noted in chapters 1 and 2, and earlier in this chapter, democracy is a complex issue. Apart from the many complicated prerequisites required before democracy can begin to emerge, sustaining democracy is not simple also. In Fiji, the desirability of democracy is often plagued with anti-democracy sentiments and arguments. It would seem that for the system to develop, it requires certain components and the political will of the people to move towards democracy. In this study, the emergence of democracy will be presented in terms of the impact of access to information, communication and participation.

Before turning to Fiji as a case study two points should be noted. One, the theoretical framework presented in chapter 2 is broader than the specific application to the study of Fiji’s political system. Second, despite the definition used here of democracy and its emergence, it may be suggested that there are stages to this development. Nothing, however, in the framework and as we shall see in the case study, suggest that the development process follows a series of changes or stages in which democracy is the final outcome. The Fiji case study will show that the democratic process is erratic and difficult.

Information and communication concepts can be useful for the comparative study of political systems and their development, as well as being usefully applied to single-country analyses. While using this approach cannot cover all aspects of democracy,
nevertheless the information and communication approach gives some explanation as to the necessary conditions for the transition to democracy.

In using the framework devised in chapter 2, an important component will be the use of or the traditional and modern information and communication systems. In developing societies that do not have developed, information and communication systems to support a shift from traditional to modern political forms, the traditional information and communication systems can be used to promote more information access as well as be used as a development tool for government. Yet, there is a general lack of understanding of how precisely can traditional information systems play an effective role in the political process of a country. There seems to be a lack of appreciation at the global level, of the dependency between culture, information and communication. It would seem that while on one hand information and communication play a central role in influencing culture in a society, on the other, culture can limit access to information and mould the character of information and communication systems in the same society. Thus ultimately, the role of information and communication in each society must be examined on a country-by-country basis to understand more fully their effects on democracy. Hence the case study which is discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

CONCLUSION

It would seem that the global information and communication picture, that is the availability and use of the radio, television and circulation of daily newspapers, has improved in absolute terms for the developing countries, but not in comparison to terms developed countries which have reported greater increases relatively since 1978. From the penetration of the radio, newspapers and television into rural areas in developing countries, it would suggest that the people would have more information available to them and this should help them in "becoming informed".

There have also been expectations, in theory, concerning the benefits and value that can be obtained from information and communication in developing countries but what is happening in reality does not provide relief. This seems apparent in this review of the information and communication picture, that since the MacBride Report almost two decades ago; overall improvements have been negligible for the developing countries relative to the developed. The gap between the rich countries and the poor has remained in terms of information, communication, literacy, and income. In effect, in terms of what was examined in this chapter, it would seem that it is in the
Asian countries that development in the press, radio and television have been extensive.

The correlation between the Information Access Index and democracy, as well as the correlation between the Information Access Index and the Polyarchy Scale show the complexity of the relationship between information, communication and political development in particular. While information and communication are generally considered as tools for promoting political development as is discussed in chapter 2, it would seem that these tools may not be adequate to explain political developments taking place in such a varied world. However, a number of conclusions can be drawn from the result of the correlations made. One, that in democratic countries more information is available and accessible to the citizens. Two, information provided through the newspapers, radio and television is more extensive in developed countries as opposed to developing countries where information availability and use are low, and these directly affect people's political awareness and efficacy. Three, in countries where democratic principles are absent, free access to information is low.

A number of social scientists, Sussman and Schramm, for instance, as discussed in chapter 2, see new technology as bringing about many benefits, political and economic. Others see a clear link between income and the provision of information, between literacy and the use of available information, between government regulation and the provision of information to the people. However, overall, there seems no balance between the developed and developing countries in the provision, availability of information and use of the radio, newspapers and television. This situation seems to be further complicated by the fact that in many of these countries military rule and one party governments continue to exist controlling freedom of information and the media.

To be able to examine some of these complexities and analyse the information systems in a country and their impact on political change, a more detailed study at country level is necessary; hence the case study. The study of the information and communication systems and how they impact on political development in Fiji will allow me to examine more closely some of the complexities mentioned in this chapter regarding the exact relationship between information, communication and democracy.
CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY: FIJI: THE CASE STUDY

The MacBride Report had highlighted from the very beginning that any study on communications and information will face many difficulties and challenges. First, there was a need to achieve a balanced approach in a study that included a host of different factors with extreme differences. Second, it was necessary to remain objective in a field that would be better undertaken from a more subjective and micro-level approach. Third, it was important to maintain a non-partisan attitude in a highly political field of study. It was also clear that given a mandate to study the totality of communication problems in modern societies, the task of an all-encompassing review was great, and required various approaches to the problem. Information and data from a historical, economic, political and sociological perspective were collected. As much as the Commission had hoped to collect complete records on communication and information, it was a fact that comprehensive data collection was not possible, particularly from developing countries where information was either not available or unreliable. To ensure that information on all the regions of the world was covered, the Commission approached the challenge by conducting international and regional meetings, as well as obtaining data and qualitative reports from expert individuals in the subject field. The direct consultations on agreed central issues and themes were found to be invaluable as these further linked the study to wider socio-economic, cultural and political patterns. Unavoidably, the study finally concluded that information and communication problems assume a highly political character, and confirmed the importance of conducting studies at the micro-levels to understand more fully the nature and impact of these problems.

In this thesis, I first looked at the global situation of information and communication and conducted a comparative assessment of the intra-societal penetration of information and communication systems. I used data available from international sources. This process highlighted the complexities that arise when trying to ascertain the effects of information and communication on political change at the micro-level as highlighted in the MacBride Report. It was clear that to obtain some understanding of how information and communication impacted on politics and change in a country, a different approach or approaches from that undertaken for a global study was necessary. Hence to test the hypothesis that access to information is a political necessity for democracy, it was
necessary to obtain different types of information to assist in the analysis. Relying only on quantitative data was not sufficient. I collected both quantitative and qualitative data through different types of methods. I had decided from the beginning that I could not rely only on quantitative data, as this may not be sufficient in trying to draw any conclusions. My objective was to obtain as much relevant data as possible and a more flexible approach was seen to be suitable.

According to Bulmer it seems almost impossible to understand human society, in both its objective and subjective aspects, without an integrated methodology. Triangulation of methods was advocated which is "the attempt to strengthen the validity of empirical evidence in social science by reliance on more than one approach". A combination of methods mixing Western and traditional approaches was, therefore, used: in-depth interviews; participant observation; discussions in groups and library and archives research. The mixing of the two cultures approach proved not only very useful but was the best method to adopt in order to obtain an accurate assessment of the impact of new information technologies and communication on politics in a village community.

Another sociologist, Blumer had also proposed the flexible procedure. Blumer had emphasised a number of important points. A researcher should have first hand knowledge of the social and cultural life of the area studied. While noting the argument that researchers must maintain a detached and objective view over a study, Blumer maintained that a researcher must participate in the study being undertaken as nothing can substitute the familiarity a researcher may have with what is actually being studied. This argument has relevance for me as being a Fijian makes me part of the political and cultural life that is being studied. As a researcher, I become both the object and subject of the study at the same time. This situation obviously has its good and negative points. As a Fijian I am able to understand the different cultural considerations that may emerge when conducting research. I am also able to approach the Fijians in the village as

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2 Ibid. p. 28.
3 Ibid. p. 32
5 Ibid., p. 41. Blumer describes this flexible procedure as "to use any ethically allowable procedure that offers a likely possibility of getting a clearer picture of what is going on in the area of social life".
6 Ibid. p. 47.
well as in the urban more freely, understand their responses and relate to the people better than an outsider would. On the other hand, as the study may be conducted from a Fijian point of view it can be argued that the study loses its objectivity and neutrality. I argue, however, that conducting the study from a Fijian point of view enabled me to obtain reliable and extensive results and data, which gave a more accurate assessment.

This combination was important because at the national and rural village levels, I needed to find information that related to how people think about information, how they use information for making political decisions and what they feel and know about democracy. I had to find out not only people's background but also their psychological and behavioural patterns if they had greater access to and greater selectivity of information. I designed two questionnaires and an interview schedule to draw data and responses from the subjects. I planned to complete the questionnaire personally with many of the subjects, as I believed that this approach would give me more complete and valid results than sending the questionnaires out to be completed. For the rural village, an interview schedule was prepared and used to guide my discussions. I was also able to ask other questions as the need arose.

The analysis at the village level is a part of the second half of this study and includes an assessment of the status of information and communication in the rural village community. A review of information needs of the people, where to access the information desired and how the information was used to make decisions and the process of decision making itself are evaluated. The evaluation and review was conducted through village meetings or group discussions rather than interviews with individual members of the village.

PROCEDURES FOR IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

A useful way of collecting data on how Fijians access and use information for political purposes is to ask the subjects questions directly: what the Fijians think about the present political setup; democracy; their perception of information and communication; their perceptions of development; and how these affect their political decisions. The present study sought to collect data with in-depth interviews. The survey instruments were developed guided by the work of MacBride. The steps taken for planning the survey included: (1) development of the interview schedules; (2) selection of geographic areas in Fiji to be visited; (3) selection of academics and professionals to be interviewed; (4)
testing the interview schedules; (5) evaluation of the test; (6) implementation of the
survey; (7) and evaluation and analysis of survey data collected. Step (1) and (5) were
undertaken at the University of Queensland while the other steps were conducted in Fiji.

Three questionnaires and one interview schedule were developed initially. These were
pre-tested in an informal way by administering it to friends at the University of
Queensland and the University of the South Pacific and in the information industry in
Suva, Fiji. Two questionnaires and one interview schedule were eventually used and one
excluded. These instruments appear as Appendix II Schedules 1, 2 and 3. Appendix II
Schedule 4, based on the recommendations made by the MacBride Report was dropped,
its exclusion was due to views made by the selected group that tested the instrument. The
main criticism highlighted the lack of opportunity to make varied responses. It would
have been difficult not to agree with all the statements made. The general view I received
was that a more personal face-to-face interview with interviewees would be more
effective than sending out questionnaires. The instruments developed should be used as a
guide to interviews.

The interview Schedule 3 was translated into Fijian. Interview Schedule 1 was more
general and used for all people interviewed: those in the urban areas and peri-urban7
(hereafter referred to as urban areas); academics and professionals in the urban areas;
people in the rural village. Interview Schedule 1 was divided into five basic sections: I
Biographical Data; II Information Source; III Evaluation of Source; IV Political
Information; V General Questions. The section of the questionnaire that sought to
identify information sources was mainly concerned with the newspapers, radio and
television and the Fijian Provincial Administration. The question on the Fijian Provincial
Administration was used as a way of investigating how this structure affected the Fijian
in the urban areas. Accessibility and usefulness of the radio, television and newspapers as
sources of various types of information were examined and respondents asked to identify
the sections of the newspapers and magazines they found useful. For the radio, the
objective was to establish the number of radios held in the household, the frequency of
usage and the types of programmes preferred. The same was done for television.

7 Peri-urban here means the immediate areas surrounding the main urban centres as defined for the
census in Fiji.
A number of questions relating to political issues were asked towards the end of each interview session including questions on the work of the Fijian Provincial Administration, participation in decision making at the village level, and the use of other government departments to access information. These questions were relevant for the Fijian in the urban and rural areas. The interesting point about this section of the interview was that people had a great deal to say. Apart from the questions posed, the interview often touched on other important areas of use to this study. The data collected was mainly in the form of notes and taped interviews.

The second questionnaire schedule targeted the academics and professionals, and was prepared with questions based on the recommendations in the MacBride Report that was published as *Many Voices, One World* in 1980. Seven headings from this report were used focusing on the global information and communication problems and issues from a very broad political, economic, and cultural perspective. This schedule appears as Appendix II Schedule 2 and was designed to serve as a guide to interviews. This explains the inclusion of questions with multiple responses. The 100 people chosen to be interviewed were done through a self-selection process. This group comprised accountants, lawyers, office workers, academics, politicians, and journalists. Of the 100, I was able to interview 65 individuals. Thirty-five people who could not be interviewed completed questionnaires.

In this schedule information and views were sought for a number of key issues. These included: information needs; democratisation of information and communication; strengthening capacities; responsibility of journalists; the need for information communication policies; integrating information and communication into development; basic needs. The schedule was long and sometimes required a second visit to selected interviewees either because of time limitation or because new questions and issues arose.

A number of the issues discussed were difficult in the sense that they did not have a clear answer. However, the data collected made a number of clear statements that have been used in later chapters and also support the hypothesis of this thesis.

Interview Schedule 3 was an interview guide used for the rural village. This was a guide only so the people in the village were not required to complete any form. Details of the

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usefulness of this instrument can be found under the heading, Participation Observation in the Village Level later in this chapter. Discussions were conducted in Fijian. Where possible the discussion sessions were taped. Otherwise I took notes.

The first interviews were conducted in the urban areas. Interviews included mainly urban people of different races and gender in Suva, Korovou, Nausori, Tailevu, Sigatoka, Nadi, Navua, Lautoka, Suva, Labasa, Savusavu and Bu. (See Map 4.1) As my aim was to get a wide cross section of people interviewed in terms of ethnic group, social status, employment status, political orientations, I concentrated my interviews in the markets of these towns. The market is a meeting place for many men and women of different ethnic groups and different social standing. It is open six days a week.

The method of the interview was open and unstructured. Apart from using the instruments as a guide, the respondents were allowed the flexibility to discuss and address any areas they seemed concerned with. This method proved useful for all interviews. The interviews attempted to remain focused at all times particularly in the village discussions when often these slipped into social chitchat. However, this was expected and accepted as part of the interviewing method as it created a more relaxed and informal atmosphere for the interviews and discussions.

I undertook my fieldwork December 1992 to April 1993, in August 1993, January and June - July 1994, supplemented by other observations and experience during 1995 and 1996. Tape recording the interviews of the different events and activities was a major aspect of this research. I conducted 640 interviews in the urban areas averaging 30 to 40 minutes each. A total of 320 hours of recordings was collected. A number of interviews were not recorded for two reasons. First, I decided at the time of interview that the respondent did not seem central to the study. Two, the respondent did not wish to be recorded. In these cases notes were made during or after the interviews. These were in English and Fijian.

For the academic and professional group another 50 hours of taping was obtained. These were all in English. For the village, 20 hours of discussions at various meetings on the subject of this study and other general meetings of relevance were recorded. These interviews were conducted in Fijian only. I have transcribed and translated most of these but also worked from the Fijian version of the interviews. I also made accompanying notes describing the respondents, location, time, major issues brought up in the

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discussions and other matters that were relevant to the study. These provided additional
data that was helpful at the completion of the recording task.

Entry of the data collected was slow, as apart from developing and maintaining a
quantitative record, the volume of qualitative data was large. I had to sort through and
check these for errors and also follow up with a number of interviewees over statements
made.

Data Collected: An Explanation

The validity of the data obtained through in-depth interviews was reviewed carefully.
First, there was the matter of the interview questions where the respondent may have a
different interpretation of the question, and may provide responses that may not be valid.
My being personally available in the interviews and asking questions that may bring out
more clarity and discussion helped. For instance, a question on democracy was replaced
by a number of questions and discussion items on their experiences with government and
government's response to their needs.

There was also a difficulty with the subject of the questions themselves. Questioning
individuals on the government and the availability and accessibility of information during
a period of political uncertainty raised some uneasiness on the part of the respondents.
While close to 80% of those interviewed in the urban areas were free to say what they
wished; the remaining 20% did not feel free to speak about the Rabuka Government. This
did not affect the data in any significant way as this latter group did indicate some view
as to their stand regarding government and the free flow of information in the country.

Another difficulty related to the interviewing of public servants. Many of those I
interviewed requested to remain anonymous because in small communities it is possible
to guess who the respondent is once a report is available, without even providing names.
The information provided was therefore carefully reviewed before inclusion.

The problem of objectivity raised earlier did not pose great difficulties. While I did not
encounter any "threat" or "rejection" from people I approached to interview, sometimes I
could feel that the respondents held back a little for fear they may say the wrong thing. It
could be argued that my selection of interviewees in the urban areas might create a
difficulty, as this did not provide me with representative data. For a study of this kind, I
think it is not necessary to get a representative sample, nor do I think I could have easily
got such a sample based on a number of constraints I faced. The geographical interview
area was vast in terms of space and time. The incomplete nature and the inaccessibility of
complete electoral rolls, the vast changes in the population characteristics since the last
1986 census and the tremendous development taking place in information and
communication technology in the country, added to the difficulties in trying to work to
some established samples. According to Mark, random sampling is only one way of
constructing representative samples, and it does not always produce truly representative
samples. Although random sampling is usually the best way to get a representative
sample there is no guarantee that random sampling will produce a representative sample.
For instance, my sample of 640 interviewees is small compared to a total population of
over 700,000 people. The chances of my sample mirroring the activities researched here
would be much smaller than if my sample was large. Larger samples would be more
likely to be representative than small samples. It could be argued that only large samples
would allow the principle of randomization to work. It would be ideal to draw random
samples of sufficient size from our populations because these samples would be
representative. However, it is increasingly becoming accepted that faced with real-world
and research constraints such as little money, inaccessible or unwilling participants,
confidentiality of information and lack of information, other alternative sampling
procedures have to be developed to cope with these constraints.

The nonprobability sampling used in this study is defended on a number of grounds. The
data on the people I interviewed in the urban area form only a part of my study as the
larger part of the case study was to examine and analyse the use and impact of
information on politics by Fijians in a particular village. Furthermore, since the
interviews were conducted over a large area, it would have been difficult to manage a
large size sample from which I could make inferences on the wider population. These
interviews could be included as qualitative data. For the interviews with the academics
and professionals, I purposely handpicked the people I interviewed. The purpose was to
get the different views prevailing from people who were knowledgeable about the state of
the media and their impact in Fiji rather than to generalize to a population. To the extent
that the purpose of the study was to examine and analyse how and to what extent
information and communication impact on the political behaviour of the Fijians in a

pp. 103 - 108.
particular village and selected groups in the urban areas, the use of nonprobability sample
is appropriate. It is sufficiently large and includes a sufficient diversity of respondents.

A strong argument also was the use of cross-cultural research methodologies as suggested
by Bulmer. Bulmer suggested using alternative approaches as being more useful for a
study of this kind. Using the "chance meeting" interviews approach as I have done for the
urban area interviews for instance, where meeting people on the street to interview, was
also useful and provided reliable results.

Data on the Fijians

As the study focused on the Fijians and not Fiji society in general as discussed in chapter
1, the Fijians interviewed in the urban areas together with the in-depth participant
observation in one Fijian village provided sufficient data on the Fijians. The study looked
at Fijians as a group and not urban versus rural issues. Hence, the location of individual
Fijian was not necessarily a key factor. In addition, it should be noted that the rural and
urban Fijian population is transient. The traditional "Fijian way of life" that applies to the
Fijians in the rural areas applies also to those Fijians living in the urban areas though their
interpretation of concepts, experiences and views on matters and attitudes may differ. It
can be assumed that the Fijians in both the rural and urban areas are familiar with the
problems and situations in both environments. This was evident in the responses I
received to questions posed to those in the rural village as well as to those from the
village now living in the urban areas.

Of those interviewed in the urban areas 40% represented Fijians as compared to 36%
Indo-Fijians and 26% others. In addition, the urban category included people in the "peri-
urban" areas. This category, according to the 1986 census, includes people in the
periphery of the urban centres. Hence, in the urban category people from villages in urban
centres — Nausori, Suva, Lami, Korovou, Nadi and Lautoka — are included. These
numbers could fall in either the urban or rural category of Fijians interviewed. Since
having this separate category may cause confusion, a decision was made to include the
numbers in the urban category. Since I conducted the interviews personally, I was able to
identify, categorise and compare the responses to those of other Fijians in both the rural
village area researched and those in the urban areas.

Bulmer, (ed.) (1977), op. cit.
In reporting the findings in later chapters, particularly chapters 6 and 7, the study draws on both the quantitative and qualitative data of the urban Fijians and the qualitative data drawn from the Fijians in the rural village. In the responses it is interesting to note the similar responses held by urban and rural Fijians to a number of questions posed. This confirms the view that the Fijians, whether in the rural or urban areas, are aware and share the same traditional values in many ways. Thus the views of the rural people are represented and reported fairly. Inevitably there are few questions that draw different responses but these are reported in later chapters.

Demographics of People Interviewed

The breakdown in the number of interviews conducted in the urban areas of the first set of interviews is shown in Table 4.1. There were no deliberate plans to interview equal numbers of men or women. I interviewed people as the opportunity presented itself.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urban/Town</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Population(s)</th>
<th>% of Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ba</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10260</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labasa</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10376</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lautoka</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24804</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nadi</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>9734</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nausori</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8831</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nausori</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8831</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navua</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2775</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savusavu</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2872</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sigatoka</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2872</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suva</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4730</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korovou</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2872</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>165382</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:
(a) Total urban population as of the 31st August 1986 census of people 15 years and over. 15 years is considered the employable age.

Table 4.2 shows the total of males and females interviewed with the males constituting a slightly higher sample than the females with 52% (compared to 50.7% males represented in the 1986 census) and females 48% (compared to 49.3% females represented in the

It should be noted from the outset that all statistics given are to the nearest whole figure.
The breakdown of males and females in many of the urban areas showed almost equal numbers with Suva and Nadi showing a higher number of females than males as seen in Table 4.1. The fact that more women were interviewed in Suva and Nadi was not a deliberate plan. Most of the women interviewed were working, reflecting the need for many families now living in Suva and Nadi to work to meet the high costs of living in the urban areas. It could also mean that there are more women who are heads of families and find it necessary to work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number in Sample</th>
<th>% Interviewed</th>
<th>1986 Census Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the total number of people interviewed, 74% were married, and 26% not.

The percentage of people of Fijian, Indo-Fijian and those belonging to other ethnic groups is shown in Table 4.3. The figures indicate that it is in the urban areas that a mixture of different ethnic groups will be found as compared to rural island areas where Fijians dominate. For instance, the 40% of Fijians interviewed in urban areas can be compared to 46% estimate given in the 1986 census. For the Indo-Fijians the figure was 34% as opposed to the 49% reported in the 1986 census, and others 26% as opposed to 5% reported in the 1986 census. A reason for the over-representation of the others in the numbers interviewed could be explained that during the times of the interviews in the urban areas more people in this group were available, a "chance meeting".

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>% 1986 Census</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indo-Fijian</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other(a)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: (a) include Part-European, Chinese, and other Pacific Islanders.
Of those interviewed, 48% were between 20 and 44 years of age. In the 1986 census people in this age group made up 37% of the population. Those interviewed in the 45 to 54 age group comprised quite a high figure of 19% compared to 7%, the national figure in the 1986 census. This indicates the number of older people that are now living in the urban areas for work, as well as living with their working children and out of the village situation. Table 4.4 shows a breakdown of those interviewed by age group.

Table 4.4: Urban Areas: Age distribution in %

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>% Interviewed</th>
<th>1986 Urban Population %</th>
<th>1986 Rural Population %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-44</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55+</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No age given</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1995 estimates showed some degree of movement to the urban areas with the percentage of people now living in the urban area 40.7% and rural area 59.3%. As noted earlier, there are a number of reasons for moving to the urban areas. For Levukana village, the three main reasons for moving are for schooling, old age and health.

The educational attainment of the people interviewed differs considerably. Of the people interviewed, 45%, reached only class 8, and had not gone to secondary school. These people were mainly in the over 39 years age group. The next group comprising 25% were people who had completed secondary education. The next figure of 15% represented people interviewed who had no education. Those people who were interviewed and had tertiary or technical education totalled only 14%.

The percentage of unemployed people in the urban area interviewed was 43% or 277 people. This represents a high number. It included people who did not have a steady income and did not work full time at a job. A number worked selling small items on the

20 Fiji Bureau of Statistics, (1988), op. cit, p. 4. This figure is for 1986.
roadside or markets and did not see this as a job. In comparison, the 1992 unemployment figure for Fiji was 67%. Of the 33% employed, 21% included unpaid employment, homeworkers and part time farmers, and only 12% in continuous paid employment. Of those interviewed in the urban areas, 52% were employed as shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Urban Areas: Employment status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment status</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Male%</th>
<th>Female%</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>640</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In interviews conducted with academics and professional people in the urban areas, I selected 100 people based on their knowledge of the state of information and communication in Fiji, and their availability to be interviewed. They were all employed. See Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: Academics and Professionals: Occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number interviewed</th>
<th>Number completing questionnaires only</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architect</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadcaster</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business person</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Doctor</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musician</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politician</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publisher</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantity Surveyor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Minister</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number paid employment in 1992 was 249,000. Majority of people is in unpaid employment or sold in markets. 92,480 people were in continuous paid employment. Opportunities for Growth: Policies and Strategies for Fiji in the Medium Term. (1993), Suva: Government of the Republic of Fiji.
The number of males interviewed totalled 40% and 60% female. Seventy per cent of the people interviewed were in the age group, 25 to 54.

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION IN THE VILLAGE

Through discussions conducted in small groups it was able to observe actions and attitudes of individuals when asked specific and general questions relating to the interview schedule. In preliminary enquiries, it was apparent that the people in the village were more comfortable in discussing matters together rather than individually. This format did not allow for the collection of data that could be analysed quantitatively. However, the response as a group was taken to be indicative of what the village population felt about many of the questions that were raised. A consensus on the questions and the points raised in discussions are important to the whole study in terms of trying to establish some differences of opinion.

The spontaneous and detailed responses from individuals proved very useful as detailed information on personalities, their feelings, beliefs and views on political matters were publicly discussed. The open discussions were a source of inspiration and interest, and the ideas put forward were encouraging. There were no inhibitions or bias. It was possible to interact with the villagers and become a participant, observer and researcher. In reviewing the events and discussions, I do not feel that there was a problem posed for me. In fact, the data collected proved very useful and assisted in answering some of the questions relating to the people's views on democracy, the "Fijian way of life", the importance of information and communication, and ethnic issues.

Method: Village Level

Vanuabalavu, Lau, is 150 nautical miles from Suva, the capital city of Fiji. The village of Levukana is on Vanuabalavu, and is part of the district of Lomaloma. See Map 4.2. The other district on Vanuabalavu is Mualevu. The main village in the district Lomaloma is Lomaloma. The other villages that make up Lomaloma include Narocivo, Susui, Dakuilomaloma, Tuvuca, Uruone, Malata, and Mago. The village of Levukana has five clans. These are Soso, Vatu, Namasi, Buca, and Saukalou. There are about thirty households in Levukana. The number of people living in the village varies due to the mobility of the villagers.
The population was 135 at the time of my visit in 1992 and this number varied between 135 and 129 during my visits in 1993-1995. The number comprised men, women and children with ages ranging mainly between 1 to 14 and 35 and over. There were a few people between the ages 15 to 34. The number of people who attended the meetings varied, aging from 18 years and over. They also included adults and children, male and female living in the village. Those who had left the village were not counted. Those from the village who reside outside the village as independent farmers, galala, were not counted as part of the village population. Answers to questions raised concerning income, absence from the village, length of working time in the garden, use of information sources and the type of information source were often dependent on the villager's memory. No records are available in the village regarding time spent in the gardens and in other activities.

Most of the villagers are subsistence farmers. A number are involved in the fishing industry but on a small scale selling fish locally. A few women are recruited to work in the small hotel business recently established. It is inevitable that change will occur. Such change would mean a move from communalism to individualism where people become concerned with their own personal welfare.

Those living in the village depend on government for assistance but dependence of village people on those who have now moved to live and work in urban areas is great and very little has been documented on this. Since the 1987 coups, the links between the rural village and those from the village living in the urban areas are becoming increasingly strong. Assistance has been necessary with communal village projects, which may include for example, the electrification of the village, improved water supply and sanitation, smokeless stoves in kitchens, repairing of homes and churches and education. While those in the urban area help, questions are being raised by many from the village now living in the urban areas as to the level of assistance the government gives to the village. A number of people I interviewed were of the view that the government should supply all villages with the basic amenities of water, sanitation and electricity. Villages themselves often meet these developments; the money obtained being raised from fundraising activities with some percentage of assistance from the government. Hence, within the village, there are some who may be passive, and others who may be active. Many rely on the central Fijian administration and institutions, accepting information, instruction and the limited assistance made available to the village. On the other hand, there are those who are active, and may be able to move from depending too much on
government and developing their own way in terms of small village mode production, improved water supply and housing, for instance.

For the village, the main source of information is in the spoken word. My main method of obtaining information on the impact of information and communication on the political life of the Fijians at the village level was to record people's conversation with me, guided by questions I raised with them. I urged the people to talk and give me all the information they could about their lives, their views on information, communication and the government, their experiences and also stories and accounts that were relevant. Questions on development were directed at them. Issues pertaining to information and communication with them as a group, either together as a village community, separate women's group, or village elders were discussed. After all, the Fijians do not produce written accounts that might contain the answers to questions posed. The use of sources of tradition and local knowledge in relation to their written counterparts as a method of research is very useful particularly when trying to investigate the more cultural concerns covered in this study. The use of this methodology is to me logical, justified and valid. The words of the people thus become the key form of expression.16

Newspapers get flown into Vanuabalavu when the plane flies, sometimes once a week and other times twice or three times a week. Many households, 85%, have a radio. Television is not available. Levukana enjoys an efficient telephone system. Transportation to Vanuabalavu is by plane or boat. Unfortunately, boats travelling to Vanuabalavu are rare during the year except for the Christmas holiday when more frequent trips are made due to people on Viti Levu travelling to the village for Christmas.

The discussions held with professionals and academics centred on a number of common issues raised with the first two groups: urban dwellers and professionals and academics. The purpose of having discussions with the Fijians in the village was to collect qualitative

16 A number of scholars, for example Goody, J. (1977), *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; and Ong, W. (1971), *Rhetoric, Romance and Technology*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, have raised the increasing importance of oral studies and have gone further and theorized that the emergence of writing was not good and is associated with the growth of an oppressive state. Such arguments have not removed the centrality of writing in any study. The spoken word may be different from the written word but it is nevertheless important. For instance, we cannot imagine human existence without spoken words. Experience, information and knowledge are passed from person to person through words. While words are important there are nevertheless other forms of nonverbal forms of communication. For this study, however, talking to the people in the village, as a group and at community meetings formed a very productive method of gaining an insight into the impact of information and communication on political life.
data on a number of issues. It was also necessary to find out where they obtained information and the source of this information. Another important element was to find out how the people viewed information and communication and their understanding of the role of information and communication in the democratic process.

As far as information and communication are concerned, the information and communication process and how these concepts are perceived have not been important considerations in the Fijian village, nor have they been researched in Fiji. In many villages, the roles of meetings and village crier have been taken for granted. The people receive information through the Fijian Provincial Administration and its network and the information is generally accepted as the "truth". The people also receive information through other channels and forms of communication but generally, information through these sources, unless it is an announcement from government or the Fijian administration, will not be taken very seriously. These issues are discussed later in chapters 5, 6 and 7.

The process of political change and developing an informed Fijian society is a complex issue. In later chapters, it is argued that political decisions do not come about with the availability of information alone through the radio, newspapers or meetings and other individuals travelling in and out of the village. The central Fijian administration and culture are active in bringing about change or containing the people in the villages and directing and influencing the Fijians in the urban areas.

LIBRARY, ARCHIVES AND OTHER RESEARCH

The Fiji National Archives, the University of the South Pacific Library and the Library of the University of Queensland provided me with much of the material I required for my study. At the National Archives I was able to access selected numbers of the Great Council of Chiefs Minutes of Meetings, Annual Reports of the Fijian Affairs Board and contemporary reports of various government departments and statutory authorities. Some of the earlier material especially that covering the Great Council of Chiefs meetings was not accessible either because they were classified or not available for various reasons. The Pacific Collection of University of the South Pacific Library provided me with the bulk of the necessary material I needed including reports, research papers, historical documents and Fiji Bureau of Statistics annual publications. I was also able to go through the issues of the Fiji Times, the Fiji Sun, the Daily Post and Na Mata. The Periodicals
Collection of the University of the South Pacific Library and the University of Queensland provided me with the articles referred to in this study.

The other sites I visited and had useful discussions on the subject of information access and control, telecommunications, policy issues and politics included the University of Pittsburgh, Queensland University of Technology, The University of Hawaii, The Fijian Affairs Board office and the Fiji Broadcasting Commission.

Problems with the Availability of Material and Information

While I endeavoured to obtain as much background material as possible on the subject because of an overall lack of detailed research and literature on the history, development and impact of information and communication in Fiji in all disciplines especially politics, I had to rely heavily on my interview material and discussions with key informants. In addition, because I was conducting my interviews during a period of political uncertainty, it was not easy to get the interviews scheduled as planned. Furthermore, many people I interviewed preferred confidentiality. However, with the approval of the interviewee, I have provided names when necessary within the text of this thesis.
Map 4.2: Map of Lau

Correlation theory suggests that there are connections between economics and politics. This argument has its basis mainly on experiences in Europe, where capitalism and democracy had their beginnings and were closely interrelated. Perceiving any correlation between information and democracy in any country presents a number of complexities. One of the main difficulties is that there seems to be no conclusive evidence that there is an evolution of a relationship between information and democracy, although a correlation is being suggested as discussed in chapters 2 and 3.

These complexities relate to uncertainties as to the sources and effects of information and communication on political change within a country or at the national or micro level. This change is where the population in a country moves from traditional to modern ways of life; going through changes in expectations, needs, roles, experiences, associates, and different ways of doing things. Deutsch referred to this collection of changes as social mobilization and defined it as "the process in which major clusters of old social, economic, and psychological commitments are eroded or broken and people become available for new patterns of socialization and behaviour". This process of social mobilization expands the people's political awareness that affects the political practices and way of life of the people of a country.

In this chapter I will examine the status of information, communication and democracy in Fiji. In doing this, I will chart the transition to democracy in Fiji since 1970, and the state of information and communication during the different periods in Fiji's post-independence history. In the examination, I will refer to aspects of the state of information and communication during the British colonial era from 1874 to 1970, as logic suggests that the British institutions would have been influential in shaping the information and communication structure of Fiji today.

The particular questions that this chapter will seek to answer are: What has been the relationship between information, communication and democracy in the different periods in Fiji's history? Can we attribute the impact of information as a likely factor
causing political change, moving the country towards democracy? What socio-political constraints would there be against greater access?

First, however, the ethnic composition of the country will be discussed, and this will be followed by a discussion of the effects of colonial rule on the political environment.

ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF FIJI

There are 320 islands of varying sizes in Fiji. Of this number, 150 are permanently inhabited. These islands lie in the Southwest Pacific between 15 and 22 degrees south latitude and between 175 degrees east and 177 degrees west longitude and just to the west of the international dateline. See Map 4.1. The total land area is 18,272 square km. with the two largest and main islands of Viti Levu (10,390 sq. km.) and Vanua Levu (5,538 sq. km.) comprising 87% of the land area of Fiji. Other major islands are Ovalau, Taveuni, Kadavu and Beqa. There are fourteen provinces and elections are largely based on these divisions.

There are two main ethnic groups in Fiji: the Fijians and the Indo-Fijians. In December 1992, official estimates put the total population of Fiji at 746,3263 of which 48.7% were Indo-Fijians and 46% Fijians. The Fijians are mainly Melanesians, with the eastern regions of the country more Polynesian in racial and cultural characteristics as a result of invasions by the Tongans in the pre-colonial period.4 While Fijian society is very structured, the eastern islands of Fiji are strongly hierarchical and observe strong customs and traditions.

There are a variety of Fijian dialects with Bauan being predominant. However, English is the official language of the country.

In 1879 the Indo-Fijians were brought into the country to work the sugarcane fields. This ended in 1916 resulting in the flow of about 2,000 immigrants a year. The Indo-Fijians are mostly Hindus, but there are also Muslims, Sikhs and Christians.

The other ethnic groups include European, part-Europeans, Chinese, and other islanders, and are collectively called "General Electors". These other races make up 5.3% of the population.

In 1995 the Bureau of Statistics produced the unofficial population estimates placing Fijians 403,288 or 50.7% of the total population; Indo-Fijians 346,523 or 43.5%; and others 46,267 or 5.8%. In 1986, prior to the coups, the largest component in the population was the Indo-Fijians with 349,320 population or 48.7% of the total population of the country, Fijians with 46% and "other" with 5.3%. The difference in the 1992 population numbers for the two major components of Indo-Fijian and Fijian has been due largely to emigration between 1988 and 1992. Internal migration and migration abroad have been high. During the pre-coup period, the migration abroad estimate was 2640 per annum. These numbers increased to 5670 per annum for three years immediately after the 1987 coups. The rates of emigration peaked in 1990 with 487 residents leaving each month. By 1992 this rate had fallen back to about 390 each month. During 1988 to 1992 over 22,000 Fiji citizens of whom more than 80% were Indo-Fijians, left the country. In 1995 the number of people who migrated totalled 4931 persons. If political conditions remain uncertain, Fiji's constitutional crisis not resolved, and the economy maintains its current low growth, emigration is likely to continue at the 1995 rate at least, or higher.

Of the three categories of internal mobility in 1986 - rural to urban, urban to urban, and urban to rural - rural to urban migration was a high 55% of the total reported migrants. The other two categories comprised 25% and 20% respectively. The level of overall mobility internally in Fiji in 1985 was 41%, representing people who were rural born and had moved to urban areas. In 1986 the estimated number of people living in the urban areas was 38.7% as opposed to 61.3% living in the rural areas. In 1995 the estimate for internal migration as percentage of people now living in the urban area was 40.7% and rural area 59.3%.

The distribution of the Fijians by provinces in the 1986 census showed that there were distinct geographical variations of the population in Fiji. Many Fijians reside in the

7 Ibid., p. 22.
8 Ibid. Of this estimate 4463 were Indo-Fijians, 285 Fijians and 183 others.
10 Latest figures available on migration.
rural areas, for example Ba and Naitasiri. See Table 5.1. Maritime provinces such as Kadavu, Lau and Lomaiviti, and those that did not have an urban area had high percentages of Fijians.

Table 5.1: Population including percentage distribution by province and ethnic origin 1976 - 1986

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western Division</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ba</td>
<td>4328</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>52926</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>110461</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>137051</td>
<td>39.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nadrau/Navosa</td>
<td>20903</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>25706</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>25877</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>28423</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ra</td>
<td>12215</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>16751</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>13000</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>14730</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Division</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serua</td>
<td>5518</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>6815</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2170</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>5775</td>
<td>1.7</td>
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<td>Namosoi</td>
<td>3072</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>4440</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>0.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taveuni</td>
<td>23318</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>27844</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>15742</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>15772</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naitasiri</td>
<td>31088</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>49713</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>30836</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>44889</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Division</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kadavu</td>
<td>5422</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>9630</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lomaiviti</td>
<td>10393</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>14393</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>654</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lau</td>
<td>14419</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>13389</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>1803</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>-1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rotuma</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>1344</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17646</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>110461</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>110461</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:
The ethnic grouping, "Indians" is used in the 1986 census report instead of "Indo-Fijians".

A high percentage of Fijians live in the rural areas engaged in semi-subsistence village agriculture, fishing and craft. Village agriculture tends to be mixed subsistence and small-scale commercial agriculture. The number of Fijians involved in commercial agriculture has been declining since the 1970s. Hailey established that despite opportunities and support given to Fijians to take part in business, few Fijians have done well in the private sector. For the Indo-Fijians, commercial agriculture,

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13 In 1986 the percentage of Fijians living in the rural areas was 67.3% and Indians 58.9%.
mainly sugar cane farming, was and is still the predominant type of agricultural production throughout the 1970s and into the 1990s. A high percentage of Indo-Fijians live in the urban areas. In 1986 41.4% of Indo-Fijians lived in the urban areas as compared to 32.7% Fijians. Also, more Indo-Fijians than Fijians worked in manufacturing, wholesale, construction, retail trade and transport while more Fijians than Indo-Fijians worked in agriculture, forestry and the fishing sectors.\textsuperscript{16}

There were a number of regions that absorbed a large number of migrants while others lost a large number of people. For instance, Rewa accounted for 29% of out-migration and 20% in-migration, Ba recorded 17% out-migration and 14% in-migration. A number of provinces recorded more migrants, for example Naitaisi, with 28% against a loss of 9%, and Serua with 3% against a loss of 2%. The provinces in outer islands are losing more people. For example in Lau, more than 40% of the people born there were not living there at the time of the census in 1986. It is useful to learn that immigration is clearly to provinces with urban areas, for example Rewa province which has the town of Nausori and city of Suva.

The population is concentrated on Viti and Vanua Levu. The island of Viti Levu is the focus of the main economic activities with many of the urban centres. The Western Division is the major sugar growing area, the location of the goldmine in Vatukoula, the headquarters of the national airline, Air Pacific, and the area where tourism and major hotels are concentrated. Also on Viti Levu are the major manufacturing industries and small scale farming for example ginger and rice. It is on Viti Levu that much of the development in information technology and telecommunication is taking place responding to the needs of government, businesses and educational institutions.

The Economy

Fiji's economy with an estimate per capita GNP in 1996 was F$1,874.\textsuperscript{17} This places it way ahead of many Third World countries, and is perhaps the most developed economy in the South Pacific. Its economy, historically, has been heavily dependent on the sugar industry. Now tourism, although a fragile business, is featuring high in Fiji's economy. Both industries are subject to external influences beyond the control

\textsuperscript{16} For example 55.4% Fijians as opposed to 35.1% Indo-Fijians worked in the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector; 9.8% Indo-Fijians worked in manufacturing as opposed to 4.9% Fijians; 13.5% Indo-Fijians are employed in wholesale and retail trade as against 7.5% Fijians. Fiji, Bureau of Statistics, (1988), op. cit., p. 133.

\textsuperscript{17} Price Waterhouse. (1996), \textit{1997 Fiji Budget Commentary}. Suva: Price Waterhouse, p. 1. Budget Address delivered 7th November 1996 by the Minister of Finance, Mr. Berenado Vunibobo. F$1=AUS$0.96. Note the drop in GNP for Fiji. In 1993 it was US$2,130.
of government and the country. For instance, hurricanes can damage crops and plantations, and discourage visitors from visiting Fiji. Earnings from tourism are also affected by the economic conditions in the visitors' countries. Investor confidence is still low, and the government is not able to compete in the outside market for some of its products. Generally, recent months have seen a decline in the quality of merchandise that has entered the market. Political uncertainty has been given as a major reason for such negative growth in the economic sector.  

Other resources include gold and fisheries. In 1992 the value of fish exports amounted to F$39.1 million, of which F$28.7 million was in canned fish making this the country's fourth largest export after sugar, garments and gold.  

In his 1996 Budget Address in Parliament, the Minister of Finance, Berenado Vunibobo, highlighted a number of points that indicated that the economy was not well. For instance: there would be an injection of $133.3 million to clear up the bad debt mess at the National Bank of Fiji which came to light in June 1996; expected economic growth would be 3.2% compared to 4.4% in 1996; unemployment is projected to be 6% for 1996 over 5.8% in 1995; gross budget deficit would be $282.2 million or 10.5% of GDP compared to $241.5 million or 9.6% in 1996; total government debt would be $1,386.7 million or 51.7% of GDP compared to $1,167.1 million or 46.2% of GDP in 1996. Much of the poor state of the economy is blamed on the poor management by the government. According to an economist, now a private consultant and former permanent secretary for Commerce and Industry, Navi Naisoro,  

This country doesn't know where it's going. We're just drifting along without any sense of direction...The problem is management. I'm uncertain about what government's vision is because government's different departments are all doing their own thing.  

Naisoro puts a large part of the blame on the lack of good leadership and decisive action to handle the problems related to the economy.  

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20 In the 1996 budget $80 million was injected towards this crisis.  
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Focusing on the Fijians, the 1986 Census shows that of the total Fijian population, 52.9% were economically active. A high percentage of Fijians - 55% of the total population worked in the agriculture, forestry and marine sector. Those Fijians living in the rural areas are mainly involved in non-capitalist production, but many are in small subsistence farming and sell in the markets for local and urban consumption. There was also a growing number of Fijians in the informal sector concerned with agricultural production. The village production system is essentially domestic in scope, and operates at a very low monetary level. At the village level communal use of labour for agriculture production and other village projects is common. In the Eastern division village production farms dominate as compared to the Western and Central Divisions where labour is involved in more non-village agriculture relating to sugar as well as other smaller enterprises.

A high percentage of Fijians work as civil servants in salaried government jobs. The 1986 census the figure given for this category of worker was 16.1% compared to 14.9% Indo-Fijians.

Education and Literacy

It has been necessary to look at the state of the education system as an aspect of access and use of information and communication for political purposes. As discussed in chapter 2, a better educated society would create better awareness and use of information by the people for development purposes with limited chances of being manipulated.

Education in Fiji has been strongly influenced by the churches since the arrival of the Methodist Missionary Society in 1835. While the policy was to teach the Fijians in the vernacular, the beginning of the indentured Indian labourers in 1879 prompted the government to establish primary schools, introduce compulsory education for all, and begin teaching in English. These were recommendations of the 1909 Education Commission which were implemented in 1916 except for the teaching in English which came into effect after another Education Commission in 1926. The colonial government supported the teaching in English so as to raise the standard of education in Fiji, and this was seen as a binding force of the different races. In 1969 a further

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23 This is a count of people 15 years and over who had worked for the production of economic goods sometime the previous week before the census was taken in 1986. The production of goods may be the market, for barter or for personal consumption. It also included unemployed people who are actively looking for work. Fiji Bureau of Statistics, (1988), op. cit., pp. 120 - 121.


Education Commission recommended that there be more English taught in schools. Today, more time is allocated to the teaching of English and in English than in the vernacular. While the major vernaculars - Fijian, Hindi and Urdu - have been introduced in the curricula in the 1980s and students are taught in the vernacular in the first three years of school, attitudes obtained from interviewing people in the urban areas indicated that English is more valued for practical reasons. Textbooks, newspapers and radio programmes are in English, instruction in the classroom is in English and examinations are in English.

The schools are operated by local school committees, and are usually ethnically based or uniracial. There is no government policy of racial segregation or integration in the schools but the schools continue to remain segregated. The two teachers unions are divided by race and there seems to be no pressure to merge these two professional organisations. In 1997 of the 680 primary schools the Ministry of Education operates 14. School committees administer the remainder. Of the total secondary schools 92% are committee owned and 8% government. Over 75 schools are administered and financed by churches and religious organisations. In 1997 there are 78,143 Fijians in primary schools compared to 58,177 Indo-Fijians. In the secondary schools there are 33,056 Fijians and 33,479 Indo-Fijians. Europeans, Chinese and others make up a small percentage of the numbers in both primary and secondary schools. Children start school at the age of 6 years. Schooling is, however, not compulsory. The government plans to make education compulsory and free up to Form 6 in the near future. Currently schooling is free from class 1 (age 6) to form 3 (first year secondary).

Tertiary education can be taken up at the University of the South Pacific based in Suva, the Fiji School of Medicine, the Fiji Institute of Technology, Ba Technical College and the Fiji College of Advanced Education, Pacific Theological College and Pacific Regional Seminary. There are a number of private colleges offering extension programmes in various fields. A number of countries award scholarships to students directly or through the government.

MacQuail has highlighted the media as having great potential for education. The broadcast media can support or extend the range of formal educational channels, and

television being used for informal, continuing education. This would “create a more generally informed society for the purpose of participant democracy and creating a more socially responsible society”\textsuperscript{29} The question that is posed here is “how, and to what extent, Fijians use the newspapers, radio and television to educate? Little support has been given by the government to use these communication media as an education tool as education is done in the classroom and is the responsibility of teachers and lecturers. There are also other difficulties: lack of skilled people to manage such concerns; lack of appropriate methods of teaching and incorporating media studies in the curricula; lack of finance and vision to get the support needed for media literacy; lack of understanding of the role of the media in education. The media were used specifically to distribute news and information. The potential as an education medium is still far from being realised.

Education is seen as the means of maintaining the occupational status of the population as well as developing a more informed and politically active society. There is no perception that education is only for the higher social group creating barriers to the low-income group. Given the facilities available and the various religious, government and other organizations that are involved in education, these have ensured that the population has equal access to opportunities for education.

\textbf{Adult Literacy}

The definition of literacy used to establish the literacy level in Fiji in the census over the past thirty years is that all persons who have completed four or more years of primary education are considered literate. Based on this definition the literacy rate of Fijis in 1986 is 87\%\textsuperscript{30} This can be compared to 1966 where the rate was 72\% and in 1976 where it was 79\%. According to the 1986 census report, 93\% of Fijians as opposed to 80\% of Indo-Fijians were literate; 90\% males as opposed to 84\% females were literate; 92\% Fijian females were literate as compared to 74\% Indo-Fijian females.

From the 1986 census report it is clear that more people in the younger age groups were literate. The adult literacy rate declines with the increase in age. For the Fijians except for the older population aged 50 years and above, more than 93\% of the population in the other age groups were literate. More than 92\% of the Indo-Fijian


population in the age groups 15 to 29 were literate. For the age group of 50 years and above more Fijians were literate than the Indo-Fijians in 1986. For each age group, males have higher literacy rates than females.

The uses of literacy are many. It makes possible the acquisition of information as process, as thing and as knowledge. This leads to a number of developments: new needs and views on life by the people; possibility of religious, social, economic and political change; individual Fijians become more educated and informed of what is happening in government and in society in general. The Fijian has been able to accept the knowledge available, and to restructure and reformulate the perception of the organisation of Fijian society and culture. By the early 20th century, as France pointed out, the culture that the Fijians called their own, were a mixture of the traditional and the new elements.

Literacy has enabled many Fijians to become more informed. They read the newspapers and listen to the radio, and make their own decisions on political and matters of national interest which may bring about structural changes within the Fijian society, the desire for and acquisition of knowledge, and further change in society. Despite these developments, the usefulness of literacy in political participation at the rural level, however, remains unclear and has raised the question as to what extent culture and traditional institution influence and control political participation of the people. This will be discussed in more detail in chapters 6 and 7. Generally, and overall, literacy, as argued by Clammer, is the "vehicle for the introduction of a new belief system" and is closely connected to knowledge, power and decision making.

Urbanisation

A look at the urban characteristics of Fiji should provide a wider insight into the spatial pattern of inequalities in Fiji. The urban population of Fiji as a percentage of the total population increased from 33.4% in 1966 to 38.7% in 1986. This means that in 1986 about four to five out of ten people lived in designated urban areas. While the growth in urban population in the 1966 to 1976 period was rapid, 16.3% in 1966 to 37.2% in 1976, increase in the years 1976 to 1986 had been steady. The projected

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32 Clammer, (1976), op. cit., p. 201.
growth up to the year 2011 is expected to be in line with 1986 figures. This shift in population has reflected a shift from agriculture to manufacturing industries.

Over 22% of the population is concentrated around the capital Suva, Nausori and Korovou in the eastern area and around the western towns of Nadi, Lautoka, Ba Sigatoka and Labasa and Savusavu on Vanua Levu. The people interviewed in this study are from these urban centres. In total, about 35% of the population live in, or in proximity, to urban areas. In 1980, the latest adult population figure available of 20 years or over was 52%. This total adult population is expected to take part in voting and choosing leaders although voting is not compulsory.

Since 1946 there have been four major trends in urbanisation. First, many Fijians are moving from the rural provinces to the urban areas. Second, many people are moving to the major centres where they hope to find employment. Centres such as Suva, Nausori, Nadi and Lautoka record high population growth. Third, urban centres are still concentrated on the main islands of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu. Fourth, new businesses and trade have opened up in these centres increasing the flow of people to these centres particularly in Nadi, Ba, Sigatoka and Suva.

In chapters 2 and 3 it was noted that the correlation between urbanisation, literacy and development was made by such scholars as Lerner. Lerner argued that higher urbanisation creates higher educational levels in both rural and urban areas. This eventually led to political participation and modernization. In developing countries, the rise of education levels is produced by the efficiency of education centres in urban areas to educate the population. Today, educated people largely reside in the urban areas as they can secure jobs here. While education is associated with higher occupational levels than lower, this tends to develop a stratified society correlating education, occupation and social rank in the urban areas more so than in the rural areas.

Politics of the land

Fiji's land tenure system established under the Native Land Commission of 1912 - 1917 is complex. Today, the Native Land Trust Board (NLTB) controls all native

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35 Voting eligibility is 21 years of age. As census statistics do not separate specifically for 21 years, it was not possible to give an accurate figure for the adults eligible to vote. This figure of 52% includes adults 20 years and over. Fiji, Bureau of Statistics. (1992), Current Economic Statistics, October 1992, Suva: Fiji Government, p. 4.

36 Voting will be compulsory under the new 1999 Constitution.
Under the Fiji Laws Chapter 134: Native Land Trust Act, the management of native land was assigned to the NLTB. The NLTB regulates the use of the land, protects the interests of the landowners by reserving sufficient land for their needs, provides suitable land for settlement and continues to promote new business ventures for the landowners.

Apart from the laws directly relating to Fijian Affairs there is legislation providing for land such as the Agricultural Landlord and Tenants Act (ALTA) of 1977. The Act specifies the period, not more than thirty years, after which native lands on lease revert back to the communal owners, if they wish to farm it. Leases have come up for renewal in early and late 1997 and the government has taken a long time in deciding what action to take on the matter. A report with recommendations on ALTA was submitted to Cabinet in November 1996 for discussion and approval. This is not a public document. In 1997, of the 45 native land leases to be considered for renewal under ALTA, 21 have been renewed with 9 leases cancelled with land reverting back to the Fijian landowners. Of the 9, new leases will be issued to 5 sitting tenants. Of the remaining 15 leases, the landowners have agreed to grant new leases on the house site with sufficient land for subsistence farming. The remaining land is to revert back to the original Fijian owners.

The question of other leases not being renewed could be a source of instability in Fiji. The NLTB had indicated that there are 11,000 native leases under ALTA. Of these 2000 have had their leases renewed. Tenants whose leases will not be renewed would be resettled on State or Crown land. The government is now looking at various fair options for the remaining ALTA leases and the resettlement of displaced tenants.

37 Altogether there are 1,833,030 hectares managed by the NLTB. Pacific Islands Yearbook. (1994), Suva: Fiji Times, p, 164. More on land issues is discussed in chapter 7.
38 Land has always been a controversial issue throughout Fiji's history. Hence, a decision by Cabinet in December 1996 to sell leases on State land involving 67,000 hectares raise many questions relating to the long term interests of the Fijians. Government has given two main reasons to sell the land: one being the high costs involved in administering the leases and two, to give current tenants greater security to tenure and the incentive to make more productive use of the land. This sale will involve 16,000 leases of State land. Overall, it is costing Government three million dollars to administer the leases while rental income is two million dollars. The land will be offered for sale on a freehold basis. The Fiji Times, Wednesday December 4, 1996, p. 1. Before sales are implemented Government has ordered a proper valuation of all leases be undertaken. This whole issue of land sales has drawn wide scale criticism from Fijians and other citizens in Fiji.
40 Originally Agricultural Landlord and Tenants Ordinance of 1967 (ALTO).
42 Ibid.
Telecommunications

Fiji Posts and Telecommunications Limited (FPTL) had introduced digital technology in 1992 to improve quality of service to its users. The total number of working lines connected to digital exchanges by the end of 1994 was an estimated 54,000. In July 1st 1996 when the separation of posts and telecommunication became official, Fiji Telecom had increased its operating working lines to over 88,000. Telecom's 5-year Telecom Business Plan for 1996 - 2000 projects a total working lines of 127,700 by the year 2000. A large number of these lines will be for the rural areas.

International Subscriber Dialling (ISD) has increased by 53 per cent a year. The domestic telephone network in 1986 was 42,610 telephones compared to 22,738 telephones in 1977. There has been a 72 per cent growth in working lines. At the global level, Fiji's earth station carries 75 per cent of its international telephone, telex, facsimile and data traffic. It is backed by international communication links. At the regional level there exist a number of networks that Fiji can access. Intelsat has dominated satellite communications in the South Pacific region. Soon there will be Asia Sat., Panam Sat., Unicom and a few other operators. Much of this new satellite development will be used for television and broadcasting.

Supplying a rural telecommunication service that will support voice and data transmission is a continuing aim of Fiji Telecom but this is often complicated and expensive. There are problems of distance, rugged terrain and lack of vital services such as electricity. In these areas radio technology is the best alternative. To date there are 15 manual exchanges and 225 Radio Telephone stations servicing the rural and remote areas. Fiji Telecom is currently upgrading rural telephone services. Manual radiotelephone services are being upgraded to automate operations, for example in Rotuma and remote areas in the Lau Group.

Fiji has an extensive postal system with over 50 post offices and 203 postal agencies throughout the islands. Telephone services are extensive also linking the main centres to the rural and the islands. Fiji enjoys fax and international communication services with Internet and e-mail facilities.

43 Official name since separation is Fiji Telecom. The postal section is formally known as Fiji Post.
45 If we accept that in every ten year period there will be a growth of approximately 72% in telephone working lines, in 1996 working lines total 73,642.
In January 1996 the Managing Director of FPTL (now Telecom), Winston Thompson, indicated that "Telecommunications itself will see a growth in business during this period (next five years) of 14 to 15 percent. We have a large unsatisfied demand for telephone services that we hope to catch up on over the five-year period".  

In late 1996 Fiji Telecom commenced operating as two parallel companies, one dealing with postal services and the other telecommunications. With telecommunications growth is expected to be fast and will open up many services. Telecom Fiji, as the company is called now, is the Internet service provider. The number of users is expected to be high. The initial approved 50 dial-up users with another 30 on the waiting list and 8 corporate users have been surpassed. Internet services and use will be expected to grow in the areas of education, tourism, trade, business, and video conferencing. No doubt the developments in these areas will affect the way information will be communicated to the different sectors of the population. At present, the users of the system are mainly in the urban areas and it will be sometime before users in the rural areas will have the opportunity to access this service.

Fiji Telecom has plans to improve services to users in many areas with the hope of developing a national information infrastructure which will promote and enhance the development of domestic info-communication industry and facilitate links between Fiji and other global information and communication networks. Internet developments have been extensive in the past three years, and Fiji Telecom plans to expand these services further. The services will be targeting the service sector including business, tourism, education, agriculture and medical services. According to Thompson, "the integration of Internet technology with Fiji's existing telecommunication services has the potential to assist in over-coming many of the geographical and economic barriers which have impeded Fiji's socio-economic development".

**COLONISATION AND INDIRECT RULE**

Prior to Fiji becoming a British colony in 1874, internal strife within the Fiji Islands existed between the Tongan warrior, Ma'afu, who had invaded and conquered the Lau group, and the powerful Bauan chief, Ratu Seru Cakobau. There were also significant rivalries between the small islands and those Fijians living on the mainland. Apart from the troubles caused by the Fijians, some Europeans were disruptive and caused

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turmoil. The solution to the problem of control and of government over both the Fijians and unruly Europeans was to cede Fiji voluntarily to the British. This was done by the paramount chief, Ratu Seru Cakobau, Ma'afu and ten other chiefs. Whatever way colonisation is perceived, it unified the various Fijian groups.

The first governor of Fiji, Sir Arthur Gordon, arrived in 1875. Gordon came with paternalistic ideas; concerned that the Fijians' interests must be protected. This included interests in the sea, land, customs and traditions. Gordon took up the responsibility of protecting the rights of the Fijians over their land, as well as the preservation of their culture and traditions against Western influences. The Native Administration - later named the Fijian Administration – was established to protect these interests and the policy of indirect rule was introduced. The paternalistic native policy designed by Gordon and introduced in this period had the following essential points: "indirect rule" through the Fijian chiefs; end of native land alienation; the development of a top-down information and communication system for the Fijians; the dependence on the Fijian Provincial Administration for information by the Fijians; and the continuation of the "Fijian way of life". These compelled Fijians to be apathetic and not assertive in their rights to information. Under this policy, the British ruled the country indirectly through the Fijian chiefs working through the Great Council of Chiefs, established as a formal body. Hence, these separate Fijian institutions came into existence to govern the Fijians.

Furthermore, Fijians were encouraged to stay in the villages and work on their own plantations concentrating on subsistence farming. They were prohibited from working on foreign-owned plantations or hired for paid employment. Robertson and Tamanisau point out that the decision not to allow the Fijians to work on the commercial plantations was because the British knew that any exploitation of the "indigenous" labour would jeopardise the good relations that existed between them and the Fijians. However, there are a number of arguments as why the Fijians did not work as labourers on plantations. Gillion, for instance, argued that Gordon wanted to

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49 Lawson, (1990), op. cit.
50 Lawson, (1990), op. cit., p. 799.
51 Often referred to as the Great Council of Chiefs or Bose Levu Vakaturaga.
52 The Great Council of Chiefs and traditional politics will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 7.

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protect Fijian customs and traditions and insisted that the Fijians be left in the villages living in communities under government control. Indo-Fijian immigrants and not the Fijians were, therefore, brought into Fiji to work in the sugarcane fields. Ravuvu argued that all Fijians are landowners, where the land is considered an extension of life with physical, social and cultural dimensions.57 While some Fijians worked in the plantations many remained in the villages as subsistence farmers. While Fijians have a work ethic this was based more on social rather than economic considerations, argued Nuyacakalou.58 Norton, like Gillion, argued that the Fijians did not work on plantations or were made to work because the colonial government aimed at preserving the social structure and traditions of the Fijians.59 Siegel argued that although a small number of Fijians worked in the plantations as labourers, "nevertheless, for the first ten years of the plantation era (mid-1880s), Fijians were the most important labor force, and for at least fifteen years Fijians working alongside imported laborers was the rule rather than the exception".60

The Fijians' work ethic is a research subject on its own, but based on some of the arguments and developments given here and life in a village today, I would argue that there were probably a number of reasons for containing the Fijians in the village and moving them away from work. The Fijians were mainly subsistence farmers and owned the land. It could be assumed that they did not need to work, as the Fijians' concept of the environment and life in general was that the land and sea would provide for all their needs. They respected and preserved the vanua, their environment. Despite the fact that the colonial government protected the Fijians' rights to the land by legislation, the Fijians did not need any legislation to regulate land. As far as they were concerned, the Fijians were custodians and owners of the land. It was doubtful that during the early colonial period information on any legislation would be communicated and understood by the Fijians in the rural villages. Their traditional knowledge and way of life would override any new legislation to do with the control of their land.

The impact of indirect rule has had far reaching social, economic and political consequences on the life of the Fijians. Ordinary Fijians did not have direct personal

contact with the colonial administration. Lawson argued that many Fijians regarded the colonial government as a part of the chiefly authority. Fijians were left behind economically during the colonial period. As many of the Fijians lived in the rural areas and worked in subsistence farming, many remained unskilled or semi-skilled. In contrast, many Indo-Fijians worked in the commercially owned farms and acquired various skills. As a result of this early colonial rule, a large number of Indo-Fijians acquired better levels of education than their Fijian counterpart, became financially better off and improved their general standard of living. However, the Indo-Fijian saw the colonial administration as oppressive. Indeed, Fijian society during this colonial period was highly hierarchical. At the top were the Europeans together with the chiefs. Next in line were the part Europeans. Below this category were the Fijians and the Indo-Fijians. This division was reflected in salaries, conditions of work and housing.

While not all the Indo-Fijians and Fijians enjoyed the economic change, it would seem that from the colonial period, economic inequality, ethnic divisions, political and social divisions between the Indo-Fijians and Fijians on one hand, and the Fijians and the General Electors on the other were set in place. These divisions have continued to the present but now the hierarchy has reversed. If economics is used as the criteria to group the population, then generally the Indo-Fijians now sit at the top followed by the Europeans, Fijians and then part Europeans. The Europeans have economic status, but do not hold political power as compared to the Indo-Fijians' struggle to do so. Such divisions may explain some of the political and ethnic problems facing the country today irrespective of the fact that there are also poor Indo-Fijians and some rich Fijians.

Up to the present day, the two major communities, the Fijians and the Indo-Fijians, have managed to live side by side with minimum integration. Issues that continue to cause strife between the two ethnic groups include land, unequal representation in parliament, and unequal education and business opportunities.

Information and Communication in the Colonial Period: 1874 to 1970

The British ruled the Fiji Islands for 96 years, almost a century. Much has been written about Fiji during this period particularly the history of the islands and how colonialism has structured the economic and political processes in Fijian society. Modest attention only has been given to the way colonialism has structured the

information and communication sectors. Without much written information on the work of the information department during the early and war years, much of the information I have used was gathered from Fiji's Annual Reports and interviews with Usher.

Usher emphasised a number of different points. First, British structures and organisation principles influenced Fiji's information and communication institutions very much. Although the information and communication structures may have taken time to evolve in Fiji, the structures were influenced greatly by the colonial institutions. For instance, the Public Relations Office (PRO) was modelled after the British Information Services in London. Like the London Office, the Fiji PRO had people working in press relations, films, exhibitions, advertising, stories. The PRO operated a film unit in the urban areas, monitored the content of the local press, cooperated with foreign correspondents, and participated in books fairs, concerts and exhibitions. These responsibilities did not come all at once in the beginning. The main responsibilities were to tell the people of Fiji about government policies and activities - to keep the people of Fiji informed as well as to keep the government aware of trends and public opinion. A subsidiary responsibility was to report on events in Fiji in overseas papers. The Department passed on to the local press over a thousand news items annually. Fijian members of staff edited the Na Mata, the monthly government newspaper in Fijian. A photographic section produced photographs for displays and sale. A poster section printed posters using the screen printing method. Work carried out here was for both government and non-government organisations. These responsibilities are part of the Information Ministry today.

When first started, the PRO was responsible for public relations, the British Council, Museum and libraries. Under the colonial government there were other information resources that were available for use. These included the library and communication resources including books and film. The colonial era brought many changes in information and communication style. For instance, the British introduced telephones, quicker transport, communication links, new political and social structures, and a new philosophy of life and culture.

62 Sir Leonard Usher, a New Zealander, first came to Fiji in 1930 as assistant teacher, then head master at the Levuka Public School. In 1943 he was seconded from the Army to be Government Public Relations Officer. After the war in 1945 he was appointed first head of the Government Public Relations Office (now Ministry of Information). He retired from government service in 1957 to become executive director of the Fiji Times and Herald Ltd., being Editor from 1958. He retired from the Fiji Times in 1973 and became Organising Director of Pacific Islands News Agency (FINTA).
According to Usher, during the colonial period, government's general attitude to people receiving or accessing information for their personal benefit and in the interest of national development purposes:

...was that people did not need to know what government was doing. The government believed that it was not important to let the people know what was happening within government departments and how government made decisions. The government maintained the view that people were provided the information on a need to know basis only.

It was during the war that the wartime information office had to give regular reports in the gazette. Information on people was also included. This was the only public information service English newsletter available then. The Fijian news was covered in the Na Mata.

Usher, had always believed that the whole essence of any stable government was that people must be informed if they are to make good decisions and judgements. Furthermore, Usher encouraged the provision of information and comments on issues to government personnel to enable them to make wise decisions to the public. There was much resistance from Government Ministers against this trend. The ministers did not think that people should know or need to know what was happening in the departments. Low information dissemination and access continued until about the sixties when there was a distinct change in attitude in anticipation of independence. Slowly things changed. The PRO became the government vehicle for disseminating information. Some government officers were still not convinced that keeping the public informed was essential to the democratic development of the country. In particular, there was no plan on the development of a colonial information system for the islands. People depended on the personal initiative of the information officers. Further control was placed on the Fijians as Usher reveals:

The Great Council of Chiefs and the Fijian Provincial Administration in this period controlled the flow of information making it a problem for the individual and the Fijian generally, to access information when needed. The Council did not want people to know what was going on in government and at Great Council of Chiefs meetings and restricted information access. The Na Mata used to disseminate information and reported on selected matters of the proceedings of Provincial Council meetings as well as the Great Council of Chiefs meetings.

The existing traditional information and communication system often complemented the modern, particularly for the Fijians. Government also used these traditional

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63 The Fiji Royal Gazette commenced publishing in 1874 and reported on government activities, laws, orders, promotions, business and trade. Since October 1987 it has been called the Fiji Gazette.
64 The Na Mata commenced in 1874 and is still being produced by the Ministry of Fijian Affairs. It is a monthly newsletter and includes many items of public interest to the Fijian community and others.
systems to ensure messages were reaching the people at the rural level. Despite new developments and services in telecommunications, many villages continued to use the traditional communication system of oratory, meetings, and to a lesser extent song, dance, and stories.

The newspapers, which have been in Fiji since the 1800s and the radio since 1920s, have provided up-to-date information and have the widest reach in the country. Television is a new technology introduced in Fiji in 1991. While radio broadcasting has been monopolised by local interests and government, foreign interests have largely owned the newspapers. With the ownership and control of part of the media dominated by foreigners, there is a growing need for a more independent and sovereign press, more trained indigenous people in the reporting of news and events in the media and less press controls placed by government. This would contribute to the development of democracy in Fiji. These issues are discussed in chapters 6, 7 and 8.

Newspapers

The first paper in English published in 8th August 1868 was the Fiji Weekly News and Planter's Journal.63 This was devoted to reporting on items of concern to the small European community settled in and around Levuka, the old capital of Fiji. This paper was short-lived with the final issue appearing on 21st November 1868 and was succeeded by the Fiji Times,64 the first issue appearing in September 1869. In 1918 the Fiji Times merged with the Western Pacific Herald which was established in 1901 by Alport Barker to Fiji Times and Herald. In February 1956 the paper was sold to Robbie Robson who renamed the paper, the Fiji Times. A rival newspaper, the Fiji Gazette was published in 1st January 1871 as an alternative to the Fiji Times and was pro-government. It ceased in 1883. The Fiji Times and the Fiji Royal Gazette absorbed its role of reporting events to the people. The latter was published at the beginning of colonial rule in October 1874 and continued to include notices, appointments, government notices and Ordinances mostly in English. Small sections of Fijian interest, notices mainly, were published in Fijian. Reports also appeared in the Fijian-language government monthly, Na Mata.

64 George Littleton Griffiths, a New Zealander, founded this in Levuka.
The range of material presented in a newspaper will always provide some indication of the readership, the interests of the paper and the people and the political, social and economic status of the country. I was interested to see what pattern would emerge. I therefore read through the Fiji Times for the period 1869 to 1874 and concentrated also on the subjects covered in the Editorial. Since the commencement of the paper in 4th September, 1869, typical issues of the paper included news of the week, shipping news, commercial reports, selected intelligence from the various islands, trading and business news, extracts from various colonial and English papers, advertisements, court cases, government notices, notices of births, deaths and marriages, mail, Letters to the Editor and the Editorial.

The features that stand out at this early stage are: the newspaper was presented entirely in English; there was a complete lack of local news or news in Fijian; there was also a strong bias towards news of Great Britain; and there was more on business notices and advertisements. The early issues of the paper reported many incidences of theft, of movement away from the villages and the need for the Fijians to be contained in the villages and be guided in their development. This reflected on the Fijian character. The papers always referred to the Fijians as "natives" and it seemed that any social problem would be attributed to them and other "white settlers of Fiji who were wholly without law". Of the reports on the "natives" these included mainly subjects of thefts, community disturbances, and "native" troubles. In fact, there was nothing good said about the Fijians in the early days. It was in the 1930s that letters began to appear concerning the better side of the Fijian character and the need for the Fijians to be educated and converted to Christianity and be civilised.

The Radio

The radio, since 1920s, has served as the main means of communication and source of information for many in both the rural and urban areas. Radio had tremendous impact on the people then and still does now. Its effect is greatly enhanced with broadcasts in the vernacular languages - Fijian and Hindustani. Another reason for greater impact is that often information obtained through the radio and newspapers if originating from the Fijian Provincial Administration tends to be accepted as the truth by the general listeners especially people in the rural areas. There is also the issue of diversity. From the early 1920s to the 1990s Fiji did not have the luxury of having many radio stations to choose from or various newspapers to read compared to developed countries.

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1953 the Fiji Government made provisions to establish a Fiji Broadcasting Commission (FBC) to control the development of a broadcasting service in Suva initially. The Commission took over responsibility for broadcasting on 1st July 1954, from the Fiji Broadcasting Company.

FBC continued its work as a government station and the only national radio station in the country for many years. It broadcast in English, Fijian and Hindustani. Throughout its life, FBC has maintained its high user rate. However, in the late 1980s, the FBC recorded losses and there was threat of closure. This change can be attributed to a number of factors: competition from a new radio station established in 1985, FM 96; poor management; the lack of a financial base; the lack of interesting local programmes. Despite the losses, the government continued to subsidise and support FBC and its operations.

**The Impact of Colonialism on the Information and Communication Infrastructure**

From the early contact period between the Europeans and the indigenous Fijians there existed a complex, vigorous and highly organized Fijian civilization. The social organization was highly hierarchical with Kings, chiefs, warriors and commoners. Kinship structures were diverse. The Fijian language was elaborate with the existence of many gods and spirits signifying a pagan belief system that was embroiled in struggles between warring tribes. In this period the Fijians had a complex and sophisticated information and communication system where information was communicated through the beat of a drum, song, dance or story. Oral tradition where people were the carriers of information proved effective. Information flow was a two-way process as described in chapter 2 - "Islandic communication environment" by Vusoniwailala.

After Cession, many of the traditional forms of organisation were replaced, according to Clammer, by a colonial theocracy - a Christianised and educated state. This transformation was the result of a number of factors for example, religion, education, literacy, commercial development and communication. There was increased need for services such as health, education and transport. Fijians continued to move from the

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68 Clammer, (1976) op, cit.
village to urban centres where government had developed production systems within a growing economy for copra and sugar plantations. The paternalistic native policy developed during this period was meant to bring order to the native sector in terms of production and encouraging the Fijians to proceed into cash cropping. The policy also brought with it controls in the information and communication sector.

With cash cropping individualism among the Fijians emerged. The colonial government supported this development and permitted greater but controlled mobility of the people in the villages to urban centres to work as wage earners. Fijians also started to take on individual farming (galala) resulting in more people moving to the main island of Viti Levu. The importance of this development to the information and communication sector is that two reports\(^\text{69}\) prepared in the 1950s on the Fijians and rural development focused on the view that the Fijian social structure and its related land tenure system hampered Fijian rural development and proposed that "...the future for the Fijians lies in a turn from communalism towards individualism".\(^\text{70}\) While this was seen as mainly the individual access to land the idea spilled over to other areas - production, business, education and general lifestyle of the Fijians. Such individualism was a contradiction where the Fijian was being encouraged by the colonial administration to take part in individual production cash farming on one hand, while being subject to legislation that opposed full integration and a radical departure or modification of his communal value system on the other. Hence, being involved in commercial production did not result in the Fijian becoming economically advanced. The economic marginalization of the Fijians, the preservation of their social structure and the transformation of some of their traditions were the effects of the colonial administration.

The result of colonial rule was the transformation of the indigenous society to meet the needs of the colonizer. In the information and communication sector, as described above, the transition to the modern was not complete. Communication was largely one-way and authoritarian during the colonial period. While the new and modern information systems that inform exist in the form of newspapers and radio, the role of the traditional information communication system within the Fijian Provincial Administration remains.

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\(^{70}\) Spate, (1959), Ibid, p. 97.
The political system in Fiji has been largely dependent on political power remaining in the hands of the Fijians. The 1970 and 1990 Constitutions were designed to do this. This raises the question of whether Fiji is a democracy. A number of arguments have been raised on this matter but one issue that focuses on the debate on democracy in Fiji and the South Pacific has been the difficulty of transplanting Western democratic institutions to non-Western polities. Larmour, for instance, had argued from two points: the first concerns the extent to which democracy is something introduced from outside rather than developed from within a country or region; and second the conditions under which democracy can be developed and sustained. Larmour identified five issues that are central to debates on democracy in the South Pacific region. These include: the relevance of monarchical and nationalist conceptions of democracy; the conflict between egalitarian principles and hierarchical indigenous traditions; a conflict between representative and direct democracy; the feasibility of democracy in multiethnic societies; and the conflict between liberalism and indigenous culture. While there are many indicators of democracy, the indicators of the attributes Larmour set to compare South Pacific island nations included: an executive responsible to an elected legislature or directly elected, universal adult suffrage, and freedom of speech. "Suffrage" deals with the right to vote. Larmour recognized that this right is of little use if the legislature did not have power over the executive. Larmour's third aspect of democracy, freedom of speech, was seen as important in informing and making the electors aware of happenings in government, who to vote for in an election and also the alternatives that might be available to the individual in the process of choosing a leader. The important political role of an independent and non-government press in a representative democracy was highlighted. As many newspapers in the South Pacific were foreign owned, this created an environment in which democracy could develop and survive. The press would expose government corruption and incompetence. The right to access this information was seen as important.

Lawson, on the other hand, argued that the basic principles of democracy were absent in the political practice of many countries, including Fiji. Furthermore, Lawson argued that while democracy could not mean all things to all people, there was no one

71 See Appendix III for Fiji's Political History: A Chronology.
73 Ibid, p. 53.
"correct" universal political system. Democracy could be adapted legitimately to suit the particular circumstances, but there were limitations to this adaptation.  

The Constitution

There have been two Constitutions since independence - 1970 and 1990. When Fiji became independent in 1970, the Queen was the head of state. The Queen was represented by a Governor General. The legislature consisted of a Senate and a 52-member House of Representatives. See Figure 5.1. The Prime Minister was chosen from these 52. The system of government was based on the Westminster model. However, the 1970 Constitution included many provisions for the protection of the rights of the indigenous people especially land and fishing rights. Representation was under a rigid communal electoral system that ensured the Fijians 22 seats, the Indo-Fijians 22 seats and others 8. Any laws regarding indigenous rights would require the vote of three quarters of the members of the House and the Senate. It would seem Fijian interests were protected particularly when the membership of the Senate was made up of 22 members appointed by the Governor: 8 on the advice of the Great Council of Chiefs, 7 on the advice of the Prime Minister, 6 on the advice of the leader of the opposition and 1 on the advice of the Council of Rotuma. This Constitution was swept away in May 1987.

The new Constitution of the Sovereign Democratic Republic of Fiji was agreed to by the Great Council of Chiefs on June 25, 1990. Although the Great Council of Chiefs has no vote in Parliament, all issues that relate to the welfare of the Fijians and political developments of the country are referred to the Chiefs Council for discussion and endorsement. Its support on many issues is often sought by Parliament before a decision is made. The 1990 Constitution recognized the Great Council of Chiefs or Bose Levu Vakaturaga. It ensured the political supremacy of the Fijians allowing only a Fijian to be Prime Minister and a Fijian paramount chief to be President. The Great Council of Chiefs appointed the President for five years. The President is accountable to the Great Council of Chiefs. The politicising the Fijian chiefly system has not been accepted by many in the community and in academia. This is largely because throughout Fiji's history the Great Council of Chiefs has remained a separate group of "wise men" who had the interests of the people at heart. Usually, the chiefs

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75 Rotuma is an island in the north of Fiji. The people are Polynesian. It became part of Fiji in 1881.
The Fiji Legislature According to the 1970 Constitution

- **Queen of England** (Head of State of Fiji)
- **Governor-General** (Queen's Local Representative)

**Parliament**

- **Senate** (Upper House)
  - 22 Nominated members
  - 6 year term

- **House of Representatives** (Lower House)
  - 52 elected members
  - 5 year term

**House of Representatives Composition**

- **52 ELECTED MEMBERS**
  - Fijians
  - Indians
  - General

  - Fijians: 12 elected
  - Indians: 12 elected
  - General: 3 elected
  - Fijians: 10 elected
  - Indians: 10 elected
  - General: 5 elected

- **All Voters**

**Senate Composition**

- **22 NOMINATED MEMBERS**
  - 8 nominated by the Council of Chiefs
  - 7 nominated by the Prime Minister
  - 6 nominated by the Leader of the Opposition
  - 1 nominated by the Council of Rotuma

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are known to be unbiased, not influenced by situations and deeds, and therefore are able to make decisions without getting too involved in political conflicts. They were above the mud slinging and the arguments that were associated with politics. Under the new Constitution the chiefs were required to take a more active role in politics, and this no doubt, would affect their known role as good mediators. Hitherto, their concerns had always been for the welfare of all and not only one sector of the population.

Under the 1990 Constitution preferential policies for the Fijian and Rotuman interests continued as noted in chapter 3 of the 1990 Constitution. The Constitution promotes and safeguarded the cultural, economic, educational, social and other interests of the Fijian and Rotuman. The Constitution also gave power to Parliament to enact laws to adopt programmes or activities in the interest of the Fijian and Rotuman community.

This is reflected in the opening passages of the Constitution of the Sovereign Democratic Republic of Fiji:

There was widespread belief that the 1970 Constitution was inadequate to give protection to the interests of the indigenous Fijians, their values, traditions, customs, way of life and economic well-being. ... The people of Fiji have expressed the desire to have a new constitution for the advancement of their beliefs, rights and freedoms and accept that it is desirable that the 1970 Constitution be replaced so that the will of the people may be truly set forth and their hopes and aspirations and goals be achieved and thereby embued.78

The 1990 Constitution provided for a 70 seat House of Representatives (compared to 52 in the old parliament) and 37 seats for the Fijians; 27 for the Indo-Fijians; 5 seats for general electors79 and one seat for Rotuma. The Cabinet functions in consultation with the Great Council of Chiefs. The Senate consisted of 34 appointed members, 24 representing the indigenous Fijian community. See Figure 5.2. The new method of electing members to the House of Representatives gave fourteen provincial constituencies different numbers of representatives. These were: Ba 3; Bua 2; Cakaudrove 3; Kadavu 2; Lau 3; Lomaiviti 2; Macuata 2, Nadroga/Navosa 2, Naitasiri 2, Namosi 2, Ra 2, Rewa 2, Serua 2, Tailevu 3. There are separate electoral rolls: one for Fijians, another for Indo-Fijians a roll for Rotumans and another for those who are neither Fijian, Indo-Fijian, or Rotuman. The 1990 Constitution has been criticised widely, internally and internationally, as being racist and communal. Apart from a

78 Ibid. Unpaged.
79 "General electors" or "Others" are the non-indigenous, non-Indian population including the Europeans, part Europeans and other Pacific Islanders.

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The election results in May 1992 saw the great Council of Chiefs sponsored SVT winning 30 of the 37 seats allocated to Fijian members of the House of Representatives from the fourteen provinces. In the 1994 elections the SVT won 32 out of the 37 seats allocated for Fijians, and the remaining five from urban constituencies. This electoral system has had far reaching effects in terms of promoting provincialism which in turn has affected the administration and distribution of resources of the Fijian Provincial Administration and the District Administration. It is a trend that can only breed competition amongst the Fijians themselves and generally divide the Fijian society even more. Results of the 1994 elections as detailed on Table 6.17 can confirm the growing divisiveness in the Fijian community.

On April 12, 1995 the Constitutional Review Committee members, Dr. Brij Lal, an academic and Mr. Tom Vakatora a retired politician, chaired by Sir Paul Reeves, a former Governor General of New Zealand, were sworn in by the President, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara. The Commission adopted a Mission Statement based on their Terms of Reference which stated:

The mission of the Constitutional Review Committee, appointed in accordance with section 77 and 161 of the Constitution of the Sovereign Democratic Republic of Fiji, is to review the Constitution and produce a report by 30 June 1996, recommending constitutional arrangements which will meet the present and the future needs of the people of Fiji, and promote racial harmony, national unity and the economic and social advancement of all communities.

These arrangements must:

- take into account internationally recognised principles and standards of individual and group rights;
- guarantee full protection and promotion of the rights, interests and concerns of the indigenous Fijian and Rotuman people;
- have full regard for the rights, interests and concerns of all ethnic groups in Fiji.

In achieving its mission the Commission will have:

- scrutinised the Constitution
- facilitated the widest possible debate on the Terms of the Constitution
- inquired into, and ascertained, the variety of views and opinions among Fijian citizens on how the provisions of the Constitution can be improved to meet the needs of Fiji as a multi-ethnic and multicultural society.80

The Fiji Legislature: After the 1990 Constitution

House of Representatives Composition

70 ELECTED MEMBERS

- Fijians: 37
- Indians: 27
- Rotumans: 1
- General: 5

Senate Composition

34 NOMINATED MEMBERS

- 24 Fijians, Nominated by the Bose Levu Vakaturaga (Great Council of Chiefs)
- 1 Rotuman, Nominated by the Rotuman Island Council
- 9 Nominated by the President
The Committee completed their work and presented their report to the President of Fiji on 6 September 1996. The Report is titled, *Towards a United Future* and recommends 697 changes to the 1990 Constitution. The Report was tabled in Parliament on September 10th. The report has been discussed by a Joint Parliamentary and Senate Select Committee (JPSC) comprising 24 members from both Houses. The JPSC has arrived at a consensus for a new constitution for Fiji. Work on the drafting of a new constitution is now underway to be ready before the next elections to be held in 1999.

From my interviews with the Fijians in both the urban and rural village on the Report, it would seem that there was little trust between the two major races in Fiji. Without this trust and without the will of all the people to want a multi-ethnic government, the road to a more democratic Fiji will not be easy. The Constitutional Review Committee had indicated early in its report that the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government and that this shall be expressed in regular and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and will be held by secret vote with approved set procedures. The report supports a democratic Fiji, where the people have the ability to change the government through this democratic voting system. However, as noted earlier, what the Committee is recommending and the feelings of many Fijians are not the same. For the purpose of this study, it is relevant to note the report recommends "that everyone has the right to freedom of expression including the freedom to hold opinions, to receive and impart ideas and information without interference and the freedom to seek ideas or information" and that "freedom of expression includes freedom of the press" and this freedom is extended to all media.

**AUDITING DEMOCRACY IN FIJI**

When Fiji gained independence from Britain in 1970, the ethnic divisions that existed in the colonial period remained strong, and the "traditional politics" practiced by the Fijian chiefs through the Great Council of Chiefs were part of the political system. During the constitutional pre-independent talks in 1969, the differences between the Indo-Fijians and the Fijians were evident; the Fijians preferring the status quo while the Indo-Fijians placed greater demands for increased political representation. Indo Fijians pushed for the common roll and saw this as the best means of securing their

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81 Ibid., p. 180.
82 Ibid., p. 180.
83 Lawson (1996), op. cit.
future in the islands. They argued that since they formed the majority in the country, it would be only fair that representation was at least equal with the Fijians. The Fijian chiefs argued that political power and control would have to remain with the Fijians and that they will not accept being ruled by the immigrant Indo-Fijians. This separation of the two ethnic groups prevented any common political interests developing between them.

During this early period prior to independence, relations between the Europeans and the Indo-Fijians were also strained. The economic and political success of the Indo-Fijians posed some threat to the Europeans. Political cooperation between the Fijians and the Europeans grew, brought about by the common perceived threat posed by the Indo-Fijians.

However, despite the tensions that existed between the two major ethnic groups, as well as other tensions between the different groups of Fijians, and the Europeans and the Indo-Fijians, Fiji moved from a colonial to independent state peacefully. At independence in October 1970, Fijian interests were safeguarded constitutionally. Ratu Mara, as leader of the multiethnic party - Alliance Party - was Prime Minister. Ratu Mara took Fiji through four elections in post-independence Fiji until 1987. After the coups it was clear that the political system failed to guarantee the Fijians' long-term political dominance, a matter that was ensured in the 1990 Constitution.

Hence, looking at the post-colonial political system in Fiji up to 1987, the characteristics can be listed as follows:

- a new constitution which guarantees personal security and private property;
- provisions for freedoms of expression, worship and assembly;
- universal suffrage;
- a system for free elections were held within constitutionally stipulated periods by secret ballot - 1972, 1977, 1982, 1987;
- a Constitution that guarantees the interests of the Fijians;
- ensured preferential policies for the Fijians in education and business in particular;
- a system of state and local government;
- the monarchy remained constitutional;
- a separation of powers between the executive, the legislature and the judiciary;

84 Ravuvu, (1991), op. cit.
• the existence of a number of political parties with a high degree of political representation and organization;
• a functioning and fairly independent press;
• a relatively efficient bureaucracy;
• a professional army and police force that are not expected to interfere in politics.

This political system, as expected, was modelled after the British system and matched the requirements of a democratic political system. From 1970 and the pursuing years, democracy was seen to be functioning well in Fiji despite the growing ethnic tensions as well as the insecurity felt by the Fijians in the control of their land and government by the Indo-Fijians. After the 1987 coups the following characteristics of the political system can be identified:

• free elections were held within the constitutionally stipulated periods under the 1990 Constitution - 1992 and 1994;
• guaranteed the political security of the Fijians constitutionally; 87
• continued preferential policies for the Fijians and the Rotumans;
• many parties with different manifestos contested the elections;
• elected governments were formed at the state and local levels;
• multi-party opposition debated freely, but often, not aggressively, against the party in power;
• the press remained relatively free with a number of constraints appearing in post 1987;
• there was an independent judiciary;
• the army stayed out of civil affairs.

After the 1987 May and September coups, the quality of democracy in Fiji deteriorated. Three weeks after the 1987 elections, and the defeat of the ruling Alliance Party led by Ratu Mara, the military coups led by Colonel Rabuka shattered democracy in the islands. While there are different theories as to the reasons for the coups, the scope of this thesis excludes analysis of any kind. What can be said, however, is that the coups altered the Fiji polity significantly and introduced greater inter-ethnic distrust. It has been argued that the staging of the coups could have been predicted judging from the worsening relationship of Fiji's Indo-Fijian and Fijian

87 This matter, in my view, was not clearly understood by the Fijians as a whole, including parliamentary representatives. In the 1970 Constitution, as well as the 1990, the rights of the Fijians were protected as any legislation to do with the welfare of the Fijians needed two-thirds majority of the Parliament and a consensus by the Senate. Considering that eight of the Senate members are appointed by the Great Council of Chiefs, it seemed unlikely that a consensus would be reached on any matter that would be detrimental to the welfare of the Fijians.
leaders, the growing desire by the Indo-Fijians to own more land, the push by the Indo-Fijians to have equality in voting and representation, and the desire by the Indo-Fijian parliamentarians to introduce common roll and voting as against communal.

CONCEPTUALISING DEMOCRACY IN FIJI: THE IMPACT OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

In my view, the major concerns to the Fiji polity that would affect the development of democracy in the country are: the containment of class conflict particularly between the Fijian chiefly elite and the ordinary, educated Fijian; the management of inter-ethnic conflict; the stagnant economy; the politics of the land and religion. I will concentrate on some of these concerns in this chapter and others in the remaining chapters when analysing the impact of information and communication on the character of Fiji democracy and its changes in the periods: the Alliance phase, 1970 to 1987; the Labour phase 1987; the Interim Government phase, 1987 - 1992; and the Rabuka phase, 1992 to the present.


The Fiji political system at independence offered multi-party and multi-ethnic elections but these were communal based. Ratu Mara's Alliance Party of Fijians, Indo-Fijians, Europeans and Chinese represented an attempt by the multi-ethnic ruling class to rule over a "race-and-class society". While it can be argued on one hand that such a multi-ethnic party would appear to be more successful in the eyes of the Fijians with genuine attempts to build a multiracial society, on the other it can be argued that Ratu Mara and his elite group of politicians represented the interests of the rich businessmen first and the needs of the poor people second. The coups of 1987 bore some justification of this.

The Alliance Party was confronted not just by opposing ethnic demands, but also more pressure from the trade unions and academics that demanded more transparency in operations and increased accountability. The Indo-Fijian middle class and the poor considered their opportunities for employment and education to have been prejudiced by the preferential policies for the Fijians. In 1975, a Royal Commission was appointed by the Governor General to study and recommend changes to the electoral

system. In the findings, the Commission stated that the Westminster model was unsuitable for Fiji, and instead recommended proportional representation and the abolishment of communal seats. The Alliance Party who preferred to stay with the status quo rejected this. Ironically, however, the loss of the Alliance Party in the 1977 elections proved that the existing system could not guarantee Fijian political supremacy. With the rise of Fijian nationalism, the Indo-Fijians’ dissatisfaction with the preferential policies for the Fijians in place, the National Federation Party won the elections. The NFP, however, due to internal squabbles, was unable to form the government. The Alliance Party managed to stay in office despite losing the elections.

From the 1970s to the 1980s, it would seem that on the surface there was political stability in Fiji. The Fijians were not aware of any threat to their political dominance, or if they were, did not react to it. According to Norton89 there was relative peace in Fiji as power was shared between the Fijians and Indo-Fijians. While this argument has some merit, I would say that during these years, the growth in the economic power of the Indo-Fijians was being watched and questioned silently by many Fijians. A number of rural Fijians questioned the need and desirability to spread the wealth more equally. The Alliance leaders, in my view, were oblivious to the silent dissatisfaction of the Fijians in their low quality of life and lack of integration into the business sector.

During this period, the constitutional safeguards of freedom of speech, the press and assembly were in a state of uncertainty with increased use of preventive measures on the part of the government against the press and trade unions. After independence in 1970 there was some indication that the government would attend to the introduction of an information and communication policy. Ratu Mara was supportive of government starting its own newspaper and broadcasting service. His Minister of Information at the time was also keen to see the development in the information and communication sector. However, apart from running an open government where information was accessible and where people exercised the freedom of speech and expression, the Mara Government, did nothing about the introduction of an information policy. There were other pressing development issues and the government did not have the resources or the trained, skilled personnel to pursue developments in this area. Even after the 1977 defeat of the Mara Government, no development in the information and communication sector occurred.

The PRO continued to carry the information work of the government until 1975 when a Ministry of Information was formed with the late Ratu David Toganivalu as Minister. As Ministry of Information it adopted the organisational structure of the London Information Service. This structure where there is a Director, Assistant Director, and the information officers who are responsible for press releases, vernacular publications, publicity, exhibitions continues today. Soon after the appointment of the Minister of Information, the Minister noted that "it will be my Ministry’s aim to make information services an effective component of the government’s function to develop and advance the standard of living of the people".\(^9\)

Throughout Ratu David Toganivalu’s term as Minister of Information, it was clear that support would be given to information and communication. The development of information centres and libraries was encouraged as well as the promotion of reading and the teaching of writing skills. The Minister maintained a good working relationship with the journalists and librarians. Despite all this and government’s pledge to develop an informed society, very little happened to ensure that these objectives were realised except in the telecommunications sector where progress has been rapid. Limited resources were allocated in the annual budget for the development of information and libraries nationally.\(^9\) While the government believed that the dissemination of ideas and information should be encouraged, organisational changes to the existing system were minor.

As for the privately owned newspapers and the radio, these maintained their autonomy and independence and reported news as they saw it. Because of the quality of reporting which reflected the quality of trained journalists at the time, there were many reports of ministers and private citizens suing papers for misinformation and defamation suits. Consequently, many ministers refuse to be interviewed because of misreporting by journalists.

Generally, during this period, 1970 -1987 there was little interference from the police, the army and the government regarding information dissemination. There were no attempts made at preparing an information policy or introducing information legislation for the country. The newspapers were generally free to publish and there were no restrictions on the information that was communicated through the newspapers and the radio. The radio and the newspapers continued to be the main

\(^{90}\) Pacific Islands Monthly, February 1975 46(2): 9
\(^{91}\) In the 1975 budget only 0.23% of the total budget was allocated for the development of the information and communication sector. In 1994 it had not changed at all, in fact it had worsened. It was 0.2%.
channels through which information was communicated to the public with the Fijians being provided with information from the Fijian Provincial Administration as well.\textsuperscript{92}

Also during this period, traditional customs and institutions had distinct roles to play in political development as well in the development of the open and competitive markets. Communication modes and information affected the pace and extent of social, political and economic growth of Fiji. Oral traditions continued to have an important role in disseminating information but were not integrated into the mainstream information system.

In this development, the traditional practices of the Fijians were affected to some degree. The government tried to stamp out a number of practices which to their mind were impractical, such as various traditional practices associated with deaths and births\textsuperscript{93} so as to increase individualism. These attempts were accompanied by other attempts to reduce the chief's privileges and power. Members of the government administration and missionaries took over the functions of the chiefs.

Despite some of the changes that were introduced in the administration, the chiefs maintained power over social, cultural and economic matters. The establishment of a native administration and the institutionalization of the chiefly system ensured the continuation of the "Fijian way of life" especially its village based social structure. By the 1970s this framework was intact although little reform took place. The Fijian village remained preserved. The Fijian administration continued to control mobility out of the village by supplying permission to people who may wish to leave. According to Lasaqa\textsuperscript{94} the Fijian administration and the village society were interdependent, a situation that seems to have continued today.

One of the questions that is often asked about access to information in Fiji is whether people really have difficulties getting information. My interview data suggest that there are varying opinions. For instance, some view information as being available but the methods of accessing this are different from one government department to another, and one organisation to another. The problem lies in knowing where to access information. The Official Secrets Act\textsuperscript{95} is often quoted as the justification for

\textsuperscript{92} This is discussed in chapter 7.
\textsuperscript{93} Thompson, L. (1949), "The Relations of Men, Animals and Plants in an Island Community (Fiji)", American Anthropologist 51: 235 - 267.
non-disclosure but more often departments are not sure how to handle the issue of the right to information. Many government departments make an attempt to disclose as much information as they can. However, the problems of poor management and organisation of records make access to information difficult. In addition, civil servants or government workers are under an oath restricting them from disclosing information. As there are no clear guidelines about what can be disclosed and accessed and what cannot, many officers of government take the easy option and generally restrict access altogether. A government information officer who cannot be named had this to say about his work in disseminating information to the people:

All information officers outside Suva have established guidelines of work, news collecting, type of news to be collected, type of writing and what can and cannot be disseminated. We have no authority to do as we like. We are answerable to the central Suva office. We are not free to print or say what we wish. Usually, after collecting the information and story and having written a transcript that is sent to the Ministry of Information in Suva. They decide what is to be published, when and where. When approval is received, often the story is weeks old and has been covered by other newspapers and radio. This system stifles creativity. It should be changed, as we should be given some responsibility. We should also be given more funds to enable us to do our work out here well. Often, when we hear of an event we cannot rush out to the scene, as we do not have transport. We are always relying on other government agencies for transport. We also do not have good writing and printing facilities. Our responsibility to disseminate information is curtailed by all these rules that exist. We should be given some funds to enable us to do our work well. When asked why nothing has been done to improve the situation or whether he has the capacity to recommend changes, the officer replied:

We have our own ideas but we do not make these known in case we are victimised and promotions get affected within the Ministry. But we are clear that decentralisation will not help in getting information out to people. The system we are operating under has been in existence since the colonial days and there are no signs of having this changed. Decentralisation or regionalisation is an alternative which is being introduced soon but even then we will still need to have some clear decisions on how much responsibility we will get and how much resources. The people at the top of the hierarchy are just not aware of the importance of keeping the people informed, getting feedback and the importance of being responsive. Amidst all these problems, we have to continue to work.

The restriction in the flow of information as in this case continues to be a source of irritation for many people and affects political development in many ways. As a senior academic, Baba, commented:

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96 Public servants are bound by the promissory Oaths Ordinance No. 11 of 1876 where public servants are sworn to secrecy and to be faithful to the government of the day and superior executive officers. The oath of allegiance must be taken. The Law has been revised in 1985 and is still effective today.
Information is there. This is not the problem. Knowing how to access it is the problem. The great difficulty is in determining the procedures that government departments follow in matters that affect requests to access information. Also government tends to control the channels through which information can be accessed and disseminated. Often, I am not able to access the information I need for my work. Finally, I have to resort to using a friend in the government agency. This is happening all the time, in greater frequency too.

There seems to be too much government secrecy and control at present. In interviews with a number of senior civil servants, they argue that many of the facts that are used to solve difficult issues are too technical, complicated or confusing for ordinary citizens to understand. They add that the politicians were elected by the people to do what they think is best, and need not go back to the people each time a decision is made. Further, by not involving the people, decisions are made more quickly and efficiently. As a senior civil servant commented:

There is a silent understanding of and acceptance by the people that a more closed government is good for Fiji at this time as the civil servants and the politicians know what the best position of government is in any matter. Involving the people will only invite public pressures as well as irrational comments and debates and these all take up time. We can argue for weeks and philosophise and nothing practical will result. We know that the Prime Minister and his Ministers have a big task to do in bringing the country around to a better economic and stable position and this cannot be achieved with too many people raising too many questions and offering no practical solutions.

Moreover, as explained by a lawyer who did not wish to be named:

There is much information that could do a lot of damage to the ministers themselves and it serves no purpose for this to be disclosed and is not in the public's best interest to know about.

These comments only serve as evident that Fiji could not be categorised as a democracy as defined in this study. Information was definitely controlled and not made available to the public. Conditions were authoritarian but the government continued to claim that it was democratic. The people in general also were apathetic and did not demand more accountability and information on government activities. The lack of an efficient feedback system was evident and its complete breakdown as alluded to by Robie in chapter 8 accounts as one of the major reasons for the political crises in 1987.

Therefore, from independence to the early-1980s the information sector could be regarded as "complacent". People accepted the existing level of information availability and its management. The FBC appeared to be an official arm of the government reporting much - censored news. Government relations with the media remained strained.
It was not till the mid-1980s that the threat of a free press became apparent. Both the Fiji Times and the Fiji Sun published stories of the lack of accountability and corruption by the Mara Government. The newly formed Labour Party in 1985 gained the support of the two newspapers, and almost on daily basis published stories of alleged corruption and poor performance by government ministers. The Alliance Party suffered electoral damage by the newspapers.97

The Labour Phase, April - May, 1987

In the 1987 election the NFP/FLP coalition won the elections. The Alliance won all the 12 Fijian seats and 3 General Elector communal seats while the coalition took the 12 Indo-Fijian communal seats. However, in the national seats, the coalition won 7 Fijian, 7 Indo-Fijian and 2 General voters seats compared to the Alliance 3 Fijian, 3 Indo-Fijian and 2 General Electors seats. The final number of seats won by the coalition was 28 and the Alliance 24. The new government had more Indo-Fijian members but was led by Dr. Timoci Bavadra, a Fijian.

The Fiji Labour Party (FLP) was founded in May 1985 from a split in the National Federation Party (NFP) and had the backing of the unions. Support for the coalition came mainly from the Indo-Fijian community. The coalition comprised the FLP, the NFP and the Western Union Front. They won 28 seats out of the 52 seats in the House of Representatives. Of these total seats, only 7 were won by Fijians.

Immediately after the April elections, racial tension surfaced between the communities. Some sections of the Fijian community perceived the loss of the Alliance Party as the loss of the Fijians and decided to take matters in their own hands. Five weeks after the elections, on May 14 1987, a military coup led by Colonel (now Major General) Sitiveni Rabuka dissolved the new government and placed the Cabinet under house arrest. Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau, who was Governor General at the time, suspended Parliament and agreed to govern the country for six months with the assistance of a temporary Advisory Council until fresh elections could be arranged.

97 It would be interesting to analyse the role of the newspapers in bringing down the Alliance Government but this deserves a study on its own. Papers at this time continued to publish reports of poor government management of resources as well as planning. There was no accountability. There seemed a total anti-government move on the part of the paper but they argued that they were doing their duty and reporting the truth. There is no doubt that the effects of the media, the newspapers especially, accounted partly for the defeat of the Alliance Government in 1987.
During this period, the Bavadra Government was just settling in after their victory and was not able to put into place any plans for information and communication.

The Interim Government Phase, 1987 - 1992

Still hoping to bring some ease to the tension that existed in the country and the desire to ensure that security of the people was not compromised in any way, Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara and Dr. Timoci Bavadra met to try and agree on terms of sharing power in government between the Alliance Party and the coalition NFP/FLP. Talks were held at Deuba on 23 September, 1987. Rabuka, seeing any such agreement as compromising the position of the Fijians to secure political dominance, staged a second coup on 25 September, 1987. Rabuka revoked the 1970 Constitution and declared Fiji a Republic on 7 October, 1987.

Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau was dismissed as Governor General and Rabuka became head of state and set up a 22-member Council of Ministers to assist him to run the country. This Council was short lived as on 5 December, 1987, a civilian government was reinstated with Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara as Prime Minister. Ratu Mara selected a governing council of 21 ministers including Rabuka. Their appointment was for two years. At the end of this term a new Council of Ministers was appointed and served until the general elections in May 1992. Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara served as Prime Minister.

For the period immediately after the May 1987 coup there was great confusion. There was information blackout throughout the country. The two local newspapers were closed down for a week for criticising the coup. The Fiji Broadcasting Commission, Radio Fiji was controlled by the military that broadcast false and contradictory statements. The radio continued to air music most of the time interspersed with government announcements and special bulletins from the Office of the Governor General.

The total blackout in information encouraged widespread rumours. Usher had this to say:

Soon after the first coup in Fiji, armed soldiers occupied newspaper offices and broadcasting stations. Newspapers were then stopped from publishing, and radio news bulletins became a travesty. At a time when people, particularly in outer islands, wanted desperately to know what was happening on the national scene, local news broadcasts were confined to forest fires. Where there is no authoritative source of news rumours flourish, and there is no limit to the fancy of their inventors. Some rumours are deliberately conceived and spread to support a particular political or other group or fill a
particular propaganda aim. Whatever the purpose or origin of rumours, there was every indication that they disrupt national life and cause considerable distress. They are the worst possible foundation for rational and intelligent judgements. They are intensely destabilising and I cannot emphasise too strongly that they flourish in the absence of newspapers and radio reports on which people have come to rely for accurate information.98

Many of the people residing in urban areas whom I interviewed said that rumours were a real problem in the development of Fiji at this time. “Rumours are mischievous and cannot be ignored. They are a form of instilling fear in people”, says Isikeli Mataitoga who was Director of Public Prosecutions at the time of interview. This was further confirmed by a number of respondents in the urban areas. "I have not allowed my children to go to school because I am afraid that they may be attacked," was the reply from a concerned Indo-Fijian mother. Parents were constantly rushing off to school to collect children because of rumours that certain schools would be attacked. "I do not go out at night now as I am afraid I may get attacked in the nightclub" commented a young Fijian woman. People did not go out to socialise as there were rumours that thugs were on the streets ready to pounce on Fijians and non-Fijians. Rumours also penetrated the business and trading sectors. People were unnecessarily afraid and were not sure what to do. Many people became very silent and were careful not to voice an opinion on any matter. The Na Mata did not communicate and disseminate information as expected. This failure was due largely to the fact that there were no funds for travel or to organise and disseminate relevant information to the people. Information was also reaching the people late. The radio and newspapers became very sensitive in their broadcasts and reports.

During this period the government’s control of information intensified and its influence in commercial publishers and their products tightened. Operations of information and communication services within government departments were experiencing some change. Some undertook automating records and work in the hope that this would improve response time and information dissemination. Others did not managed to do very much because of a lack of human and financial resources. In a report to government on an information technology strategic plan, Price Waterhouse Urwick summarised Fiji’s information situation as

> the IT institution and capability in Fiji Government is approaching crisis. >At the operation level, IT tends to have little visibility and does not attract attention. Department Managers and national policy makers tend to have little awareness of IT, even when it

practitioners broadcast the existence of a variety of problems, provided a minimum level of service continues.99

In the private sector business firms tended to develop their own way. Foreign owned companies usually had information systems compatible with those of their parent companies abroad. Some local companies had developed their own information systems and facilities.

The Rabuka Phase, 1992 to the Present: Backward to Authoritarianism, Forward to Democracy

Elections were held peacefully under the new 1990 Constitution in May 1992. Rabuka was now President of the newly formed Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Tuikei (SVT), the Great Council of Chiefs' Party, which contested the elections. The SVT was a party whose members were only Fijians. The SVT won the elections and Rabuka became the first Prime Minister in the post-coup period. In November 1993 after failing to pass the budget, the Prime Minister dissolved Parliament and fresh elections were held 17 - 24 February, 1994. The SVT regained power and Rabuka once again became Prime Minister.

In the post-coup years, the people and also the opposition members could not organize or take part in meetings unless there was clearance from the police. The freedom of expression, assembly and the press were curtailed. Government's attitude to opposition groups was not good, barring groups from holding meetings whenever in the government's view the meeting would threaten their power and the security of the people. A number of people argue that the government has adopted a double standard as evident in reports appearing in the newspapers, Fiji Broadcasting Commission programmes or other people. While the government allows the public to criticise the government, it still maintains restrictions.

The Fiji Times has continued to operate a fair degree of self-censorship in response to the tense political situations in the different periods. From experience, it was believed that if government critics go too far, government would use force to limit freedom. While self-censorship was considered practical, the news media attempted to be fair in its reporting of all events. While the Fiji Times was free from state control, the newspaper recognised that it should be responsible and accountable. Assuring responsibility through statutory regulation of the press would be seen as undesirable for the development of democracy.

Central to democracy is freedom of expression, including the institution of a free press. In the Western view, a necessary prerequisite of that freedom is that the press must be independent of government. In this way the press is able to report and exercise responsible reporting on matters of interest to the government, the parliament, the people and society at large. But being independent does not mean that the press should be free from the law.

The newspapers have maintained their prominence in the media market. The annual Vakaviti '96 Omnibus market research\(^{100}\) confirmed that the *Fiji Times* remained the number one newspaper in Fiji dominating over the *Daily Post* by 2.6 to 1 on Monday to Wednesday, 2.9 to 1 on Thursday and Friday and 3.6 to 1 on Saturdays. As far as media usage in Fiji, the radio remained popular with 91% reported listening to the radio, 78% reading newspapers and 80% watching television and 27% involved in all three.

The same research also confirmed that more educated and people in white collar jobs read the newspapers with a high percentage of people in the over 18 to 44 age bracket reading the newspapers. Of the age group 18 to 29, an 88% readership was recorded, 30 to 40 years 80% and 57% for people 45 years and over.

It should be borne in mind that the readership figures of a newspaper do not represent its full readership. From one purchaser of a newspaper, it can be expected that more than twelve people will actually read or look at it. In the rural areas the numbers may be higher.

Two other newspapers ceased during this period. The *Fiji Sun* found it could not accept a great degree of self-censorship and closed down after September 1987. The *Weekender*,\(^{101}\) a weekly newspaper that commenced in 1989, did not have a long life. Plagued by financial difficulties and government interference, in 1994 it ceased to publish indefinitely. This paper covered stories that reported on government mismanagement of public funds, a gossip column and other stories that were in the opinion of government, subversive.

\(^{100}\) *The Fiji Times*, January 3, 1997, p. 1. The survey sample for radio was taken from those aged 14 years and over. For the print media and television, the sample was for 18 years and over.

\(^{101}\) Ceased publication in May 1994. The reasons for closure are uncertain. A combination of factors has been given for government intervention including its anti-government reporting and poor finances.
The Fijian-language newspapers - the weekly Na i llalakai, Voleagauna and Na Volasiga - and the Hindi weekly newspaper - Shanti Dut continue to be published and are an information source for many of the people in both urban and rural areas.

The magazines - The Review, Pacific Islands Monthly and Islands Business - have continued to appear with some interference from government. For example, The Review, in its May 1994 issue covered a story on the activities of Prime Minister Rabuka. The editor was hassled by the Ministry of Information as to the source of his story and was also questioned by police. Nevertheless, the particular issue of the magazine appeared amidst rumours that The Review would be closed down if the story was published. This did not happen. The story was published and the magazine continues with growing circulation.

Based on the above and my own observation, it would be fair to assume that there is a high desire to read the newspapers in both the young and older age group. Also, newspapers are read for interest, for the articles that they carry, for the photographs and also for the sake of reading. Any correlation between reading the newspapers and literacy can be made as in the rural areas more older people listen to the radio than read a newspaper published in English if this is available. They will however, look at the paper and will read a newspaper published in Fijian if this is available. Fijians in the rural areas will read any newspaper despite its currency.

Radio continues to grow with good and bad times. In 1994 the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development commissioned Coopers and Lybrand to: (a) examine and make recommendations on the financial viability of FBC; and (b) conduct a job evaluation and restructure of FBC. With regard to (a) government had endorsed a short term plan, part of which included the closure of Radio West in Lautoka. One of the recommendations made in this Report was the possibility of FBC becoming privatised with government subsidies reduced. The General Manager at the time, Mr. Walter Thomas, indicated in our interview that FBC's commercial stations 104FM and 98FM (Hindi) could be privatised sometime in the future, to make FBC viable. With regard to the national network Radio Fiji 1 (Fijian) and Radio Fiji 2 (Hindi) these will remain statutory bodies. Thomas could not see how FBC could become fully privatised as it served as the government's propaganda machine. However, any changes in legislation, planning, financing and the operation of these networks could see the corporatisation of FBC rather than privatisation. The emphasis is on the commercial viability of the organisation as a whole. In 1997, however, FBC continues to meet financial and operational difficulties.
In 1997, the FBC has five radio stations - Radio Fiji One and Bula FM (broadcast in Fijian) and are national, Radio Fiji Two and 98FM (broadcast in Hindustani) and FM104 and FM100.2 which broadcast in English. Broadcasting times range from 5am to midnight with four stations, 98FM, FM104, FM100.2, and Bula FM operating 24 hours.

Communications Fiji established the other radio station in Fiji in 1983. It is a private radio station, and runs three stations on FM. These are FM96 which broadcasts in English and Navtarang which broadcasts in the Hindustani language. Viti FM broadcasts in Fijian. All these stations air 24 hours and have extended coverage to larger areas in Fiji's eastern, western and northern regions.

During the Rabuka phase television developed to be a popular medium in the urban areas. Fiji began television services to the Suva area in October 1991. Television New Zealand (TVNZ) was contracted by Fiji Government to establish a TV receiving and rebroadcasting station. This was a trial service with only one station. Since then the Fiji Government has had difficulty trying to continue a service that will not be foreign owned. The government has resisted different types of pressures to retain ownership and independence in its television service. Television ownership today has been granted to the 14 provinces in Fiji in partnership with TVNZ.

It should be noted from the outset that television is available largely in the main urban areas. Video has been in Fiji for the past eighteen years and is available in many areas where television is not. When TVNZ set up a station in Suva there were already more than 30,000 video sets and 20,000 recorded cassettes in the country and the numbers are still growing. Video viewing had certainly paved the way for the introduction of television into the country. Prior to this there were frequent debates on whether Fiji should have television as there were many strong views regarding television as having negative social effects on Fiji's culture and society. Interviews conducted for this study gave some interesting insights on views on television viewing in small island states. Only a number of people in the urban areas and academics and professionals were able to respond to questions posed to them regarding television in Fiji. Because television has been going for only a short time since this study commenced, and that viewing is limited to the main urban centres, it was not possible to get more comprehensive and detailed information on use and effectiveness. It was also not possible to get wide ranging views on the effectiveness

of television in promoting political development, especially democracy, in the country.

While only 45% of the people interviewed in the urban centres own a television because of the high costs of television, there is every indication that the medium will grow in popularity as costs of television sets decrease. A high 94% of those who have a television set indicated that they watched television programmes every night seven days of the week. Some of the responses received indicated positive replies: "the visual effects are great"; "to be able to watch sports as it is played and the world news as it happens is tremendous"; "the documentaries are excellent. We learn so much"; "television's educational value is unquestionable". From these responses, there is every indication that television will be a popular medium of information when it becomes available nationwide and people can afford to purchase television sets.

Although television in Fiji is barely six years old potential benefits and expectations are encouraging. Since 1996 Fiji has had Sky pay television with one channel. There is talk of additional channels.

In political terms, during this phase Rabuka offered the people liberalism that appeared to be at odds with his view on democracy. Having committed the coups in the interest of the Fijians, it can be argued that Rabuka has never been much of a democrat. However, in interviews, speeches in Parliament and addresses to the public and the media, it seems difficult to gauge where Rabuka is coming from and where Rabuka is going. Many times Rabuka would support a free press. At the same time Rabuka would curtail the interests of the press and freedom of speech if opposed. In the late 1980s, Rabuka was convinced that democracy was not practical for Fiji. If anything, judging from actions and words, Rabuka preferred authoritarian ways of Government and this has been evident during the Prime Minister's reign. Rabuka frequently attacks and abuses the press. Yet the Prime Minister would grant press licences.

OTHER SOCIO-POLITICAL FACTORS LIMITING INFORMATION ACCESS

To understand why moving towards democracy has been a slow process, it is necessary to analyse some other socio-political factors that may limit the flow of information in Fiji society. These include the military, politics of the land, religion, urbanisation, telecommunications, economy, education and culture. A number of
these were discussed earlier in this chapter. The military and religion will be discussed next except for the cultural factors which will be taken up in chapter 7.

The Military

The army was established in 1871. Its role is to assist the police and civil authorities to restore law and order in the country. The army took part in both World Wars and since 1978 the military has been largely involved in international peacekeeping. During peacetime the relevance of the military to society has raised questions. A number of possible roles have been suggested that the army could adopt. For instance, it could be an agent of socio-economic change assisting government with its development policies. It could monitor internal security given the polarisation of the races in the country. It could also assist with agricultural and developmental projects throughout the country. Some aspects of this list differ from that given by Colonel Sanday who recognised the role of the military as including, in priority order: assisting the police and civil authorities in restoring and maintaining law and order; contributing to the national development of the country; supporting the government's foreign policy objectives; providing protection in war or other emergencies; and training for war and home defence. The roles suggested by him focused on national security.

Prior to the coups of 1987, the military maintained a more apolitical role with little interference in government matters. After the coups the military became more political, seeing itself as the "legitimate upholder of the constitution and the values it will enshrine". These values included the supremacy and the rights of the Fijian race, the positive discrimination policy for the benefit of the Fijians, and the reintroduction of a number of colonial institutions such as the traditional courts of justice. The military also continued to take part in socio-economic development projects of the Fijians such as the construction of roads, buildings, bridges and water systems in rural areas.

In the 1990 Constitution the military was given a special role as well as immunity for its action in the 1987 coups. The Constitution goes further and confirms that the

104 Ibid., p. 263.
immunity provisions of members of the Republic of Fiji Military Forces (including the Naval Division), the Police Force and the Fiji Prisons Service appear in Chapter XIV in the Constitution and "shall not be reviewed or amended by Parliament". The army is charged with the task of ensuring "the security, defence and the well being of Fiji and its people".

In Fiji the army remains one of the most powerful and important institutions. It enjoys the support of the government and the Fijian people mainly for the reason that it is regarded as the institution that will protect the Fijians' supremacy in their own land, and security in general. For many Fijian families it is hard not to be proud or supportive of the army as many have sons, brothers, sisters, uncles, and other relations serving in it. In my village alone about 50% of households have a member of the family serving presently or previously in the army. How long will the collaboration between the military and the traditional elite and government continue in protecting and maintaining ethnic Fijian rights and customs and traditions? In a submission which Rabuka and his fellow officers presented to Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau and Ratu Sir K. Mara in December 1987, they made a number of recommendations. These included: the appointment of Rabuka Minister of Home Affairs; the exclusion of members of the Bavadra Coalition from being members of the Mara interim ministry; the acceptance of the draft Constitution prepared by the military; the need for Fijian control of the national economy by giving them 51% shares in all foreign investment; the need to abolish the trade unions; the need to control the media; the appointment of a compliant judiciary; the importation of Chinese labour to work on cane farms; that Fiji be a Christian state; and that the return to constitutional government be delayed. There were other recommendations. These are some that justify the current concern that the army is not, and cannot be, neutral. It cannot be the protector of all citizens as they hold their loyalty to protecting the rights and lands of the Fijians above others.

Another concern is what to do with selected former army officers now promoted and holding key senior government positions in the district offices, and the police. These positions will enable the military to control and penetrate the communities, and influence development overall. The army still maintains close links with Rabuka even though Rabuka is no longer in the army. But interestingly enough is the fact that over

106 Ibid., p.153.
107 Ibid., p. 86.
the past two years a number of the recommendations listed above have been activated, and some are now beginning to surface under the administration of the Rabuka Government. An example is the continuous debate on the control of the media by government and also the importation of Chinese into Fiji.

Religion

Missionaries arrived in Fiji in the early 1830s. Prior to this the Tongans had been visiting Fiji together with the Wesleyans. While there seems to be no record to explain how the Fijians accessed information on Christianity, according to Clammer\(^\text{109}\) the Fijians became acquainted with the news through gossip and through the connection with the Tongan language acquired through the Tongan mission that had set up a base on Lakeba on Lau. Fijians accepted the missionaries and were tolerant of their teachings. The Fijians were in intimate contact with the missionaries who taught them Christianity.

The Methodist Church entered Fiji in 1835 and had great influence on the history of Fiji over the past 160 years. They introduced writing and converted the early Fijians to Christianity concentrating on the chiefs first. The conversion of the chiefs was seen as ensuring the conversion of other Fijians. The interrelationship between the conversion to Christianity and education was a major process in the early history of Fiji. The foundations of education were laid in the Methodist Mission schools in almost every part of Fiji.

Christianity brought with it many changes to the social, cultural, economic and political life of the Fijians. Understanding the process of these changes in general and their impact has relevance here. To be able to convert Fijians and bring about social change would mean that the types and ways the missionaries influenced the Fijians were important. This can be examined and explained through the ways people acquired the new Christian teaching and other information, the source of the information and communication, the content of the communication and the manner in which the recipients reacted to the communicated information.

In accepting the information, the Fijians had to accept the credibility of the source of the information. Missionaries linked the source of information to biblical issues, and education that the Fijians accepted. And as Clammer explained, the Fijians accepted "the intimate causal link (was) established between the sources of Christianity and the

technical and economic superiority of the Europeans\textsuperscript{110}. Fijians also accepted information appearing in the written form. Accepting the content of the communication was difficult for the missionaries as these competed with the traditional beliefs. The missionaries had to devise ways to pressure the Fijians in accepting the communication. It has been suggested that the use of fear, appeal and persuasive communication were some of the ways in which missionaries were able to get their audience to accept the teachings and information communicated. The reaction of the audience to accept the different information and teachings communicated induced different reactions and behaviour in different people. These may reflect different value and belief systems as well as culture as discussed in chapter 2 where information is seen as being situational and cultural.

Today, Christianity continues to have strong influence over the people. Fiji has all the great religions, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Confucianism. Hinduism accounts for 36.5% of the population and 81% of the non-Christian population with a total of 289,600 people. The annual average growth has been low, 2% caused mainly by the massive migration after the two military coups of 1987, and also to a low growth rate.\textsuperscript{111} Islam accounts for 7.7% of the population, Sikhs 0.6% and 55% of the population belong to one of the Christian religions. The dominant Christian religion in Fiji is the Methodist Church with a membership of 33.6% of the total population. Between 1966 and 1992 the growth rate of the Methodist Church has been about 84,386. The recorded total loss for the same period was 37,865. The church lost members mainly to the Assemblies of God, Every Home, and other varieties of new religious groups. The Anglican Church has also reduced membership while the Roman Catholic Church recorded slight growth. The fastest growing church is the Assemblies of God. According to Ernst, the trend in the growth of new religions has been unequal but that the growth has been at the expense of the Methodist Church.\textsuperscript{112}

The Methodist Church

The influence of the Methodist Church in the politics of Fiji should not be underestimated. Currently the Methodist Church plays a very active part in politics. This has resulted in many criticisms and calls for the Methodist Church to divorce

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., p. 117.

\textsuperscript{111} The total population growth rates for 1987 and 1988 were -0.2% and -0.3% respectively. This was due to the large number of Fiji residents who left the country after the coup d'etat in May, 1987. It is estimated that 80% of those migrating were Indo-Fijians. Breakdown by religion is not available. Fiji, Bureau of Statistics. (1994), Current Economic Statistics, 1994, Suva: Fiji Government, p. 3.

itself completely from all political matters. Immediately after the 1987 coups, the head of the Methodist Church motivated his followers to be more involved in the politics of the country. As a Methodist preacher said about politics and the church:

Rev. Lasaro, the Head of the Methodist Church in Fiji, must think seriously about the consequences of his actions. We are not concerned about power here; or about the individual but rather the whole group of MC followers who are devoted worshippers and believers. Many do not wish to get involved in the present discourse between Government and the church and hoped things will change. Lasaro is very unchristian in his actions: inciting racial remarks, calling for support to mount road blocks all over the country because of the MC stand on the revoking of the Sunday Ban decree.

A member of the general public had this to say:

Rev. Lasaro is an effective church leader. He knows how to get information through to all MC members to get their support. He knows how to use the system. But I do not like what he is doing as I feel it is not related to religious teachings and the faith. I am thinking of leaving the MC and changing my religion.

Clearly, since after 1987, Methodist Church leadership, through their actions, made it clear where their allegiance lay regarding the coups. Some of the actions of some members have led to the trouble creating divisions in and distrust of the Methodist Church. For example, in December 1988 Rev. Lasaro and fellow Methodist Church members set up road blocks in 70 points in the greater Suva area to protest against the lifting of the Sunday Ban. Rev. Koroi, the President of the Methodist Church, suspended Rev. Lasaro at the time, for acting unconstitutionally and without authority of the Methodist Church. Hence began a power struggle in the church. On one side was Rev. Lasaro, supporter of the coups and friend of Rabuka, and supporters comprising mainly rural Fijians. On the other was Rev. Koroi who believed that it was improper for the Methodist Church to impose their views and beliefs on the rest of the population. Conflicts continued. In August 1989 Lasaro and with supporters were imprisoned for unlawful obstruction. They were given a six-month sentence but released after a few days on the authority of Rabuka, then Minister of Home Affairs. A year later, Rev. Lasaro was elected President of the Methodist Church.

As President, Lasaro had faced various politically related conflicts. For example, in 1992 some dissidents of the Methodist Church established a breakaway Rewa Wesleyan Mission in Lomanikoro, Rewa. This occurred when a minister of the Methodist Church, Rev. Maravu, refused to move after transfer orders. Fiji Nationalist, Sakeasi Butadroka and Ratu Mosese Tuisawau, a high chief of Bau

supported his stand. The new church is now officially registered and has about 2000 members. Problems such as this have involved the church and its leaders, the government and the chiefs. They illustrate what Fiji is experiencing at this time. Many Fijian people have moved from the Methodist Church to other religions suggesting that people are searching for an answer to their spiritual problems, which at this time they still cannot identify. In the interviews, those members of the Methodist Church noted that changing their religion has been largely due to the leadership crisis in administration of the Methodist Church. They believe that the Methodist Church leaders are no better than powerful businessmen. A number of Fijians relate their loss of religious faith to their loss of faith in the objectives of the coup. Fijians had expected positive results almost immediately. This analysis was confirmed by a number of people I interviewed in Korovou, Navua, Ba and Lautoka. "The church is not guiding us. The government is also not fulfilling its promises. We have had problems with our roads in the past twenty years and nothing has been done about them. The church is spending too much time on politics," commented a lady in Korovou.

Whether the church should take an active part in politics is a controversial issue and one that cannot be resolved easily. In societies such as Fiji where the church and religious leaders of all faiths have great influences in shaping people's attitudes towards political and social issues in life, such a controversy can polarize communities within a society. A number of faiths in Fiji, for example the Roman Catholic Church, criticized those who were responsible for the political crisis of 1987 and have continued, as an institution, not to be directly involved in the political affairs of the country. They believe that while religion should be divorced from political activity the Church is still free to voice an opinion on injustices, poverty and exploitation. The views of the Methodist Church under Lasaro's leadership differed. The Methodist Church leadership believed that to remedy the injustices and exploitation they must be involved in the political arena because that is where the decisions are made, policies formulated, and structures drawn up. The Methodist Church had been a strong supporter of the Alliance Party. Many of its members are now members of the Taukei Movement.

This relationship was highlighted in the actions taken by the President of the Methodist Church in Fiji in August 1993, Rev. Lasaro, who supported the ban on Sunday trading and organized sport. Lasaro called for a censored and controlled television service to curb undesirable influences. Under the new President of the Methodist Church, Rev. Tuwere who was elected in October 1995, things have
changed. Rev. Tuwere encourages cuts on levies laid on members of the church. Tuwere also disagrees with a total Sunday ban and supports inter-denominational services, and better management of church finances. Further, support is given to helping the poor and getting the people more informed and knowledgeable about the country, the church, commitments and responsibilities. Tuwere supports the dissemination of information with the church continuing to publish books and maintain a good collection of early records on Methodism in Fiji and other subjects. The other effective means of communication is through human links. Ministers are based all over Fiji and they form a human network for information dissemination. It is most effective. In the village and rural areas it is the Methodist Church that forms a major source of information on various matters. The Methodist Church also has close relations with government. There is no doubt that if used effectively, the church communication system can influence people and benefits spill to other areas.

Since Fiji has declared itself a Christian state with the 1990 Constitution, the Methodist Church and the state will find their paths crossing frequently sharing common religious values and community life. The present Prime Minister Rabuka has strong beliefs in the link between religion and success, economic growth and good government. Rabuka has endeavoured to introduce this idea and attitude into the Fijian political system where religion forms the basis of government. It has certainly filtered through to the Fijian community, who as noted in chapter 6, rated the church as number one priority ahead of the land and government. Hence, when the former President of the Methodist Church comments that people must not read newspapers but the Bible as the newspapers "fill the mind with trivial matters and rubbish while the Bible gives people direction", one begins to wonder about the effectiveness and retention of such messages by the people. The church, the land and the government are thought by many Fijians as one in a political - religious fusion. A change in one will lead to a change or collapse in the other two. Unity in the church, as a community of the people under ministers and chiefs, is regarded by many Fijians as crucial to its political development and participation in the democratic process.

In summary it can be said that the church and its practices are powerful forces for social and political management within the Fijian community and, more specifically, the Methodist Church and its congregations are a primary means for facilitating social

114 Many studies have been undertaken on work ethics but a seminal work that links Protestantism to capitalist economic development has been Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1930.

control, information dissemination, cooperation, competition and conflict management. The study reveals that the Methodist Church and its congregations are a primary social factor within the Fijian community which are the means for organizing labour, delegating responsibilities for a wide range of work, distributing and sharing resources and responsibilities. Information management and distribution responsibilities of the Methodist Church usually relate to these tasks, and sometimes to the work of and support for the government. These expressions of belief in the church and its role in the government fuels an ongoing church identity which extends to political beliefs in respect of the self, kin, group and community. The Methodist Church maintains this identity and influence through its preaching and information disseminated. It can be regarded, therefore, as an agent of information control.

CONCLUSION

A major feature of the development of the information space in Fiji is the distinct ethnic, cultural and economic differences that exist and which have influenced the character and operations of the information and communication infrastructure and environment. The information industry with the establishment of the newspapers, radio and later television has been supported in varying degrees by the colonial administration and successive governments, business people and the religious sector. Developing alongside this has been the information space for the Fijians, which was developed by the colonial administration but separated from the mainstream information system for the country.

In its presentation of a historical description of the development of information and communication in Fiji from 1874 to the present, this chapter highlighted the great extent to which Fiji’s former colonial power, the United Kingdom, continues to influence the information and communication sector and institutions resulting in the continuation of colonial management and operational styles. This chapter shows that successive governments in Fiji’s history have not made development in information and communication a priority in any of its development plans. The potentials of information to development in general and to the attainment of democracy have not been fully recognized. The newspapers, radio and more recently television, provide a good coverage of news and general information. Although there is evidence that government ministers and departments have not been happy with the freedom given to the newspapers to publish, except for the period immediately after the coup, the press in Fiji has largely been "free" to publish as they wish.
Can we attribute the impact of information as a likely factor causing political change, moving the country towards democracy? This chapter supports the point made in chapter 3 that more information can bring about political change. From post-independent Fiji to 1987, information was relatively easy to obtain. Fiji was classified as a democracy. However, government's plan to review media laws (covered more fully in chapter 8) with the view of regulating the information sector and the media more, raises question on the justification of introducing information control mechanisms. The likelihood of a more controlled media may move Fiji further from democracy. Chapters 6 to 8 will also deal with aspects of this question.

What socio-political constraints would there be against greater access? This chapter suggests that there are a number of socio-political factors that affect access and the free flow of information. These include the containment of class conflict particularly between the Fijian chiefly elite and the ordinary, educated Fijian, the management of inter-ethnic conflict, the stagnant economy; the politics of the land, the military and religion. This chapter highlights that class, religion, the military, and the economy can influence the free flow of information in society and this can in turn affect the political participation of people in politics. Chapter 6 will examine the way selected groups of Fijians and others perceive information and how they use this information for political purposes.
In this chapter I will examine how Fijians generally perceive information and communication in relation to government and politics. An examination of how Fijians access, select, use and communicate information for political purposes will also be undertaken. In making this examination, I will attempt to focus on and answer a number of questions: What is the Fijian's perception of information and communication? Is information easily accessible through the press and broadcast media for people in the rural village? What is the function of or how important is information in the electoral process? Will more information and a better-informed society affect the way people vote? Finding answers to these questions may be seen in a wider context than the electoral process itself. Therefore, a number of questions were asked of people interviewed regarding aspects relating to development in general. Furthermore, I am also conscious of the influence culture will have in people's responses, but will only touch on these briefly where relevant as the impact of socio-cultural factors on information and communication is covered in the next chapter.

ESTABLISHING INFORMATION NEEDS

Shaw and Culkin\(^1\) had argued that generally, what an individual needs to know is not only information found and provided in documents and information through formal information systems, but also information through cognitive access concerned with social, cultural and personal interests. In other words, "information needs are situational and cultural\(^2\)." Further, as noted in chapters 2 and 3, information needs of people are different in different countries and also within a country. Some countries are experiencing information overload while others, for various reasons, are suffering from a scarcity of information. Some sectors within a country have greater access to information while others do not. Ensuring equal access and availability of information within a society will require policy decisions and mechanisms put in place by government that will represent equally information needs of the different people in a society. The use of the information, once available, will depend on the individual's needs.


belief, existing knowledge and a growing awareness of the need for information and what it can and cannot do.

Perception of Information

How do people perceive information and communication? Many individuals I interviewed did not know their information needs, or have a good understanding of what kinds of information were needed, or when. In chapter 2, a detailed description and analysis of the concept of information was given. I do not intend to go over the same ground but instead give the meaning of information as perceived by the Fijians I interviewed in the urban areas and those in the rural village.

According to Ravuvu,

> when Fijians talk about information they are referring generally to the nature of that information which includes the origin of the information, centres of information, producers and production of information, the method of dissemination of information and the content of the information. The origin of the information is important as it indicates to the person whether to accept and how to respond to the message or information.

Interviews with Fijians in the urban areas and discussions at the rural level confirmed that information meant different things to different people. See Table 6.1.

For the Fijians in the rural village, information was perceived as a message or tukutuku, an instruction or vakasala, and order or vakaro from the "top", meaning the chief, central government through the District Commissioners, or the Fijian Affairs Board through the Fijian Provincial Administration. Information thus involves the process of listening and following "orders". A number of people in the village saw information as news broadcast through the radio or that published in the newspapers. Generally, for many of the people interviewed in the urban areas information was not seen as reducing a person's ignorance or result in a person becoming more informed and therefore did not have a learning role.

The information or instructions received by Fijians in the urban and rural village are usually categorised by originator as noted by Ravuvu. For instance, if the information is from a chief, then this carries much weight. If the information is to do with voting for leaders, and the chief instructs the people to vote for a particular candidate, the likelihood that the people will do this with little question is high. This was confirmed in
Table 6.1: Fijians in the urban areas: Meaning of information

Q. What does information mean to you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A message</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facts</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figures</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commodity</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=256

Note:
Quite clearly, it was difficult to obtain any consensus on the meaning of information. This concept was perceived in many different ways.

a discussion with Josevata Kamikamica who, in 1994, campaigned heavily for the Tailevu seat under a Fijian Association Party ticket but lost. Kamikamica had indicated to me that visits were made to almost every village in the province while campaigning, and received the people’s support. Kamikamica was Deputy Prime Minister in the Alliance Government and known to be an honest, well qualified and respected person with a caring attitude for the rural people. Prior to the elections, Rabuka, as head of the chief’s SVT Party, visited the main villages that Kamikamica had visited and met with individual chiefs seeking their support. The SVT Party won the seat. The result confirms the strength of traditions and loyalty of the Fijians to the chiefs. As one of the voters I interviewed commented,

It is difficult not to do what the chiefs ask, as it is easy for people to know who did not vote with the rest (of the village) as numbers are small. Besides, not voting as the rest of the village will not be good for me and my family in terms of our own interests.

The content of the message is also important, and this depends on the receiver. A village person’s interpretation of the content of the information received will reflect values, ideas on life, contacts, culture, and tradition. “The interests of the village and church often come before my own family, and this is the basis of many of my decisions,” was a response I received from a Fijian lady from Nausori village.
Generally, information is not seen as a commodity or resource. This attitude reflects the country's information sector and its allocation of resources towards information building for development.

Concept of Communication in Fiji

Responses of people interviewed on the meaning of communication are given in Table 6.2.3

While the Fijians in the village listed the village crier, the mata or village representative, the lali or drum as traditional communication channels through which they obtain information they also included the radio, newspapers, television and people as other sources through which they receive, impart and exchange new ideas.

Table 6.2: Fijians in the urban areas: Meaning of communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication in:</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talking or conversing</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singing</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dancing</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best of the lali or drum</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imparting, exchanging and obtaining information (including the mata)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silence</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using electronic media</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:
Various answers were given but many saw communication as imparting information and talking on an interpersonal basis and in groups.

In the book, *The Facade of Democracy* Ravuvu writes:

The Fijians, the indigenous people of Fiji, do not generally communicate in writing. They listen, observe and communicate verbally among themselves. Thus their feelings and aspirations are seldom communicated to the non-Fijian public or international readers. Being verbally transmitted their beliefs, feelings and aspirations are usually regarded as transitory, not seriously considered in the long term, and often forgotten.4

3 For characteristics of people interviewed see Table 4.1 in chapter 4.
Oral traditions have persisted as part of the "Fijian way of life". They have been taken for granted and few appreciate their power in shaping and conditioning knowledge, beliefs of the people, and standards and principles of development in general. So far, little research has been undertaken in Fiji and the South Pacific to examine traditional ways of knowing from a historic and progressive perspective, and how these have influenced present day developments. However, elsewhere, the significance of traditions in influencing and explaining behaviour and social systems has been widely recognised and studied. 

Information Needs

Table 6.3 indicates the type of information that people interviewed in the urban areas sought. It is interesting to note that 40% of the people in this group did not actively seek information for a number of reasons. "What is so important about information. You tell me something that I should know?" was a comment made by an eighteen year old school leaver looking for a job in Suva. "Is there a way that information can help me find a job?" "How can information help me with paying school fees, with buying textbooks for my children, or pay for their busfares," was a comment from a labourer in Lautoka. "I really don't know what information is. To me, information is news or stories I hear from friends - things that I hear that are new about people I know. And I get a lot of this type of things just driving the taxi everyday. I don't have to go and look for this news", was a comment from a taxi driver in Sigatoka. Many people interviewed were content with what was available and did not feel that they had to make an effort to seek or access information for whatever purpose.

Of those academics, professionals and others interviewed in the urban areas 25% listed their information needs as originating in central government, and 20% listed their needs as being available in private organisations and non-government organisations. A small percentage, 6%, sought educational and business information. The low need for educational information reflected the people's dependence on government for their information on education such as the availability of school places, school fees, textbook allowances, textbooks availability and courses available. Interviewees within the urban areas exhibited a high degree of dissatisfaction with the information available on education opportunities. Many parents faced difficulties

finding places in a school for children, or finding assistance with school fees. Other parents located schools for their children very late in the new school year and were forced to place their children in schools far from home.

In reacting freely to the question of other categories of information needed, and how best these were being met, respondents in the urban areas gave news, community and local news, shipping, plane and bus routes information. This category of information was not easy to obtain. While news was accessible through the radio and newspapers, information on shipping, plane and bus services was not available readily and people often had to phone for information or visit the bus depots or shipping agencies to get the required information.

Table 6.3: Urban areas including academics and professionals: Categories of information needed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Government</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational (a)</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-government Organization</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (b)</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Records</td>
<td>07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:
(a) Includes international and local business, educational.
(b) Includes specifically church and unions.

Academics and professionals nominated information from government departments as the most needed, particularly for work. Many in this group knew where to go to access information. Generally, they knew the importance of information to their lives as compared to those interviewed in the urban and peri-urban areas.

Discussions with the villagers revealed that they perceived no urgent information needs as much of what they need to know relating to their village life and information was provided them through the channels of the Fijian Provincial Administration and village communication channels as discussed in chapter 7. As reported in a group discussion by a villager:

There is little pressure for us to go out of our way to seek information. Information is reaching the village through various sources such as the radio, the mata, the mares-
There was little pressure to seek information for development in general. Information is reaching the villagers through the Fijian Provincial Administration, through the traditional communication channels and those people from the village now living in urban areas. The villagers accepted these as their main sources of information.

Thus, it is not a matter of identifying the information needs of the villagers that is the important consideration here, but rather how the people can be mobilised to enable them to recognise that information is available on many subjects that may be of interest to them as individuals and as a group. The required information can be on health matters, education, economics and that this information can be accessed through various other sources.

In summarising this section, we can say that, generally, for those Fijians interviewed and living in the urban areas, there is more pressure to want more information. However, there is a mixture in the degree of needs. Some, especially the educated, have a greater awareness of the importance of information and seek to acquire more. The lack of awareness of the importance of information to political development and development generally reflects the low education status of those in the urban and peri-urban centres I interviewed. In the rural village, oral traditions are important and the awareness of the value of information is limited with people relying on government for all their information needs. The value of information originating in government departments is regarded highly and is often accepted as the formal and right information to respond to if necessary.

Sources of Information

Sources of information refer to the places people go to obtain information that they may need. Common sources mentioned in interviews with the people in the urban areas include the radio, newspapers, television, libraries, the post, telephones, and informal sources such as people (human links) and village communication sources. Many people obtained information from friends or other people. It is also interesting to note that the use of the library as a source of information received a low rating. For those interviewed in the urban areas more use is made of the radio, the newspapers and to a lesser extent television since television is relatively new to Fiji, having been introduced over six years ago and available mainly in the urban areas.
Table 6.4 lists the main sources of information of people interviewed in the urban areas. It will be noted that the people obtained information mainly through the radio, newspapers and television but the degree of use of each communication channel varied. For instance, the medium that people used most to obtain information was the radio, followed by human links or people, newspapers and television.

Table 6.4: Urban Areas: Main source of information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Links</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers(a)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazine(b)</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libraries</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic mail</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postal service</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*n= 640

Note:
(a) Overseas newspapers
(b) Include various information leaflets produced by government and the private sector.

Table 6.5 shows that a high 40% of those in the urban areas did not know where to look for information which they may need. They also did not care. It is important to know why people do not care about needing information because it may enable us to understand attitudes and shed some idea on how apathetic people are.

My interview data suggested four reasons for not caring. The lack of awareness of the importance of information or a lack of understanding was the main reason for not caring. About 31% of those interviewed gave this as a reason. Another 30% did not have any value for information. About 20% were satisfied with the existing situation and did not see the need for information. A further 19% said that there was too much propaganda and therefore did not see any practical reason to try and get additional information.

204
Table 6.5: Urban Areas: Other sources of information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market vendors</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town Clerk</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Land Trust Board</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Cross</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District officer</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know and don't care</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=640

Academics and professionals rely mainly on the print media and colleagues for information, as indicated in Table 6.6. They also used new information technologies to access information available locally and from abroad.

Table 6.6: Academics and Professionals: Sources of information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In print form (books, newspapers,)</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human networks</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New information technologies</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video and audio equipment</td>
<td>05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=100

For the rural Fijian population information is obtained from four main sources which include the radio, newspapers, the mata or village representative, and the FPA. There is no television in the village. The FPA emphasis is on the traditional information communication channels such as the mata or village representative.

In the village, people depend to a large extent on the Fijian Provincial Administration and village system for information and their general well being. There is access to news of the country through the radio and occasionally through the newspapers. Newspapers are flown into the island of Vanubalavu in limited numbers. People do not normally buy a newspaper but rather borrow the papers from friends or others in the village who may have access to a paper.

People also receive information through visitors to the village on government business, for instance the nurses to work in the clinic, or the public workers to work...
on the roads. The telephone system linking the village to the urban areas is very effective, and forms the regular contact between people in the village and family members in the urban areas.

USE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE NEWSPAPERS, THE RADIO AND TELEVISION

The radio, newspapers and television are generally accessible and are important as means of communication throughout the country. Zolo suggests that it is the press and electronic media that now mould and influence political attitudes and it is through the press that the people can access information to effectively make choices. In this next section an attempt is made to see whether information needs accessed through (a) the radio; (b) the newspapers; (c) the television; (d) and other sources affect people’s political opinions and choices.

Newspapers

Interviewees showed different patterns of newspaper readership. Of those interviewed in the urban area, 75% indicated that they read a newspaper everyday compared to 0% in the rural village. The other 25% in the urban areas read a newspaper once a week or whenever a paper was available. Academics and professionals read a newspaper everyday. The majority of the people who read newspapers daily read both the papers published in English. The majority of the Fijians in the urban areas also read the newspapers published in Fijian.

For those in the urban areas who read newspapers they found the newspapers to be a good source of general information together with information on the activities of government. Responses indicated that newspapers were used for a number of reasons. Some people used the newspapers mainly for local community news, others read the Letters to the Editor column, notices and announcements, and advertisements. Still, others found the world news section important. The use made of newspapers by the respondents is detailed in Table 6.7.

In an attempt to compare some of these findings with other types of media usage, questions were asked regarding the use and effectiveness of newspapers for democratic development in Fiji.

---

Table 6.7: Urban Areas: Estimate use of the two major newspapers in English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Usage</th>
<th>Response %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advertisement</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General information</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notices and announcements</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World news</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional news</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters to the Editor</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political news</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local community news</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other(a)</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n=740</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:
(a) Include horoscope, tides, banking and currency rates, weather.

An effort was made to estimate the effectiveness of the newspapers in improving national news reporting and reporting on government activities. In addition, people in the urban centres were asked whether the new reporting fulfilled the role of a community information channel or source. Table 6.8 of the urban area sample indicated that 52% of those interviewed agreed that news agencies were successful in improving Fiji’s national news reporting, 26% did not think the news agencies were doing a good job, and 22% had no comment. As far as meeting the role of community information channels, 55% of those interviewed agreed that the newspapers were doing a good job while 45% did not think the newspapers were a good source of community information. Regarding the establishment of a distribution network for newspapers to be established to improve access, 81% agreed that this would be a good idea, while 19% did not see this as a need.

Those respondents who did not think the news agencies were performing well as community information channels made a number of suggestions. These include: improving news coverage and style; abolishing the restrictive censorship law promulgated during the 1987 coups; increasing rural news coverage; and providing more educational, social and health news. Suggestions were also given on how to establish newspaper distribution centres in different parts of the country so that newspapers would be accessible to more people. These suggestions included the use of health and hospital centres in both rural village and urban areas, shops, public transport system, markets, community centres, district offices, Women’s Interest Offices, schools, and youth and women’s clubs as distribution centres for magazines.

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Table 6.8: Newspapers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>n=740</th>
<th>Yes %</th>
<th>No %</th>
<th>A little %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Are the national news agencies improving Fiji's national news reporting?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>52</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Is there a need for the establishment of a distribution network for newspapers?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>81</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Are the newspapers adequate community information channels?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>55</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It would appear that majority of the people in the urban areas reads newspapers daily compared to those in the rural village who read newspapers less than once every two weeks. The newspapers in the English language are the most widely read in the urban areas, while the Fijians in the rural village also read the Fijian newspapers.

The Radio

The general availability of radio is shown in Table 6.9, where numbers of people interviewed in the urban and rural village indicated that they owned their own radio set. It is interesting to note that many households in the rural area owned radios. This reflects the importance of radio in the wider community and makes radio a valuable source of information, particularly in the rural areas.

Table 6.9: Radio availability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Urban%(a)</th>
<th>Rural%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radio in the house</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than one radio</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own radio</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No radio</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: (a) Include the 100 respondents from the academics and professionals. While all the households have radios, 55% of the total household have more than one radio and 90% of the respondents have their own radio as well as another in the house.

In the urban area 98% of the people interviewed had at least one radio in their home. Many homes had more than one radio. The reason given for this high incidence is that family members not only listen to different radio stations but also different programmes. It was found that in cases where there were teenage children in the family there was a need to have more radios in the home as children listened to more
English music than the adults who tended to listen either to the Fijian or Hindustani radio programmes.

I asked several questions about the ways the radio was used and its effectiveness in promoting information of value to users. Rural Fijians indicated that the radio was useful. They listened to radio frequently. Favourite programmes included the news in Fijian, rural and religious programmes and Fijian music. The younger population listened to the English sessions, the attraction being the music.

Those in the urban areas, reported listening frequently to radio. All different language programmes had their fair share of listeners. In trying to establish the effectiveness of the radio in broadcasting government news it was evident that there was no perceived shortage of news. But there seemed to be many questions raised by the respondents regarding the authenticity of the news that is broadcast in the three different languages of English, Fijian and Hindustani. According to Pio Manoa of the University of the South Pacific, "the news broadcast over the radio and television in English is definitely censored. But worse still, the news that is broadcast in Fijian is often different from that broadcast in Hindustani and English".

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Yes %</th>
<th>No %</th>
<th>Don't know %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindustani</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

People interviewed seemed to claim that there is a disparity between the broadcasts in the different languages. This was seen as not very democratic because this can be regarded as manipulation by government. Rural Fijians do not know that the news they are receiving is different from that broadcast in English and Hindustani.

The General Manager of Fiji Broadcasting Commission at the time, Walter Thomas, indicated during an interview that the news had never been censored by government or by the radio station. Also, the same news broadcast over the English session was translated exactly into Fijian and Hindustani, and there was no case of censorship or misinforming the public.

A number of other questions regarding the effectiveness of the radio stations in promoting political development were directed at respondents in the urban areas, academics and professionals. Table 6.11 gives a summary of answers to these.
first question raised the concern on whether radio stations promoted partisan politics. Of this 55% responding agreed that they did, 13% did not agree and 32% did not know. The second question referred to the ethnic orientation of the radio and sought people's views on whether this structure accentuated racial politics. 47% of the respondents agreed that the structure did accentuate racial politics, 33% did not agree and 20% had no comment. The third question concerned the national radio networks as adequate community information channels. Of this 55% of the respondents felt that the radio stations were adequate community channels of information. They felt that the radio could be a very effective medium for conveying messages. It could also be used for propaganda. About 46% of the respondents did not agree with the effectiveness of the radio as a community information channel in its present state. “The channels seem satisfactory but the programmes and emphasis need to be changed. There needs to be some life injected into radio programmes. It's too boring. Currently the news is too urban oriented. There is little news on rural and community activities”, was a comment made by a lecturer, Pulotu Cokanasiga. Radio was seen as having great potential as a medium for promoting community news. It was also seen as promoting racial integration in the sense that integrating radio programmes would make people more tolerant of the different languages.

The question on airing programmes in different languages together received mixed responses. Of the people interviewed, 66% agreed to the mix, 29% did not, and 5% did not have any views. Among the academics and professionals, it was clear that those who saw the mix of different programmes in the different languages in a positive light realised that it would be possible to mix programmes. “Many people are at least bi-lingual, some even multi-lingual, and it should be quite effective to mix drama and music in the different languages”, according to Professor Andrew Horn, Head of the Department of Literature and Language at the University of the South Pacific at the time of writing. Horn also noted that if programmes were mixed this might alleviate the problem of inaccurate news reporting.

Ben Lee, an architect in Suva, advanced a different view. Lee said,

Mixing programmes would be inevitable if there was only one station. Considering the many stations that exist, mixing would be a waste of resources. I believe that if Fiji is to go into the 21 century economically strong and well-equipped management wise, then English will have to be the main language and medium of communication and everyone should be fluent in this language. Furthermore, mixing implies cultural development and cultural development should be left to each cultural group without government interfering.
It would appear that the radio as a medium is widely listened to throughout Fiji, and is used effectively for the promotion of government information, news and entertainment. In the urban areas as well as in the rural the radio is listened to for news as well as its entertainment programmes. Fijians in both the rural and urban areas listen to the Fijian programmes regularly, particularly the religious sessions. Most people interviewed in the urban areas listened to the English language broadcasts and occasionally to their own language programmes. All the rural radio were listened to the Fijian language programmes more than the English programmes.

Table 6.11: Some issues in radio listening

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Sometime</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do the radio stations promote partisan politics?</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Does ethnic orientation of the radio structure in Fiji accentuate racial politics?</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Are the national radio networks adequate community information channels?</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Should the radio programmes in the different languages be mixed?</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Should information for public access be documented, written and broadcast in Fijian, Hindi, English?</td>
<td>yes to all</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Are the essential elements of Fiji's communication and information system adequately meeting and serving your information needs and that of the population?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Television

Television is a fairly new information medium in Fiji starting in October 1991. Since television is still not available in many rural areas, including Levuka, I interviewed academics and professionals, to obtain more qualitative views on television rather than the number of television sets people may have or their viewing patterns. Questions ask, explored people's views on having television, the quality of the programmes and its impact on their lives.

At the time of the interview about 65% of those in the academic and professional group had a television set. This is not representative of the national availability. Many of the people with television set - 85% - viewed television every night. The general feeling was that television was an excellent medium to convey information. The graphics and visual effects were effective. About 80% of people interviewed agreed that this should be a national service. A number, however, were cautious about the widening of the gap between the urban and rural populations. Others commented on the lack of locally produced programmes but accepted that this was a new
development and that it was only fair to give it a chance. When a media usage survey in Fiji was conducted in 1996 by Vakaviti '96 Omnibus market research, it was confirmed that 80% of the people in the sample watched television.

About 70% of academics and professionals whom I interviewed agreed that television was an effective information medium but there was strong criticism regarding the programmes aired. Local news received the most criticism. About 90% of the viewers commented that the local Fiji news was too boring. "The news is often too long and biased towards government. Government control over television is too obvious", was a typical comment made. Further, "This is not good for a country which is promoting democratic values". Other criticisms centred on the irrelevance of the programmes to the Fiji audience. There were suggestions to include more local content in programmes as well as more third world country reports. "The impression I get is that television is too commercialised. Advertisements, commercials and many programmes promote lifestyles and needs which are damaging or unattainable to the majority of the people in Fiji", was a comment made by Reverend Kamikamica.

Those with television indicated that they would prefer programmes such as comedies, adventure movies, rural community reports, and religious programmes. There was a clear preference for American and Australian television programmes coupled with a great enthusiasm for programmes made in Fiji or about Fiji.

Discussion

In chapter 2, I had discussed a number of differences identified by Rogers that distinguished the media in less and more fully developed countries. The findings given here do confirm a number of points. First, that certain categories of elite users in developing countries have levels of access to information which are just as high as the elites in more developed nations. Second, there are more users and listeners of radio and broadcast media than readers of the print media. Third, there is greater control over the media in less developed countries as compared to the developed countries. However, two other points raised by Rogers which cannot be supported by findings made here are that the media in less developed countries reach smaller audiences than those in more developed countries. If we go by the findings, it would seem that the rural village being examined has good access to radio. Since this village is located on

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7 The Fiji Times, January 3, 1997, p. 1. The survey sample for radio was taken from those aged 14 years and over. For the print media and television, the sample was from 18 years and over.
an island far from the mainland, it can be assumed that villages and rural areas on the mainland of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu would be well serviced by radios. The other point made by Rogers that media messages in less developing countries are of low interest and relevancy to villagers because of the strong urban orientation of the media, is not fully supported. The messages in radios are of interest and relevant to the people in the village in Levukana. People must be made aware of this information. Again, if this is extended to other areas of Fiji, it can be argued that in many villages in Fiji, the source of information through the radio and newspapers have some relevance to the villagers and rural population.

Furthermore, news itself may not necessarily be an agent of change. Comments, opinions, propaganda, arguments are. There is evidence of this in the current radio, newspaper and television news and programmes. It could be argued that the newspapers are geared towards the educated, localised elites and not the Fijian villager. While there are local newspapers in the vernacular, the costs of the newspapers still prohibit the general availability of the newspaper. However, in a recent survey, newspaper reading by the Fiji public was high. As shown in the annual Vakaviti '96 Omnibus market research where the finding was that 78% of the population read newspapers, 80% watch television and 27% had been involved in all three. Radio has a wide audience but again the quality of the radio programmes in Fijian and Hindustani cannot be said to be of the same quality with the English programmes featuring better and wider selection of programmes.

Television exposed viewers to different values and lifestyles which may be in conflict with their own. The impact of the different cultures promoted through television is difficult to measure and hence definite conclusions on the social effects of television are difficult to make. What can be said, however, is that television has increased the people's awareness of national issues and government policies. There were a number of concerns about television in general. The first is that the introduction and use of television for development in Fiji is costly. Fiji does not have the resources and the required infrastructure to develop this channel of communication nationally. Apart from the need for financial resources there is also the required need for skilled and specialised staff, programme developers and presenters, physical buildings and space, and continued government financial support.

9 The Fiji Times, January 3, 1997, p. 1. The survey sample for radio was taken from those aged 14 years and over. For the print media and television, the sample was from 18 years and over.
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Second, having television means more than just airing programmes that can be made available by government. Television stations need to be autonomous and entertaining. Programmes need to capture the interest of the viewers and cover subjects of interest to all communities. Third, if television is to be utilized fully and be effective it must reach all communities as well as the many rural areas. Since electricity is still not available in all rural areas, it would seem more sensible to concentrate on rural electrification and the use of radio and alternative information and communication systems to channel information for political development.

Considering the short history of television in the country, it will take some time before Fiji can claim to have a large percentage of its programmes comprise local content and is locally produced. Despite this, the fact that FijiTV produces cultural programmes such as Dateline and The Pacific Way is evident that television is an active agent in promoting local culture. The ability of FijiTV to incorporate local programming into its network and facilitate local culture and discussion is promising. While FijiTV is progressing well in this area it is also clear that much more is needed to be done to expand further the local culture content and coverage of television. This would mean more funds, more qualified and trained producers, more technicians and improved infrastructure. FijiTV is encouraging more local artists and producers to participate in this new industry, and no doubt television will generate a major industry locally thus ensuring the promotion of local culture through television. Any developments in this area would require the assistance of government to some degree.

It would seem that television should not be considered the new saviour of cultural traditions. What this may mean is that television could maintain and promote local culture, report on those aspects of culture that may be forgotten, highlighting research on the history, change and development of Fijian culture and traditions as well as those cultures of other races living in Fiji. It is too early for the full potential of television to be fully realised. The radio is still the affordable means of accessing information. It is free, carries many local programmes and community news both urban and rural and is available twenty four hours a day. The newspapers are read widely and still affordable for many people in the urban areas interviewed.

The findings here suggest that people access information through various sources from oral to printed and electronic forms. Through the various sources people are informed of various national issues. Nevertheless, the range of individual choices and opportunity for transmission were restricted either because they did not know how to or where to access information from to meet their needs. Newspapers and radio were
not immediately reactive. They provided news on various issues. Overall, the information and communication environment in Fiji has been flexible. This suggests that Fiji has been moving toward democracy for sometime but has had some difficulties along the way.

INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR

In analysing the development of democracy in a country, a central consideration would be the use of information and communication to make political decisions. In this section I will examine a set of situations in which information is used for political purposes, assess the political awareness of the Fijians interviewed in both the urban and rural areas, and link their behaviour to the availability and use of the newspapers and radio. Where it is relevant, I have included findings as they relate to the non-Fijians as well. These will be noted where they appear.

Interviewees were asked a number of questions relating to their views on the meaning of development, national issues, class and society, the role of the chiefs, church and traditions in the flow of information in the country, democracy, and the process of choosing a leader. The first question that was put to people interviewed was their understanding of the meaning of "development", and how, in their view, information has had an impact.

Information and the Meaning of Development

For the Fijians in the urban and rural areas 'development' meant many things reflecting the different values, social standing and beliefs of the people. When the Fijians talk about development in the village, they are referring to development as it affects the whole village or clan, and not so much the self. For the person in the rural village, development means the betterment of the village, and this is achieved by having a clean environment, a good home with good water supply and electricity, a meeting house, a good church, and a good and strong leader.

A village elder in Levukana village had this to say about life in the village and development in general,

Many people in the urban areas think that life in the village is simple and easy when compared to life in the city where one has to pay rent, electricity and water. This is not so. It is difficult staying in the village where time is not your own. It belongs to the community. Village life is generally ruled by what the village elders lay down for us to do for the day. This is often complicated by the many visitors to the village.
visitors from Suva mainly. They may be teachers, government officers or Public Works Department personnel or others. For all these visitors to the village, we have to feed and care for them. Caring for them can become a heavy burden for us especially when we are not given any money to provide this help.

Epeli Cama, the village mata or representative to the Lomaloma District and Lau Provincial Councils, adds,

there are no opportunities to do work or earn money in the village. Once the coconut was a source of income. Today, there is little available to generate money and other things. Some villagers see income-generating projects as being helpful and should be considered but without resources there is very little that can be done. For instance, if the villages want to fish they will need a boat and fishing lines. In addition they will need ice and storage facilities otherwise the catch must be sold on the same day or given away.

According to Cama, many young people are leaving the village to attend school, work or settle in urban areas. However, the major worry seems to be the lack of land. “If all those living on the main islands and urban areas returned home there would be no land available for them to build homes and to plant”, according to Savu, another village elder. Government was not seen to be responsive regarding the needs of the villagers in the areas of drainage, roads, education and development projects in general. The village has to depend on those from the villagers who live in urban areas to assist them in these projects.

When asked about the type of development support needed in view of the limited resources of land and sea, the villagers agreed that assistance was required in a number of areas. Much could be done regarding fishing, but without regular sea transport between the major centres and Vanuabalavu connecting the supply of sea catch to the market little could be achieved in this area. Diversifying and planting other crops to sell to other villages including vegetables, fruits and more taro and cassava is a way forward.

The needs of urban Fijians are basically similar to those in the village. They may not be living within communal settings but nevertheless, they are subjected to all communal obligations and commitment. “In some cases the load and responsibility are heavier for us in the urban areas as we are expected to assist more with village finances and expert advice and at the same time manage living in the urban areas and all the responsibilities that this entails”, commented Pulotu Rika, a curriculum development officer.
Urban Fijians recognise some of the difficulties rural people face. They also recognise that since the coups of 1987 a great deal of change has occurred. There has been a renewed awakening of identity of the Fijian. Development in all areas - business, industry, education, health - have taken off with varying degrees of success and failure. Many believe that in almost a decade since the coups, the Fijians are nowhere ahead or of equal economic status to their Indo-Fijian counterpart or members of other ethnic groups.

Urban Fijians recognise that more assistance should be placed on education of the old and the young, especially at the village grass roots level. Also government should be responding more to the needs of the Fijians in both rural and urban areas. Government should be listening and not continue with development as if people did not matter. There was a real need to develop a quick response and information feedback system from the government to the people and the people to government.

The Indo-Fijians defined development in similar fashion to urban Fijians. They see basic human needs important except that there is more emphasis on savings, monetary security, immediate family interests, good communications and information access. They tend to be more family oriented in their needs and values instead of communal. These differences in values between the Fijians and the Indo-Fijians in urban areas can be seen in Table 6.12. When asked about the meaning of development, respondents listed the different categories of need they identified as would make a difference to their lives. The table gives the expectations or what people identified as development.

For the rural Fijians, understanding development is based mainly on what their needs are and how best these can be met by themselves, their relations in the urban areas and partly by government and other organisations.

How exactly has information contributed to development? Qualitative information obtained at the urban level through a number of interviews may provide some understanding. Cokanasiga saw the clear correlation between information and development. For Cokanasiga "information plays an educative role. Through information access we are able to know many things and become informed about development in general". Unfortunately many people are not aware of the importance of information as a development tool. The late Joape Rabukawaqa added that "many
Table 6.12: Urban Areas: Meaning of development

Q. Define your meaning of development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Fijian %</th>
<th>Indo-Fijian %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owning a home</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a job with regular salary</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savings in the bank</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running water</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enough food</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good health</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good conditions for relatives</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting needs of family members</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land for planting subsistence</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video/television</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A car</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be able to read</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater community cooperation</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More information</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting house</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong leader</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

people in the rural areas do not equate information with development. Our officers visit the rural areas often with development information; but these are seen in isolation to what the people expect as development". But for many people interviewed in the urban areas, their view of development is obtained from the newspapers and radio. Schramm\footnote{Schramm, W. (1964), \textit{Mass Media and National Development}. Stanford: Stanford University Press.} had argued that information and communication contribute to the process of social and economic development. The mass media was a powerful development tool with an education role as well.

Information and Issues of National Interest

The question on national issues raised a number of responses that indicated the differences of opinion which existed between those interviewed in the urban areas and those in the rural. However, for some issues of national interest, the concerns raised by people in the rural and urban areas were similar. Table 6.13 gives the areas which the different people indicated were of national interest and for which they had some...
information. Information was obtained mainly through the radio, newspapers and television for those in the urban areas. For the people in the rural village information was obtained mainly through people visiting and the FPA.

Table 6.13: Issues of national interest

Q. Give examples of main issues that you consider important to your well being and which government should address?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main issues mentioned</th>
<th>Urban % (a)</th>
<th>Acad/Prof. % (b)</th>
<th>Rural Priority (c)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development of public roads, water, telephones, electricity</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime (law and order)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government (including the Constitution review)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church (including the Sunday ban)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land (including ALTA)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main issues mentioned</th>
<th>Urban % (a)</th>
<th>Acad/Prof. % (b)</th>
<th>Rural Priority (c)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chiefs and government</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture and traditions</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth issues</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment/Unemployment</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information access</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women's issues</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:
(a) 640 total number
(b) 100 total number
(c) Discussion in groups analysed the priority of the issues not in empirical terms but only as consensus reached. Values given are rated as high priority, medium and low priority. Values for (a) and (b) are estimates only.

Aspects of national interest which people in both the rural and urban areas felt were important included the development of public roads, water supply, electricity, telephones, education and unemployment. Generally, people were clear about government's lack of concern for some areas where the roads, water supply and electricity supply were poor and no improvements have been made in a very long time, for example in the Tailevu and Korovou areas.
Some concerns were rated higher in the rural village than in the urban areas. These included the church, land, chiefs, culture and traditions and youth issues. It seemed logical that people in the rural village will be more concerned about these issues as they are considered by the Fijians to be stabilising cohesive social forces basic to the "Fijian way of life". Those issues which were considered of low concern in the rural area but high in the urban included crime, review of the constitution, information access, poverty, and the environment. There is no doubt that these are recognised concerns which the government is trying to deal with.

Information, Class and the Fiji Society

Class differences among the Fijians, and the growing identification of the educated Fijians with the Indo-Fijians probably posed the greatest threat to the Alliance Party during the Alliance political term, particularly from 1977 when the Alliance Party lost the general elections. There were also distinct class differences between the ordinary Fijians and the traditional chiefly class. The 1987 win by the FLP/NFP coalition served to confirm that the Alliance's traditional power base was being eroded. Ironically, the military coups of 1987 revealed how deep the class divisions were in Fiji. The fact that the working class Fijians and the Indo-Fijians were finding common interests especially economic, social and political concerns threatened the ruling chiefly class.

After the 1987 coups the dominance of the Fijians was again set in. The 1990 Constitution entrenched this and the role of the chiefs was also enhanced. Divisions between the Fijians and Indo-Fijians deteriorated. After the endorsement of the Constitutional Review Report by Parliament and the Great Council of Chiefs in May 1997, there is hope that divisive relations between the major ethnic groups, and class differences within the Fijian and Indo-Fijian communities may decrease. Unfortunately, the ethnic groups have a very strong ethnic identity, and no matter what academic argument is given, the fact remains that the trust between the major ethnic groups disappeared in 1987, and it will be some time before this trust is regained. This is the reality.

Based on this background the question on class was asked of those interviewed. The responses produced results suggesting that the people in the urban areas are aware that there are class differences, as shown in Table 6.14. For the rural village opinions were obtained from discussions.
The rural Fijians identified class differences existed in the country based on traditions and achievements. The chiefs stood apart from the commoners and were respected. They also accepted the differences that existed between the educated and uneducated Fijians and recognised that the educated Fijians were financially more secure. They argued that education is important for development. Education opened up more opportunities for people to work and assist with other activities.

Table 6.14: Perceptions of class difference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Urban Areas</th>
<th>Academics &amp; Prof.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very large</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was recognition of a business class comprising Fijians, Indo-Fijians and others. The present government, as well as the past Alliance Government and Interim Government espoused a capitalist ideology as reflected in their policies, and favoured and supported businesses and private enterprise, and relied heavily on foreign investment for its survival.

But an interesting response was received from those in the urban areas and the academics and professionals who saw the current government ministers and certain senior government officers to be in a class of their own: privileged and cannot be touched by the law. They were the “new elites” with special concessions and special privileges for many things.

Standing in stark contrast to the “new elites” is the growing number of people in the lower income bracket reflecting the rural neglect, urban unemployment and low wage earners. About 40% of the Fijians living in urban and peri-urban areas confirmed that they believe that since 1987 they have become poorer compared to pre-coup times. A Fijian lady I interviewed in Korovou was very vocal about the situation, commenting that:

Since the coups, village obligations of the church, land and government are so great that I am tempted not to participate and respond to these. I have my own problems of finding schools fees for the children bus fares and what to eat for the day. These are
my family's needs that I have to take care on my own. But really the community needs and the village come before my own family's and this is when I question the caring that is supposed to espouse the Fijian way of life. I'd like to get out but I am living in the village so it is something that my family and I cannot do. I know education work in the city will help me but with my limited background I cannot do much. I do not think the opportunities are here for me to be able to tend to the village obligations as well as my own. I have no choice but to remain here.

In Lautoka a similar comment was made by a Fijian technician working with the Civil Aviation Authority:

I am from Narewa. I have been working for Air Terminal Services for over twenty-one years. I have three children. They are still schooling - one in Form 5 and another in Form 6. After all this time I'm still poor in the sense that I still am renting my house. I cannot buy my children new things. I have to struggle for school fees. I don't drink or smoke. Yet the Indians who rent my mataqali land have done very well. I know they have worked hard. I do not begrudge them or anything like that. I blame the Native Land Trust Board and the Fijian Affairs Board. They have really not taken care of all our interests as they promised. I mean, twenty-one years is a long time. I want my land back so that I can farm. I will have to learn how to farm, as I have not been on the land for a very long time. But I am determined to learn. I know I can make it.

In Sigatoka, in interviewing a young Indo-Fijian women aged sixteen who gave this story.

I did not go to school. When my mother and father died, I had to take care of my sisters and brothers - 4, all younger than me. We do not have a home place to stay. I have been working for two years now as a street vendor. I get very little but it is enough to pay for my family's basic needs - school fees and food. My brothers and sisters walk to school and take lunch. We all help out planting vegetables to be sold in the market during the week and Saturdays especially. I'd like to go to school again but can't.

There were other examples that showed how difficult life could be for many living in the rural and peri-urban areas. Many blamed the government for their situation. Some Fijians blamed the "Fijian way of life".

Prioritising the Church, Education and Land

The role of the church in politics since the coups has been influential in government decisions, plans and activities. As discussed in chapter 5, the church in Fiji plays a central and important role in the life of Fijians. The church is a good source of information for many people in the rural areas as well as urban. Because of this central importance, a question on the priority given to the church was asked of all the people interviewed. The responses as shown in Table 6.15 reveal that for the Fijians in the rural area, the church is important. The land, the government and then education
follows this. For the urban Fijians interviewed, a higher percentage placed education as their first priority, church second, followed by the government and then the land.

For the Indo-Fijians interviewed in the urban areas, education was given as being important to their lives as this would allow them to aspire for many of the things they needed to better their lives. They believed that if they had better education this would improve their economic standing. More education also led to possibilities of greater access to information.

Table 6.15: Priority between church, land, government and education.

Q. How do you rate the importance of the church, the land, government and education in your life?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Rural Fijian</th>
<th>Urban Fijian</th>
<th>Indo-Fijian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The church</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The land</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Government</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the Fijians in the village recognised education as important as it brings about some change, it was rated lower than the church in their priorities. The rural Fijians believed that there was more need for a change in attitude towards life generally, work and in particular responsibilities. They did not agree that the accumulation of wealth and resources was a good thing as these were materialistic values. Part of the money they earned or obtained from various sources was directed to community and village obligations.

Information and the Legitimacy of Democracy

There was a definite difference in the knowledge of democracy by the educated and those who were not so educated. The educated people in the urban areas, particularly those in the academic and professional group, were strongly supportive of a democratic government. They were critical of the present government who they believed regulated the free flow of information and this affected their work. The uneducated people in both the urban and rural village accepted whatever government was in power, and did not question their actions. Many in the rural village, in
discussions, indicated that they lacked an understanding of what the term means. However, they believed that the people administering the country were good and had the interests of the Fijians at heart, and if this is democracy, then it is good. "Rabuka has been good for the country. He is easy to approach regarding any matter at all. He cares for the Fijian people, I know", commented a village elder.

Another villager commented that it was good to have a Fijian leader and not an Indo-Fijian. This highlights the ethnic views that emerged over decades, but this had to be expected. Generally, the coups had made the Fijians feel that they are now masters in their own land.

Whatever means was used to achieve this situation is of little concern to us. If democracy - the opportunity to change leaders - was to change this situation of Fijian leadership and we get someone else, say an Indian leading us, and then democracy is not good for the Fijians. We want to ensure that Fiji's leadership remains with the Fijians.

This was the general agreement of the majority of the people in the village. "However, this leader must be good. He must have our interests at heart. Otherwise, he too should go. Unfortunately, there are not too many good leaders or good chiefs in Fiji".

Since the coups both daily Fiji newspapers, the Fiji Times and the Daily Post, have carried reports on government corruption, government mismanagement, misuse of funds, and other matters of national concern. The question of whether the Rabuka Government had been governing well and whether Rabuka had espoused to the democratic principles were frequently referred to by academics interviewed. However, despite the negative reports carried by the newspapers, there seemed to be no strong public outcry demanding an explanation from Rabuka. Rabuka has continued to be accepted by the Fijians, particularly the Fijians in the rural areas. How long such allegiance will last, is uncertain. According to Usher, a person who has been following developments in Fiji and can be considered an authority in post-coup politics, "Rabuka is a folk hero and all folk heroes will have to go sometime. Rabuka is no exception".

Information and the Choosing of a Leader

While it can be accepted that elections do not express the full range of issues of an electorate, in the end it is through the elections conducted under a constitution which legitimately places people in positions of power. From interviews with the Fijians in the urban areas it was evident that access to greater information sources, the reports in
the daily newspapers, television and radio influenced their views on national leaders and government performance. A young Fijian technician commented that,

Rabuka and his ministers should be ashamed of themselves. What have they achieved while in power? I know what trouble they have got the country into? It is a shame. They think they are doing a good job when all around them things are falling. I will certainly not vote for him in the next elections.

Table 6.16: The legitimacy of democracy in Fiji

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q. Would you say that generally, democracy is better or worse than dictatorship or communism?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don't know and not interested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Areas (a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic and Professional (b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural (c)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reasons for preference for democracy (Academic and Professional)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Total %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation in decision making and voting</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More freedom</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't like dictatorship</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't like uncertainty</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More just</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=100

Reasons for not knowing (Fijians in the urban areas and rural village)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Total %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not certain of the concept</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust government</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present life acceptable</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=326

Note: (a): n=640; (b): n=100; (c): n=70.

A general response seemed to be that Rabuka was not a leader, but being a good orator kept Rabuka in office. A young information officer in Labasa was of the view that the most important characteristic of a good leader is to be a good orator. "With this quality a leader could wield power and manipulate people to follow irrespective of poor management skills. The officer added, "Rabuka is a good orator". Usher also endorsed this view but added that, "Rabuka changes his mind too often on many issues, and this is not a good thing for a leader as it has various repercussions on
the people as well". This can be supported by strong arguments from Pye who had emphasised that oratory and articulation skills of leaders were essential for countries on the road to democracy.\textsuperscript{11}

How much influence, therefore, does information have in influencing how people vote for their leaders? Answers to this question would involve obtaining information on whom people voted for, what influenced their votes, and whether the availability of information and newspaper reports affected their decisions. First, an examination of some of the voting statistics will give some idea on these matters. According to Lal,\textsuperscript{12} the polling that took place from 18 to 27 February, 1994, had the following results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>% Fijian Votes</th>
<th>% Decline from 1992</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soqosoqo Vakavulewa ni Taukei</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijian Association Party</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All National Congress</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiji Labour Party</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiji Nationalist Party</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The overall turnout of the Fijian voters was poor.

Of the Indo-Fijians, a total of 159,480 people were registered to vote. The National Federation Party obtained 55.5% of the votes or 65,220 as compared to 50% of the votes in 1992, and won twenty of the twenty-seven seats. The Fiji Labour Party got 51,252 votes or 43.6% as compared to 48% in 1992. The 1994 elections returned the SVT to Parliament.

How much can these results be attributed to the effects of information influencing people on who to vote for cannot be determined. However, in interviews people voiced views on the elections, and the findings given here represent comments made by the people in the urban areas and in discussions with the people in the village.

The first point to make is that 40% of Fijians interviewed in the urban areas did not vote. Some of the reasons given for not voting included: apathy; transport difficulties; Pye, L. (ed.) (1963), \textit{Communications and Political Development}. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.


\textsuperscript{12}
did not think it was necessary to vote, unimportant; lack of information and did not know what to do. From discussions, it seemed that of those who voted, their decision on who to vote for was influenced by which political party the candidates represented, race, and support for the present leadership. Whether the newspaper reports over the radio on the elections, different party manifestos, views and interviews with the different candidates influenced voting was not easy to determine. What seemed obvious, however, was the Fijians' commitment and support for the SVT Party. The SVT Party represented the Fijian people's interests, was the chief's party and was led by Rabuka. The other Fijian parties, the Fijian Association Party and Vanua Party, had their following but this was limited at the time.

For the rural area, party politics and allegiance to the chiefs was also reflected in the voting pattern. For Levukana, the people support the Fijian Association Party, a breakaway party of the SVT. It is interesting to note, however, that during discussions, the villagers noted their preference for one Fijian party representing all the interests of the Fijians. Their voting for the Fijian Association Party was a show of allegiance to their chief, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara whose son is in the Fijian Association Party. This behaviour is not difficult to understand considering the principles of the "Fijian way of life". In the village a show of solidarity was important. Furthermore, since the people usually know the candidates from the provinces, no detailed information is needed to attract votes.

In this case, it seemed that the availability of information either through the newspapers or the radio on the different parties and different candidates had little effect on the way people voted as their support remained with the candidates supported by their chief. In further discussion with the Fijians in the village, it would seem that this allegiance might not change for some time. It seems as long as the chiefly system and the "Fijian way of life" remain, these will influence the way people in the village continue to vote.

Trust in Government

Compared to the academics and professionals in the urban areas those interviewed in the rural village area are content to accept the information provided by the chief, mata or village representative and the Fijian Provincial Administration with little question. For the majority of them, this is how it has been in the past, and it will continue to be the case as the next chapter will show. For the rural Fijians, the restrictions on the right to information are of minor concern. They trust their chief.

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For the Fijians in the urban areas, 76% noted their lack of trust of their leaders. This has been brought about by the unsatisfactory state of the economy, high unemployment, misuse of public funds as reported in the 1995 Auditor General's Report, and the rise in the rate of crime in the urban areas. The 1996 National Bank of Fiji crisis which implicated a number of government ministers and the poor state of the economy as described in chapter 5, can support the view that the government is not doing such a good job.

Table 6.18: Trust in leaders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural Fijians (n=70)</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban(Fijians, Indo-Fijians, Others) (n=640)</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academics and Professionals (n=100)</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In interviews and discussions with the Fijians in the urban areas the issue of good leadership was raised as one of the main reasons why the Fijians were not too clear about their future, their aspirations, or the development direction to take. The Fijians believed that the coups were committed to protect their rights to govern and control their own country. Aspirations and hopes were raised. In interviews with people in the urban areas it was apparent that many felt that their aspirations would never be met as leaders in government are too engrossed in their own activities, interests and in themselves. Concern for the members of their respective constituencies seems to be a low priority. These interests are only considered seriously during general election time.

Currently, there is a slow feedback system between government and the rural Fijians. Government's commitment and responsibility to provide the people in the rural areas with information is low. Measures needed to adopt and to expand public participation in the decision-making process are not encouraged. Rural populations are neither mobilised nor made aware of the type of information available which they should access and use for their benefit. An academic, Cokanasiga, said of trust of the government:

There are two issues here. One relates to leadership and the other to institutional influence. People in the rural areas, particularly in the villages, trust that government will take care of their needs and their future. I should say that they trust the current leader, Rabuka, to take care of their needs. He is a good orator and many still believe
that the coups he committed in 1987 were for their benefit, the Fijians. As a consequence, people do not question the government or Rabuka and accept the information that filters down to them as the truth. You can call it propaganda. Apart from Rabuka’s strong leadership hold on the rural Fijians, the Fijian Provincial Administration is a propaganda machine and communication channel which government uses to get information to the people. The Government uses this institution to promote its influence. The people know no better so they listen and follow what government and Rabuka tell them to do. Fiji is a leadership driven society. At this time it is difficult for anyone else or anything to influence the thinking of the rural people. This situation cannot continue forever. Sooner or later the people will start asking questions when the goods are not delivered. It is knowing when this time will be is difficult to ascertain.

The newspapers, radio and television have tried to fulfill the role of promoting the truth and reporting responsibly the work of the government.

According to the government, the media has not been truthful in its reporting. In a statement on the role of the media in reporting on government decisions, a former Minister of Information, Broadcasting and Telecommunications in the Rabuka Government, Ratu Etuate Tavai, commented on government’s role. Tavai indicated that government was committed to the principle of media freedom and free access to information and journalists must exercise great responsibility and sensitivity when making reports to the public on government and other matters of national interest.\footnote{Tavai, E. (1996), “Exercising Freedom with Care”, The Review: 11.}

The press did not exercise much restraint in reporting events and also did not check their facts before going public with the information obtained from unknown and unverified sources. This has been a cause of major friction between the government and the media.

Table 6.19: Academics and Professionals: Media’s role in promoting the ‘just cause’ of people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role is</th>
<th>Response%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ineffective</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obscure</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition difficulty (a)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes all the above</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( n=100 )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:

(a) Respondents who had difficulty with the meaning of “just cause”
National Unity

As discussed in chapter 5, Fiji is a multi-ethnic society with a population comprising many different ethnic, religious and social groups. Not only does the country have fourteen different provinces with different allegiances and traditions of the Fijians, within the Indo-Fijian community there are also various social and religious groupings. Apart from these two major ethnic groups there are also other ethnic groups that make up the Fiji population character - Chinese, other islanders, Caucasians, Caucasian-Fijian, Caucasian-Indian, or part European as the people are called in Fiji. In addition, political parties, interest groups, trade unions, schools and voluntary organisations tend to be organised along ethnic lines. This situation is further complicated by the existence of a racially biased constitution which promotes communal politics and behaviour. These are elements that are obstacles in attempts towards creating an environment that would be conducive to uniting people to build some sense of patriotism in them. Provisions may have to be made for elements of national culture in which all citizens participate and which unite the nation, and also separate provisions for culture, language, religion and other needs of the different ethnic groups. Throughout the various interviews conducted and discussions organised it seemed that the situation was very complicated in that there was no consensus as to whether people were united or divided in the present Fiji community. Many people interviewed in the urban areas commented on the fact that there seems to be little unity among the different ethnic groups and that there did not exist a Fiji or Fijian identity.

However, writings by Ravuvu indicated that tensions between the different ethnic groups, particularly the Indo-Fijians and the Fijians, have been in existence since the indentured system of labour began in 1879 in the colonial period. Resistance to integration and assimilation is not new. Whether the radio, television and the newspaper will help integrate the people and promote national unity is questionable. Those interviewed have formed their own opinions on this issue. For instance, when asked as to which means of communication best foster cultural identity and artistic creativity and enable various grassroots groups to be heard, those academics and professionals interviewed listed the radio, newspapers, community papers, television and outreach information officers in that order of priority. Much also depended on which paper and radio station people listened to, and the quality of the programmes.

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14 In Lijphart, A. (1977), Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 4. Lijphart explained that plural societies are more than just the existence of different ethnic groups.
Discussion

In the following discussion attempts will be made to relate the findings to participation, steering and efficacy.

Participation

In chapter 2, participation was taken to refer to the activities and abilities of the people to influence or take part in political decision making such as the activity of voting. A few of the people in both the rural and urban areas interviewed were cynical about being able to participate effectively in political development. They believed that even if they were given the opportunity to voice a view prior to a policy being formulated and legislation passed by government, their views and opinions would not count as the government would have already made a decision. The government's desire to involve people in participating in a decision was seen as a token gesture. In such circumstances it seemed almost futile to try and encourage participation in politics. This is the reality of the situation and people accept this. It would seem that because of this, people believe that their opinion on any political matter is unimportant.

In reality, it would appear that greater effort taken to encourage participation by more sectors of the community could have allowed more people to take part in decision making in a number of key issues of interest to the population in general. They identified other areas relating to the quality of life, education of their children and development in the village as needing urgent political attention. The people interviewed in the urban areas believed that government decisions are being made with little participation by the people. Often, decisions are made and the people are then informed. This authoritarian behaviour of the leaders was seen as causing a growing feeling of resentment among the people. The people interviewed in the urban areas believed that they should have more say in what is being decided. One of the interviewees commented "that since the political crisis in 1987, opportunities for political participation have deteriorated". The role of information in improving this situation is, however, not considered and people tend to just accept things as they are.

The majority of the people interviewed in both the rural and urban areas voiced considerable disappointment in not being given the opportunity to comment on any new major or revised policy before these were agreed upon. "The question of whether to introduce casinos in Fiji is a major decision and should involve the people" was a comment by a businessman. "The migration scheme of Chinese to Fiji is disgusting.

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Suddenly we, the public, are informed of this new deal government has come up with. They (the government) are selling us and our land and are not thinking of the future of our children", was a comment made by a Methodist minister. "The sale of national assets, such as the shipyard, without Parliament approval is not only a measure of mismanagement by the government but authoritarian tactics", was a comment by an academic. These would have major social, political and cultural consequences to the Fiji society, and it would have been appropriate to seek the people's views on these suggestions before they were approved and implemented. These examples reflect the extent to which participation is denied to large sectors of the community.

Participation in decision making at the village level by urban populations had mixed reactions. More than 60% of those interviewed in the urban areas agreed that urban Fijians should take part in decision making at the village level as they contributed much to their village in money and kind even from a distance. Many villagers now depend heavily on their urban relatives for village projects and development. Those interviewed believed that their knowledge and expertise should be utilised by people in the villages. A number indicated that they had offered their services in helping out in a number of community projects such as craft and handiwork, health issues and small village business but often funds were not available to support these initiatives.

Regarding the use of information for perceiving the wider problems facing the community and for decision-making, 28% of those interviewed in the urban areas and including the academic and professional group, believed that the government had the necessary information and facilities to make well informed decisions while 72% did not think so. Respondents made the observation that decision makers are not completely aware of the importance of information. Decision makers saw the availability of information as more negative as it could jeopardise their credibility within the community and show up their ignorance in some matters.

Steering

Steering implies good decision-making by governments which will move a country towards set goals and autonomy. To ensure this it would mean allowing greater flow of information to be accessed by the public. For Fiji, there is no information or communication policy as discussed in chapter 8. Consequently, there has been uncertainty in the ability to access certain categories of information. Many decision-making tasks are centralised. As argued in chapter 1, in many developing countries,
governments have tended to centralise decision-making. This has been largely due to the fear of losing power and control.

**Efficacy**

While there are no clear data on the sense of efficacy of the Fijians, the overall qualitative findings suggest that the Fijians have a low sense of efficacy. A number of people interviewed did not think that their participation in voting would make a difference in the voting in of a government. Fijians, both in the rural and urban areas, are passive people. They identify with certain social and cultural groupings and political parties and are positive that a Fijian leader would be concerned with their interests, as opposed to an Indo-Fijian leader.

In addition, Fijians are less aware of the importance of voting and tend to take too much for granted. An example was the 1977 general elections in which the Alliance Party lost. The Fijians are not realistic about the situation they are in and feel that someone or something will always take care of their political future. Because many in the rural village feel that the upward channels of political communication are blocked, participation in the political process is equated to an order from the top.

The low sense of efficacy in the 1994 general elections has been blamed on a number of issues. For instance, it is argued that Fijians believe that voting is complicated and stay away from this. They also do not realise that they can influence government and the development of democracy if they wished. They believe that their influence may be minimal particularly when Rabuka, backed by the chiefs, would be voted in anyway. The political system at this time was dominated by a government that was a product of the coups and the Fijians believed that their influence would be limited. Apart from these reasons, the 1994 general elections came only two years after the last elections, and I believe the Fijians had lost interest in voting. They were “tired” of having to decide yet again on their leaders.

In discussions with the Fijians in the rural village the following comments were made which brings to fore the influence of culture in the voting system: "When we vote for our representatives, our loyalty is first to the party that represents us"; says a village elder who spoke on behalf of the group discussing the subject of elections and voting. "While we cast our vote individually, usually we have already decided as a group which political party to vote for and which candidate", "Voting is influenced by our chief; to vote as our chief shows that we are united for a particular candidate. This was
not only the right thing to do, it is expected of us”, was a comment from a Fijian woman in the village.

Voting as “instructed” by the chiefs is not a difficult behaviour to understand considering the principles of the “Fijian way of life”. However, this voting behaviour does raise the question of whether the people need to know about the candidates that are contesting the elections before voting takes place.

Awareness Raising for Increased Participation

It seemed urgent that some action must be taken regarding greater participation in voting by the Fijians. When discussing this issue with those in the rural village, it was clear that many relied on the FPA for development information. Other community and social gossip is obtained from visitors or the radio and the newspapers. However, one point that was raised was whether government would develop a rural community information service housed near the village or somewhere accessible. The need was for general information on what was happening in the country, community news, business news and news of visitors. Shipping and education information was also a high priority. Many raised the need to know how to advise their children on what subjects to take at school, whether they should take science or social science. In these instances it was clear that parents relied heavily on the local teachers to advise the children what course of study to take. Many parents would like to participate more in the education of their children but do not have the knowledge and skills to do so. Some families relied on other members of the family now living and working in Suva. Nevertheless, a community information centre was seen as a priority.

For the urban areas, those interviewed also agreed that there was a need for information centres in the main towns. While town councils can be used for this service what seems to be missing is the need for a centre that could give information on community news, advise on small business, advise children on courses to take at school, and advise on travel timetables on the buses, boats and airplanes. Many members of the community needed basic information and there was really nowhere convenient to go apart from the District Commissioners’ offices.

During my interviews in the Northern, Western and Eastern districts it was interesting to see how busy these district offices were. Many people came in to the Commissioners’ offices to seek information on agriculture, health, education, rural development progress, permits, business and many other areas. While the District
Commissioners officers' staff attends to most of the queries that come through, it seems that a community information centre could handle some of the work. The District Commissions staff members go out to visit the various districts and have meetings with the people in the rural areas. Nevertheless, information availability is still not equally distributed.

CONCLUSION

A number of questions were raised at the beginning of this chapter: Is information easily accessible through the press and broadcast media to meet needs? What is the function of or how important is information in the electoral process? Do more information and a better informed society affect the way people vote? From findings it would suggest that information is accessible through the different communication systems of radio, newspaper and television as well as through the traditional communication systems including people. Information is also accessible through the local libraries, non-government organisations and institutions, religious organizations and professionals, colleagues and friends. Some categories of information, for example government information from government departments, are more difficult to access. The difficulty here is not the lack of information but the difficulty of getting the information because government officers either do not know where the information is, do not have any organised information service and most of all, are not certain about their responsibilities in information dissemination. The officers are also bound by departmental regulations which are silent on the issue of dissemination of government documents. The other difficulties concern what information is disseminated, and who controls the dissemination. These issues are covered in chapters 7 and 8.

In response to the second question, it can be said that information affects and influences people's opinions and decisions on matters generally as well as political decisions made by individuals. For the urban Fijians interviewed, more information was seen as being influential in the way people may vote for their leaders. For the rural Fijians often the voters know the candidates and more information on the person is not necessary. On the other hand, tradition and culture seem to have a strong influence on decision making and voting for the Fijians in the rural areas than having more information. This raises the question of just how influential are cultural factors in controlling information access and political decisions of the Fijians. The role and impact of socio-cultural forces on information and how these affect the democratic process in Fiji is discussed next.
In answering the third question of whether having more information would make people more informed, the answer is yes. Whether this would influence the way people vote, the answer would be yes, and no. For the most part, people in the urban areas, it would seem, vote as individuals based on their own beliefs shaped by information that they are subjected to or obtain. For the rural Fijians in the village, it is most probable that despite the availability of information on other candidates, their chief will influence voting.

The findings in this chapter have provided some understanding as to how Fijians generally perceive information and communication in relation to government and politics, and how Fijians access, select, use and communicate information for political purposes. It suggests that information is available and the difficulty is not the lack of information or technological capability. The problem is in the way the people perceive information and communication and their role in the grand scheme of things. The different attitudes that prevail on the role and importance of information and what it can and cannot do are not easily determined. The findings have also raised questions on the important role which culture plays in the process of information flow and control, and this will be covered in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 7

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION: SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS

In my view, the influence of culture on the flow of information in a society and the direct impact of this on political development is little understood, and generally, not well researched. In Fiji, for instance, the only substantial study of any kind that appears in the literature that deals with the relationship between culture, information flow and the communication environment within the Fijian society, is that researched by the late Lasarusa Vusoniwailala. Vusoniwailala had argued that culture is shaped by the information contained within a communication environment. I argue that information and communication not only shape culture but that culture itself also shapes the information environment and controls the information flow in a society.

The purpose of this chapter is, therefore, to essentially describe and analyse selected institutions and socio-cultural factors that influence and control the flow of information in the Fijian society. I will also identify which level and under what circumstances do Fijians use the traditional structure to access information for political purpose, and under what conditions, and to what extent, they use the modern. Reference to the patterns of information flow identified by Vusoniwailala will be made. Following this, I assess how these impact on the political life and behaviour of the Fijians. To understand the slow democratization process in Fiji, it is necessary to analyse some of the cultural factors that influence the flow of information.

The socio-cultural forces analysed are: the “Fijian way of life” and its impact on information access, related containment issues, and the role of the Fijian Provincial Administration including the Great Council of Chiefs in information dissemination and development.

INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE

The relationship between information, communication, culture and the attainment of democracy would seem to be incontestable. My task is to examine this hypothesis in the light of the existing socio-cultural factors, with particular emphasis on the validity of Western democratic practices on the values and institutions in non-Western

The only substantial study of any kind that appears in the literature that deals with the relationship between culture, information flow and the communication environment within Fijian society, is that researched by the late Lasarusa Vusoniwailala. Vusoniwailala, L. (1978), “Toward A Pacific Island Theory of Communication and Change”. Honolulu: University of Hawaii. MA Thesis. His hypothesis was that culture is shaped by the information contained within a communication environment.
polities. I do not intend to raise or discuss the problems of relativism, cultural imperialism, information domination and other related issues. The approach I will take is one that attempts to explain why certain aspects of culture and tradition cannot be ignored in pursuing democratic values and practices. For this reason some way should be found for people to simultaneously hold on to traditions yet accept the modern ways of doing things. On one hand, there is a modernising ideology and on the other, a conservative element has had important consequences for the analysis of culture and development in Fiji.

Earlier in chapter 2, the work of theorists including Melkote, Hall, Schiller, Mowlana and Vusoniwailala highlighted the importance of culture as a variable in models for political development. Through the cultural factor it is possible to explain how certain information and communication institutions act as "gatekeepers" and control a "one-way flow" from top down instead of freely disseminating information, and, preferably, information from the bottom up as well.

Hofstede argued that culture provides the framework within which concepts of development must be viewed. Culture, and hence the environment, are important influencing factors in determining the type of development that should and can take place. The influence is felt at all levels - individual, in groups and the society as a whole. Culture and the environment influence the type of institutions, quality of information and the degree of information and communication control. Scholars grouped in this category, for example Elgabri and Ravuvu, argue that development programmes must be relevant and tailored to meet the needs of each country. This argument implies that no single model of development can be applied universally as each situation will demand its own development concepts and criteria. It therefore follows that if development should be tailored to each country then socio-political development models should be derived from within a country. Established variables

\[ \text{Schiller, H. (1976), Communication and Cultural Domination. White Plains: International Arts and Sciences Press.} \]
\[ \text{Hofstede, G. (1980), Culture's Consequences. London: Sage Publications.} \]
\[ \text{Elgabri, A. Z. (1987), "Pathways to Development", Media Asia 14(3): 130 - 135.} \]
\[ \text{Ravuvu, A. (1988), Development or Dependency: The Pattern of Change in a Fijian Village. Suva: The Institute of Pacific Studies, The University of the South Pacific.} \]
therefore may differ from one country to another. Considerations may include: (1) development must be advocated and led by people from within a country; (2) people must identify the main criteria, values and variables that will be part of their development framework; (3) the development criteria must adapt to the local culture. Hence, any plans for making information and communication to be agents of political change must take into consideration these factors.

Three of the main features of Fijian culture that are little understood and often ignored but have great influence in the development and politics of the Fijians are the high respect given to elders, chiefs or superiors, the culture of silence and sharing and reciprocity. In the Fijian society, parents, elders and chiefs must be respected and children are asked to avoid conflicts with their parents by obeying all their instructions. The people respect chiefs. In many Fijian communities people are loyal and obedient to their chiefs. Hence, conflict must be avoided, as this would affect the harmony of life in the villages. One of the sources of conflict in the Fijian culture, is open criticism, questioning actions or decisions taken by elders or the chiefs. Thus, people avoid open criticism and often keep silent. Keeping silent is considered polite. A member of a Fijian community in a village gathering would only speak if invited to by the chief. If a person wishes to criticize a decision made by the chief, it is not uncommon that the person seeks an audience with the chief. The traditional respect given to the chiefs by the people flows on to other matters and concerns of national interest. With this kind of relationship, it is difficult to encourage people to criticize government officials. People prefer to remain silent.

Often, attributions are drawn by people not of the same culture, mainly kaivalagi that if one is silent or do not criticize a government decision or a decision of the chief you are said to be passive, unresponsive, withdrawn, backward, uncooperative, anti-social, content or satisfied with life, and stupid. These are problems of negative ethnic stereotypes. But as Tannen and Saville-Troike point out, silence is not purely negative, it is not the mere absence of speech. It is a positive, a complete world in itself. Silence is the extreme manifestation of indirectness. Speaking from the context of a woman's world, women have identified some positive silences. Dale Spender speaks of some healthy silences, some happy silences, some

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9 This is the Fijian term meaning Caucasian. Sometimes the term vulagi is used which means visitor or foreigner.
humorous silences' in women's lives. There are the silences that women choose and control. But most of women's silences are coerced; it is tragic silence, 'a silence of denial'.

Silencing is, therefore, used, to isolate people disempowered by their gender, race and class. It is often used to the benefit of the elites. It is clear that one's status affects one's perception of when and whether to speak. It is also used for broader socio-political manipulation and oppression of disempowered people. According to Adam Jarowski, 'silence is oppressive when it is characteristic of a dominated group, and when that group is not allowed to break its silence by its own choice or by any means of any media controlled by the power group'.

In most developing countries, people's silences are not only apparent in the absence of their voices. In our personal life the power to silence another is not simply the power to prevent that someone to talk. It is also the power to shape and control that someone's talk and to restrict the things that the person may talk about and the way the person is permitted to express them.

There is no doubt that keeping silent is a drawback in the development of democracy as in such situations it is difficult to assess the needs, choices and the likely decisions of the silent population. This population could be considered invisible. However, I believe that silence is an extension of the self and therefore is potentially communicative. If such is the case then silence itself becomes a form of speech. This transformation of silence into speech is important in any consideration of democracy in the developing countries. For instance, in a rural village where the chief is powerful open criticism is not expected and people remain silent. Here, being silent by authorities means that there is no communication. Steps would have to be taken to allow silence to be heard, in other words to enfranchise silence. The people should be given the opportunity to speak. In developing countries, however, culture would control silence. The idea then is to find ways to get the people to be heard and this is best achieved by more education and information awareness penetrating the rural communities and groups.

In Fiji, the struggle over the course of democratic development was connected with the oligarchy or the paramount chiefs' attempt to control and define, among other things, the role of information and communication in this process. There was the

12 Ibid., p. 106.
13 Ibid., p. 107.
dilemma of holding on to one's culture or doing away with it in the process of development. Different groups were adopted and articulated to reconcile the contradictions between the anachronistic nature of the Fijians and the liberal aspirations of the Europeans and others. Some Fijians supported abandoning the old and adopting the new, while others remained conservative. In addition, communitarianism as opposed to individualism forms the basis of the Fijian society and thus makes it difficult for the Fijians to forge through alone in any development. For instance, the 1957 annual report of the colony stated that the first purpose of the Fijian regulations was that they should secure "the continuance of the Fijian communal system and the customs and the observances traditionally associated with the system". Such a system makes the Fijians remain staunchly traditional and do everything in their power to retain the "Fijian way of life".

When Fiji became a republic after two coups in 1987, the rural Fijians in particular were constitutionally favoured at the expense of both the Indo-Fijians and others. Rural Fijians were given a sense of awareness regarding government activities and lack of accountability. The power given to the leaders legitimised by electoral votes and the view that the coup leader was indeed the saviour of Fijian interests, were reasons difficult to contest. There was much anticipation and aspiration when Fijians embraced this new political dominant status expecting their lives to improve. After two elections and almost a decade, the plight of the Fijians can be said to be the same as in pre-coup days or even worse. There has been zero economic growth. Crime rates have escalated in the past twelve months with Fijians filling the prisons. Corruption is common as is shown in the National Bank of Fiji crisis where two hundred million dollars worth of irregular loans were reported. Despite these drawbacks, the government continues to give another picture that shows development as being very promising and positive. Positive and negative reports are given through the radio and newspapers and people are left to decide for themselves what the truth is. The danger here is that there seems to be one set of reality portrayed by government legitimised by the fact that actions are in the interests of the Fijians and conveyed through the Fijian Provincial Administration communication and information system and which many of the rural Fijians would believe. There is another set of reality reported by the

16 Reports on the National Bank of Fiji crisis, crime, poor economic growth have been topics of central discussion in the two daily newspapers, the Fiji Times and the Daily Post and local magazines over the past three years. The National Bank of Fiji crisis was reported by The Review in 1995. Investigations commenced in 1996 and prosecutions are continuing. A number of people being implicated and investigated include government ministers, businessmen, senior bank officers.
radio and the newspapers that the majority of the urban population would listen to and read and make their own informed decisions.

SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS AND INFORMATION FLOW

As said earlier, at the heart of the philosophy and operations of the socio-cultural institutions being examined here seems to be a conflict between democratic values and cultural values; between individualism and communalism. These institutions - the "Fijian way of life", the Fijian Provincial Administration, and the Great Council of Chiefs operate under a democratic Constitution yet on closer examination, many of their respective policies are authoritarian. There are two systems of government operating side by side in Fiji. On one hand there is the system that involves all the affairs of the Fijian and this includes the Fijian Provincial Administration and the Great Council of Chiefs and on the other is central government. There are links between these but the area of information and communication is largely controlled by the socio-cultural factors in their own ways. This raises a dilemma: should democracy override culture or vice versa when a conflict between these two systems cannot be resolved? This question has not been resolved in Fiji except that there is every indication that the "Fijian way of life" which is espoused by these institutions is still strong in Fiji.

What seems to be apparent in the discussion of socio-cultural factors and their impact on information in Fiji is the continuation of the paternalistic native policy developed during the colonial period and which exists today. One of its major aims is to bring order in the village in terms of production and encouraging the Fijians to proceed into income generating projects in the villages. However, as noted in chapter 5, the number of Fijians involved in commercial agriculture has been declining since the 1970s as Fijians continue to migrate to the urban areas. The policy also brought with it limits and controls in information flow, contained the people in the villages and directed and influenced the Fijians in the urban areas. The government is adamant that the "Fijian way of life" will meet the needs of most of the Fijians in the village. The government, in deciding for the Fijians what is best for them, seems to be turning a blind eye to the fact that the increasing movements of people between the village and urban areas, increased education, and increased penetration of information and communication into the villages will result in social and political change. What seems important is to recognise that information will bring with it many different changes. While such changes may not be apparent now, the fact is change cannot be ignored and the
government must therefore plan to manage this change irrespective of what cultural sensitivities may exist.

The "Fijian Way of Life"

According to Nayacakalou, the "Fijian way of life" can be interpreted in a number of ways. First, the Fijians perform their social obligations and other functions within social groups of the mataqali, or village clan or yavusa, or village as a whole, and if they retain these social units, then it can be said that the people are preserving their way of life. Underlying this view is the social principle that the Fijian society is a communal organisation where everything is done by and in groups. These "groups stand in specified relationship to one another and function together through the recognition of obligations between them as well as between the members within each". Secondly, it implies a "continuance of traditional loyalties and respect associated with the Fijian chiefly system". Chiefs have their obligations to the people and the people to the chiefs. Thirdly, there is a view that draws attention to Fijian ceremonies and its procedures, especially ceremonies associated with birth, marriages and deaths. People respect ceremonies related to these occasions, but participating in related activities can become expensive as well as take up a great deal of time. Yet, another view sees the "Fijian way of life" as life in the village and the form of organisation here is important to the survival of Fijian culture. The "Fijian way of life", therefore, encompasses and stresses these different principles which form the basis of understanding Fijian behaviour.

In recent years, with the advancement of new technology and development generally, many questions have been raised by the Fijians themselves regarding the preservation of the "Fijian way of life" and the degree of change that is acceptable. A number of Fijians question the degree of change and see this as a threat to their "continuance as a people". Others feel that change and modernization are inevitable and these must be accepted as the way of the future. Hence, the Fijians continue to face a dilemma: whether to advocate and support change, or support tradition.

An early study by Spate had identified this dilemma and noted it as a problem for the Fijians trying to reconcile the conflict between the "traditional communal system" and

18 Ibid.
19 Spate, O. H. K. (1959), The Fijian People: Economic Problems and Prospects. Suva: Fiji Government. This study is commonly referred to as the Spate Report, 1959. Another study of similar significance was that conducted by Sir Alan Burns in 1959 titled Report of the Commission
the "modern economy''.\textsuperscript{20} Spate believed that the solution to this perceived problem was to shift from a communal-based subsistence agricultural production toward individual-based commercial agriculture production.\textsuperscript{21} Spate argued that keeping the traditional obligations limited the involvement of Fijians in the "modern economy" and limited their economic production.

Writing in 1984, Lasaqa\textsuperscript{22} argued that the view that "traditions" prevent wider participation of Fijians in the modern economy persists. Lasaqa wrote

\begin{quote}
...the Fijian is far from holding a commanding position in the commercial economy of Fiji... To succeed will require not only his individual and collective will... in some situations it will demand some internal adjustment of his social relationships so that the needs of economic and commercial progress are not lost sight of...\textsuperscript{21}
\end{quote}

In a study of the "Fijian way of life", Thompson\textsuperscript{23} made it clear

\begin{quote}
...that the "traditional" and the "modern" forms coexisted, that Fijians were involved in both types of relationships...As the "modern" economy expands, the "traditional communal system" as a whole does not diminish. The more pressing problem is to understand the ways in which Fijians combine the "Fijian way of life" and the "money way of life".\textsuperscript{24}
\end{quote}

If we are able to understand this it will

\begin{quote}
...explain how the indigenous and introduced social, economic and political systems articulate at the village level...we can gain a valuable and necessary understanding of the social, economic, and political conditions in Fiji.\textsuperscript{25}
\end{quote}

In my discussions with people in the rural village regarding the "Fijian way of life", a number of points were made. An essential feature of the "Fijian way of life" is sharing and caring. This includes the sharing of material wealth, home and anything else that can be shared. Caring for people is also very important to the Fijian. This is seen as part of maintaining customs, traditions, and the communal group. The focus is on sharing, reciprocity and meeting one's obligations in the village community. These

\begin{itemize}
\item Spate, (1959), op. cit, p.5.
\item Ibid., p. 5.
\item Ibid., p. 139.
\item Ibid., p. 8.
\item Ibid., p. 95.
\end{itemize}

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characteristics mean that there are certain ways of behaving that distinguishes the Fijians from other groups in the Fiji community. There is respect for other Fijians and often there is a social bond of Fijian togetherness.

When asked about the need to maintain features of the "Fijian way of life", the response from those in the rural village was a clear "yes". The Fijians in the village believed that this should be maintained as it gives the Fijian an identity - maintaining a language, customs and traditions, values, songs, meke or dance and Fijian etiquette. According to Cokanasiga

Fijians are socialized into this behaviour and often it seems that it is difficult to let go. My belief is that we can and should let go those customs and traditions that have no relevance in our present day life, especially those that become a financial burden, for example keeping all the customs that are related to death, births and marriages.

However, on the other hand, the Fijians in the village believe that there has been some confusion regarding the "Fijian way of life". For instance, people have argued that maintaining the "Fijian way of life" is really the cause of the slow development of the Fijians politically and economically compared to their Indo-Fijian counterparts as well as the other races in Fiji. If Fijians want to get ahead they must abandon some of the customs and traditions that make up their social and everyday life. Choosing which features to retain and which to abandon is not an easy thing to do. There can be some changes or modifications in the lifestyle and behaviour but the important point is trying to balance the "Fijian way of life" and modernization. It is possible to consider merging these features of traditional and the modern. The majority of the Fijians in rural village believed that in the end and as a Fijian, one is obliged to continue with the "Fijian way of life" as one can be accused of being non-Fijian.

A number of the urban Fijians interviewed, including the academics and professionals who were asked to comment on this question were of the view that the "Fijian way of life" has some drawbacks. According to Ravuvu,

The Fijian way of life is based on the principle of sharing one's resources, time, money and house. This principle is practiced all over Fiji. Hence, Fijians are often committed to contributing to many things - village development, the church, family weddings, deaths and births. These contributions make life for the young Fijians in the urban areas who are trying to settle down on their own with their families difficult as they have to make contributions to many things all the time.

If such commitment is stopped and the Fijians are more realistic about what they can afford they should be more financially secure, was a view made by Cokanasiga. Cokanasiga was of the view that:
Many Fijians do not want to let go this Fijian way of doing things - which is the only type of life that has some meaning to them. In other words, the Fijians would like to benefit from all the development that is taking place around them and at the same time hold on to the type of life they have been socialised into. There are many Fijians who desire to retain their culture and will do everything possible to do so. There are others who do not wish to retain all the Fijian culture but only some part of it. Some urban Fijians have tried to get away from village responsibilities and commitment. I have done this. This has not been an easy thing to do as Fijians in the urban areas are also obligated to the village needs and concerns. They are required to assist their villages in financial, developmental and social terms.

From general comments and discussions with people I interviewed it would be fair to say that since the 1987 coups, there has been a reawakening of the need for greater development for the Fijians but because resources were not too forthcoming through government despite the government’s claim that they do provide a great deal of assistance, responsibilities in raising funds for development projects were left to the villages and the Fijian people themselves. All this work took people away from their normal work such as planting and caring for the family and children who are at school. The new wave of development has resulted in the villagers having regular solis or contributions for projects. As a mother in Korovou commented,

there are too many fundraising activities. I can’t even pay for my children’s bus fares to school. They have to walk long distances. My children have to leave home in the early morning and by the time they return in the afternoon they have little time to study as they have to do their normal work in the home and are too tired in the evenings. The situation is bad in terms of trying to get the children educated and finding a better future.

In the end, life in the village is difficult in terms of trying to get things done for the children. Can the people in the rural village lift their living standards under the present economic and social conditions? According to the majority of the Fijian people interviewed both in the rural and urban areas, the cultural and social obligations characteristic of the “Fijian way of life” has resulted in slow improvements to their way of life. These have also impeded on personal development and a better quality of life.

Chiefs and the Great Council of Chiefs

The chiefs play a central role in the political and social fabric of Fiji society today, and it is a subject that deserves more detailed study. However, I will give only a brief description of those aspects of the chiefs’ role and influence that are relevant here. Since 1874 government has protected the interests of the Fijians. In the colonial era the first governor, Sir Arthur Gordon, developed a policy for preserving the land 27 As discussed with an official of the Fijian Provincial Administration, the late Jospe Rabuka waga.
rights and the chiefly authority of the Fijians, a policy which still shapes law and government in post-independent Fiji. The Fijians were encouraged to maintain their separate identity as distinguished from the Indian labourer and the European planter and settler. In pursuing this policy, power was focused on the chiefs.

The chiefly institution was powerful and one that encouraged unity among the Fijians. The chiefs had power, wisdom, *mana* or "spiritual power" and were concerned for their people. Typically, a high percentage of Fijians I interviewed in both the rural and urban areas saw the chiefs as a link between them and God. "They are a chosen people", commented many Fijians at a village meeting. People believed that every chief possessed some degree of supernatural power in the form of *mana* which was derived directly from God and the higher the chief's position the greater the *mana*. In addition, chiefs were surrounded by a system of *tabu* or taboos. Fijians are traditionally required to observe these customary taboos closely. It is evident that some chiefs, having the greatest privileges, abuse some of these taboos knowing that they will not incur any wrath but in recent years, respect for the chiefs is being questioned. This belief system that is part of the Fijian tradition seems to conform to the type Weber identifies and elaborates in his work on 'traditional authority'. Weber recognised that there were norms associated with the system that were considered sacred, and any abuse or rebuke of the system 'would result in magical or religious evils', particularly for the commoner.

Despite the 'traditional authority' referred to here, criticisms of the chiefs and their obligations have been growing. In interviews with Fijians, both in the urban and rural villages, it was clear that there was growing dissatisfaction with the administrative and management style of the chiefs.

In 1875 the Fijian Affairs Act formalized the regular meetings of the chiefs through the newly constituted Great Council of Chiefs. This recognized the authority of the chiefs. Since then, this Council has had the power to appoint members of the Senate, and discuss all matters of social, political and economic relevance to the Fijians. It meets twice annually in different parts of Fiji. Originally only an advisory body, the Council has, over the years, assumed additional roles with the main objective of taking care of Fijian affairs and interests in areas of negotiating for land, business, and fishing rights for instance. Since independence in 1970 the traditional policy of the Council eroded somewhat. There has been recognition of customary law, customary

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Today the Great Council of Chiefs is one of the most influential forces in Fiji. It is part of the "Fijian way of life", and cannot be eroded or abolished. Since 1987 it has played an active part in the politics of Fiji. The Great Council of Chiefs is powerful, and commands a great deal of authority and respect. It reinforces the characteristics of the "Fijian way of life" in a number of ways. The 1990 Constitution guaranteed the position of the Great Council of Chiefs in the governing of Fiji. In its Report, the Fiji Constitution Review Commission recommended that the Constitution recognises the important role of the Great Council of Chiefs or Bose Levu Vakaturaga. The Fijian chiefly system's dominant political position and the paramountcy of the chiefs have meant that the ordinary Fijians are not able to ask questions directly nor criticise actions taken. People continue to respect and follow their chiefs thus creating tribalism and provincialism. In any democratic situation as adopted in this study, this is not ideal or workable. It does affect political efficacy of the Fijian in many ways. Today the influence of the chiefs is still effective in disseminating and promoting information on their political party, the SVT, and getting the support of the Fijians in the rural villages. This was evident in the February 1994 elections when the SVT Party won despite the fact that Parliament was dissolved a few months prior to the elections because the SVT Government was not able to pass the budget in 1993. This result raises some questions focusing on how exactly do Fijians vote, and how are they influenced? It would seem, from this example, that despite the people's dissatisfaction with the current government, and despite the knowledge that the government could not pass the budget, the SVT yet won the elections. It could be argued that no degree of information access would make a difference if people are influenced by culture, in this case the directive of the chiefs in voting. This has been confirmed in findings in chapter 6.

Traditionally and culturally, the Fijian chiefly system has remained largely unchanged since the 1860s. Attitudes and views for the preservation of Fijian customs and traditions, knowledge, and the use of traditional information communication channels are still very strong. It would seem from the interviews that the Fijians in the village have managed to hold on to a great deal of their culture and traditions. However, the changing role of the system in recent years whereby the chiefs are taking active part in politics, and are no longer unbiased, wise, on-lookers has met with a great deal of criticism from ordinary Fijians and other races. Theoretically, it would seem that the
participation of chiefs in politics is acceptable and unproblematic. In practice this does not seem to be the case. There are many problems that arise, problems relating to the mixing of traditional and Western style politics. "Furthermore, many chiefs lack the leadership qualities that come with the position", commented Baba.

It is believed that the Great Council of Chiefs will provide the Fijians with the power and the ability to further the Fijians' development and, most of all, manage the development of their country their own way again. Recent developments in the political field have raised questions of whether this Great Council of Chiefs will provide and can meet the political and economic needs of the Fijians.

Fijians today are faced with many issues that are important and are of concern to them as individuals and as a race, and is a challenge to the traditional way of life that exists. With the Great Council of Chiefs now active in politics there are many issues that were once sacred but which now have become political issues and are publicly debated and even ridiculed. For example, the question of allegiance of the commoners to their chief who may not possess leadership qualities and the impact of the Vota ni Kava Bula on Fijian politics raise questions that may be embarrassing for Fijians. A number of young Fijians interviewed noted their loss of respect for their chiefs through witnessing the lack of leadership and fairness of some of the chiefs. "The chiefs are losing their mana and are very corrupt", according to one interviewee. "A number are too lazy and no longer care for the people. But some chiefs replace this with the power gained through political influence and their positions in government", commented a Fijian gentleman I interviewed in Ba.

Table 7.1: Academics and Professionals: Involvement of chiefs in politics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Should the Great Council of Chiefs be:</th>
<th>Yes %</th>
<th>No %</th>
<th>Don't know %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Involved in politics</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Associated with a political party</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Involved as an individual</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. A body approving all legislation</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. An advisory body only</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results of interviews with the academics and professionals on the role of the Great Council of Chiefs in politics illustrate a number of views. Of those interviewed, 70%
did not favour chiefs to be involved in politics. The majority believed, however, that the Great Council of Chiefs should be an advisory body to government on Fijian affairs but at the same time also review and approve all government legislation relating to Fijian affairs.

In analysing these reactions, a few points can be made. It can be argued that the participation of chiefs in politics through a political party, the SVT for instance, is new and it needs time to prove itself. On the other hand, it can be argued that the Great Council of Chiefs should return to its former role of advisory body and keeper and protector of the "Fijian way of life". The Great Council of Chiefs has been and is a unique and distinctive institution that has survived for many years.

Its role has been tested and its contributions in the past have been positive in every way. It has been able to maintain the traditional way of life of the Fijians and has always commanded respect from the people. It can act as a watchdog of government activities to ensure that its traditions are not eroded.

Lawson argued, however, that the real motivation of the 1990 Constitution was the attempted consolidation of chiefly authority and consolidating Fijian paramountcy, rights and interests. Further, those chiefs that reject democratic institutions and norms are committed themselves to authoritarian rule impeded in their own traditional culture.

There is a desire maintained by the Great Council of Chiefs to hold on to Fijian traditions, an appeal which legitimises the present political system. But Fijian traditions have not been homogenous or timeless as is clearly evident from Fiji's history. Its political history encompasses great tribal and provincial struggles reflecting national differences and individualities. Such tensions are evident now in the present dealings and deliberation of government. Equally influential, however, has

30 In 1993 a rival Council of Chiefs was established for chiefs from Viti Levu because of dissatisfaction with the work of the Great Council of Chiefs mainly and their bias towards the eastern Provinces.
been the system of colonial government and the controls put in place by the British. The apparent false stability of Fijian politics in the past 100 years is a legacy of British rule and the institutions they put in place. Their policy of indirect rule, as well as divide and rule, have been the roots of political difficulties today. The Indo-Fijians' presence has been an easy scapegoat for many years as a reason for the backwardness and slow development politically and economically of the Fijians. Yet in 1990, the Great Council of Chiefs endorsed and approved the recommendations agreeing to reintroduce the system of government active since the 1870s.

While the Great Council of Chiefs maintains its central place in the Fijian community and society it is interesting to note that many of the Great Council of Chiefs meetings are not open to the media, and information is often not reported till sometime after a meeting has taken place. Discussions are closed to the media. Over the years, a number of complaints have been made by the media regarding the lack of openness in the conduct of the Great Council of Chiefs meetings particularly when the institution is funded by public funds. At the two Great Council of Chiefs meetings in 1997, the media were barred from attending or reporting on the meetings.

From interviews with Fijians in the urban areas and discussions in the village, it would seem that many were dissatisfied with the late dissemination of decisions made at the Great Council of Chiefs meetings. Information from these meetings is not reported in detail in the newspapers or the radio. When information is eventually released, most of the decisions, or some form of it, would have trickled down to the people through the matais. There is no reason to maintain such secrecy. A question on the satisfaction of accessing information received from the Great Council of Chiefs was asked of the academics and professionals and answers indicated a high degree of dissatisfaction. Table 7.2 gives the response of those academics and professionals who were interviewed. It can be argued that if the Fijians and the people of Fiji are not informed fully of the decisions made at the Great Council of Chiefs meetings, then the people would form their own conclusions or get information from secondary sources. The authenticity of the information can be questioned.

Table 7.2: Academics and Professionals: The Great Council of Chiefs and Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Yes %</th>
<th>No %</th>
<th>Don't Know %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council is too secretive</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council to be more productive</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The authenticity of the information can be questioned.
The Fijian Provincial Administration

The first resident colonial governor, Sir Arthur Gordon, established the Fijian Provincial Administration (FPA) in 1875. An autonomous body within the Central Government of Fiji, its main purpose was and still is, to preserve the social, cultural and economic interests of the Fijians. The establishment of the FPA was inspired by the idea of incorporating the Fijians in development of the country and making them administer their own affairs. A system of indirect rule was introduced in which Fiji was divided into twelve provinces. These provinces followed closely the boundaries of the traditional political units.

The FPA framework embraces all Fijians as a separate social, cultural and economic group. At the apex of the FPA is the Great Council of Chiefs or the Bosi Levu Vakatogra. The Constitution recognises the Great Council of Chiefs and provides for the protection of Fijian land and customs. The FPA forms policies that cover the political, economic and social development of the Fijians. Thus, the system can be viewed as having various components: legal, political, administrative and financial. According to Nayacakalou,

The Fijian Administration may be regarded as a system of local government for the Fijians... a system empowered by law to organize some of the activities of the Fijian people for their own social, economic, and political development as well as for the preservation of their traditional way of life.

It is the framework of leadership which embraces all Fijians as a distinct group. Through its machinery, Fijian political views are represented to higher authority and expressed in the highest councils of the state. At the same time it forms a large part of the machinery by which the resulting government policies for the social, political and economic development of Fijians are executed.

The FPA is part of the Ministry of Fijian Affairs, a department of the government that is responsible for all affairs to do with the Fijian people. Other sections of the Ministry of Fijian Affairs include the Native Lands Commission which safeguards ownership and use of Fijian land (Cap. 133 Native Lands Act); the Native Land Trust

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32 Colonial policy placed the chief in charge of Fijian affairs. The goal of the policy was to allow the Fijians to attain independence along their own lines. There was a dual mandate: reconciling economic progress with Fijian welfare and to regard the Fijians' interests as paramount. Opposite to this was direct rule where the objective is to find a place for the Fijian in a society of which the principal institutions are European in character.


34 Chapter 3 of the 1990 Constitution provides for the protection and enhancement of Fijian interests.


36 Ibid., p. 117.
Board which is responsible for controlling and administering the use of Fijian land for the benefit of the Fijian people (Cap. 134 Native Land Trust Act); the Fijian Development Fund Board which administers the Fijian Development Fund (Cap. 121 Fijian Development Fund); the Institute of Fijian Language and Culture which is responsible for the study and documentation of the Fijian language, and the Fijian Education Unit which administers the Fijian Education Fund. These sections of the Ministry have a management board, the Fijian Affairs Board.

The Fijian Affairs Board, established in 1945, succeeded the Native Regulation Board and is mainly an advisory body to the government and the Great Council of Chiefs on Fijian matters. In 1993, the Fijian Affairs Board was re-organised and re-structured. The main thrust was to ensure the accelerated advancement of Fijians in commerce and industry and in other areas of development. The Board was to take more initiatives in formulating appropriate policies to ensure these objectives were met, as well as to ensure that approved policies were implemented effectively. The Board was to monitor progress as well.

In its new role, the Board established an executive arm to be responsible for and to ensure that the additional tasks were implemented. A Provincial Development Unit (PDU) was established in January 1993 with the following objectives: (1) To promote the welfare and good government of the Fijian people; (2) To prepare the unit to accommodate changes necessary for the transition recommended by the restructuring; (3) To see a smooth transition period from the current roles into new ones; (4) To provide liaison between Provincial Councils and government ministries; (5) To provide consultation to the Provincial Councils, government departments, the private sector and the public.

Apart from the laws directly relating to Fijian Affairs there is legislation providing for land such as the Agricultural Landlord and Tenants Act (ALTA) of 1977. The Act specifies the period, not more than 30 years, after which native lands on lease revert back to the communal owners, if they wish to farm it.

by Rodney Cole made a number of recommendations that were endorsed in 1990 by the Great Council of Chiefs. Generally the recommendations proposed that the Fijian society enforce traditional, social and cultural systems including the native court system which was introduced in 1876. Cole believed that the reintroduction of these systems would keep law and order at the village level. Fijians were to be brought under a separate system of government as it was in the colonial days. The Great Council of Chiefs believed that reintroducing the old system would provide an effective control on crime as well. See Figures 7.1 and 7.2 for the old and the new recommended structures of the FPA. The revised structure included a structure of the system of information and communication channels that existed in the colonial period. This system represents a very strong top-down flow of information. Figure 7.3 gives a structure showing the government district administrative structure through which information flows. Figure 7.4 shows the flow of information structure within the village and up to the Provincial Council then to the Great Council of Chiefs.

Generally, the flow of information follows a particular pattern. Within the village, concerns about anything are voiced first through the family or tokatoka, then taken up to the mataqali or clan meeting, then to the village meeting to discuss. Depending on the nature of the problem, this can be settled at any of these three levels. Often, any larger development needs and concerns are discussed at the village meeting before these are taken up to the tikina or district meetings.

There are weekly and monthly scheduled meetings but ad hoc meetings are also called. Proposals that go to village meetings are often discussed in detail. These meetings are considered “democratic” where each member of the village is given the opportunity to speak and voice an opinion on matters discussed. Often, however, only the elders speak and voice their views with little opposition or input from other villagers, particularly women. Sometimes it is difficult to read the silence. At most times, however, because of traditional respect given to the elders of the village, meetings are held for the people to give agreement to what has been already decided by the elders.

From the village meetings the village representative or mata takes up the decision to the Tikina or District Council meetings. Meetings usually take place once every quarter. Different village elected representatives attends discussions here. The...
Figure 7.1 Relationship Between the Fijian Administration and Central Government Departments 1967 - 1984

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS

Agriculture
Fisheries
Forest
Pine
Education
Health
Lands, etc

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION
Control development fund
Coordinate planning development-rural

COMMUNITY projects
Tikina projects
Private Development projects
Village projects

FIJIAN ADMIN

Note: By-passing of the Fijian Administration and the District Administration is made possible through the 1967 re-organization.

Figure 7.2: The Fijian Provincial Administration and the Central Government Departments (After the 1984 Review)


Note: The absence of the District Administration. All matters relating to Fijian interests such as education, land and health must be routed through the Fijian Affairs Board and the Provincial Council Office before taken up with Central Government.
decisions made at the Tikina Council are then taken up to the Bose ni Yasana or Provincial Council meeting. There are two scheduled meetings a year.

After discussion at this level, the matter is then taken to the District Office (DO) which is part of the District Administration of Central Government. For administrative purposes, Fiji is divided into four Divisions made up of districts. A Commissioner heads each of the Divisions and the District Officers look after the districts. The four Divisions are Western, Central, Northern and Eastern. The Western Division is the largest and covers the Western side of Viti Levu and the islands of the north and west. The Central Division covers the Eastern part of Viti Levu and includes the capital Suva. The Northern Division includes Vanua Levu and Taveuni and smaller islands nearby. The Eastern Division includes Lomaiviti, the Lau Group, Kadavu and Rotuma. The Commissioners are directly responsible to the Minister for Rural Development, Rehabilitation and Rural Housing.

To understand the channel of communication within the District Administration it is best to describe an example. In the Eastern Division as an example, official meetings are held once every three months. There are twelve tikinas or District Councils. Monthly meetings are held with each tikina. The meetings are attended by heads of each department of government and the District Office (DO) and Deputy District Officer (DDO). At these meetings Tikina Council members voice their needs, complaints, and project proposals, or any other matters. Minutes of the meetings are kept and distributed by the DO to the relevant departments. The DO has limited authority but can approve certain programmes and expenditures.

Decisions communicated from the District Office back to the village and family go through the same channels also - from District Office, Provincial Council, District Council, Village Council, Village Clan, and na tokatoka or family units. See Figure 7.4 for the flow of information.

Problems are recognized with this mainly top-down or sender-receiver system of accessing information. The many different steps that need to be taken before a decision is made are the biggest problem for development. The processes involved are also bureaucratic and slow. For instance in Levukana, the Roko or district representative at provincial meetings is based in Lakeba that is about 60 nautical miles away on another island. Hence there are great delays in getting decisions on any matter. Tantamount to this is the fact that a number of village requests taken up in 1989, and later in 1992 on water supply, electrification of the village and the
establishment of a kindergarten are still pending. No decisions on the projects have been made. Questions about the delay have been asked but no answers have been provided.

The Fijians in the rural village and the Fijians in the urban areas complained that the Fijian Provincial Administrative system is slow and ineffective. They gave this as one of the main reasons that development has been slow for the Fijians as compared to the other sectors of the community. Indeed, the government and the various government institutions have a policy of helping the Fijians in many ways but most Fijians are finding that this information is still not filtering directly down to them.

Epeli Cama, the village mata's comments add to our understanding of the situation:

Development matters must be taken to the Base ni Yasana (Provincial Meeting) first before anything can be done. This would include the building of roads or the establishment of a kindergarten, for instance. The needs would have been discussed at the village level and also district level first. All matau attend the Provincial Meetings. All projects are prioritised. Getting a decision back always takes so long. After approval by the Provincial Council the matter may be taken up with Central Government which allocates the resources. I had taken up issues regarding fisheries, roads, water supply and food issues three years ago and now still nothing has been done. I can complain to the District Commissioner which but this is not allowed, as I have to go through the normal process of decision making which involves five steps. Further, I was told that complaining was a European thing and I should not complain lest I will be criticised. It is very frustrating. And they say we Fijians are lazy and cannot help ourselves. It is the system that stifles us and keeps us from making any positive progress. The solution is do things the European way; as the Indians do - they go straight to the District Office when they want something done. Why can't we do this?

Another villager indicated that government had now embarked on self-development projects to speed things up. This involved the villages preparing project requests for submission directly to the District Commissioner.

While this is a good idea the government does not realise that many of us in the village cannot put a submission together. It is all so very well to come up with this kind of idea but who do they think we are? We do not have the training or even the knowledge of how to go about this matter. We do not know how to cost projects for instance. So we do not do anything as we do not get any good feedback as to what we have to do from the District Commissioner's Office or the Fijian Provincial Administration.

So there are additional difficulties faced by rural dwellers if they wish to make changes. While complaints can be lodged with the District Office, often there are delays because of financial, procedural and bureaucratic difficulties. While a number of Fijians in the village may not be able to put together written development
Notes:

1. This figure illustrates how the provincial communication structure links with central government. It also illustrates on one hand how the Fijian communication structure begins at the village then moves up the Village Council, Tikina Council, Provincial Council before matters of provincial concern are then taken up to the government. On the other hand, it shows how the Indo-Fijian community communicate their needs through the Advisory Councils then direct to the government.
1. Information to the top must go through the different levels in the communication chain. Similarly, information from the top-down follows through the same structure. Information is transmitted by the official village representative or "mata". Generally, the system is more top-down rather than bottom-up.

2. (i) A number of family groups form the Tokatoka.
(ii) More than one Tikina makes up a Yasana.
(iii) More than one Yavusa makes up a Tikina.
(iv) A number of Mataqalis make up a Yavusa. For example, in Levuka, there are five which make up the Yavusa Namasi.

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proposals, the educated and urban Fijians have often assisted in the preparation of such proposals. This, however, does not speed up matters at all as the proposals must still go through the normal bureaucratic channels before a decision is made on the proposal.

Further, in many self help projects - for telephones, water supply, electricity, roads - the village is required to contribute about one third of the total cost of the projects. Often the village does not have the necessary funds and may seek the assistance of those from the village who is now working in the urban areas. This raises the question of the principle involved in a village paying for public services when this should be a government concern, especially if development is in the rural villages.

From the discussions with the rural people it was clear that the system where the affairs of the Fijians in the rural villages must be subjected to various levels of decision making is ineffective and inefficient. "By comparison, other races can go directly to the District Officer or the Indian Advisory Council with a request and can be attended to quickly. These people do not have to wait for three or four years to get things moving", commented Epeli Cama. When asked whether the matter has been discussed at the Provincial Meeting level, the reply from Cama was that,

> It is always on the agenda. We complain every year. Every year we are told that things will improve. Why do you think we rely on our village people living in the urban areas to assist us. They have assisted us in building our meeting house, our water supply and our electricity. If we waited for government to do things we will wait for a very long time.

Many of the Fijians interviewed in both the village and the urban areas believe that the FPA is a hindrance to development from the point of view that for many major development decisions, there are several steps to go through before a proposal can be discussed and a decision made and communicated back to the people in the village. A change in the whole system is needed. However, the review and changes recommended by the Cole Report, in my view, took the development of the Fijians back even farther.

The endorsement of the Cole Report in 1990 by the Great Council of Chiefs, three years after the coups indicated that the government of the day was keen to control the Fijians' way of life. Reintroducing the old ways of doing things including the flow of information meant that change and development for the Fijians would continue to be slow and controlled by the Fijian Provincial Administration. The reintroduced customary ways of doing things including information and communication
dissemination could be viewed as containment of the Fijians influencing them in their political attitude and outlook.

It can be argued that the Cole Report did the Fijians a disservice as Ravuvu pointed out that it would seem the report was giving the Ministry of Fijian Affairs and those in authority the opportunity to be able to control the future development of the Fijians. It is evident from discussions with those in the rural village that the FPA has the power to wield and control the information that is being disseminated to the rural Fijians. It also controls the decisions that are made and can mould these to suit the leaders. These controls are manifested in policies that the government puts in place to ensure that the "Fijian way of life" continues.

Containment Policy

Such policies can be viewed as containment policies that can be defined as policies manifested and legitimised by the leadership of the day which resist change. This resistance can be consistent over a period of time (as in the colonial period in Fiji) growing less consistent (post-independent Fiji) and then becoming passive to some degree. In the colonial period, 1874 to 1970, the colonial administration established the Fijian Provincial Administration to help carry out the policies of the colonial government, which apart from other activities, aimed to "develop" the country and the Fijian people. Through their policies, preservation of the traditional order, lifestyle, authority, and communication patterns and channels was ensured. These were introduced by the government so as to preserve the "Fijian way of life" and the work of the Fijian Provincial Administration.

The Fijian Provincial Administration was responsible for the building of schools, better sanitation, better housing, water supply, planting of food crops and a general higher standard of living. It also ensured that the Fijians lived within a code of conduct defined by the Fijian leadership and the Fijian Provincial Administration. Movements of people were restricted. Attitudes, actions, allegiances and reverence to the authority were promoted by the Fijian Administration. This system fostered dependence. It also meant active suppression of information as the Fijian administration provided only selective information. The people trusted their leaders and remained silent.

As discussed with Rabukawaqa, these active containment policies and their administration through Fijian Regulations were relaxed in 1966. Fijians were allowed a great deal of freedom and choice that encouraged individualism and affected the traditional Fijian communal life. While Fijians continued to live in the villages and complied with traditional authority and communal activity, it was clear that from 1966 to 1980 those in authority found that their power as well as support were diminishing. Many Fijians took the opportunity to assert their individual rights and freedom, and forged new political and social linkages. "Dr. Nayacakalou was instrumental in moving development along these lines", commented Rabukawaqa. This was immediately seen as a threat to chiefly authority and the Fijian traditional system.

When in 1990 the government endorsed the recommendations of the review of the Fijian Provincial Administration conducted in 1984, it more or less endorsed the continuation of the containment policies. It can also be argued that the 1997 Constitutional Review Report and its recognition of traditional Fijian processes of the courts, of the Fijian Provincial Administration and the Great Council of Chiefs support containment. It can further be argued that such containment is not good, as the whole essence of any stable government is to keep people informed for them to make good decisions. However, there is little indication that the government would like to let go of the institutions that control and are responsible for the Fijians' interest. The government leadership itself finds the strengthening of the Fijian Administration a positive development as far as government interests are concerned as this would secure the position of the present government. The cohesive nature of the Fijian community was seen as important to maintain for this reason. It can be argued, that given the very divided and violent history of the pre-colonial Fijians, the likelihood of provincialism and sectorialism developing, breaking away from communal interests and the Fijian way of life, rebelling in other words, is a high possibility. This being so, it is possible to assume that the current "peaceful" existence in Fiji is resting on very fragile ground.

As far as the institutions controlling Fijian interests are concerned (The Native Land Trust Board, The Native Land and Fisheries Commission, The Fijian Development Fund Board, and The Business Opportunity Management and Advisory Service) many may be inflexible and may not change their current operations. It is likely that a number may also have their own agenda. Some structures have been in place since the colonial days, and have undergone slow change.
Two questions can be raised in relation to the continuation of the Fijian Provincial Administration and its containment policies. Has this structure altered the traditional relationships of authority that exists? What is the relation between authority and the flow of information in the village community? The Fijian Affairs Board has always taken on well-educated Fijians of high traditional rank to work on matters relating to important Fijian interests. Matters of significance are all brought before the Board for discussion and for regulation of execution throughout other government administrative units. Fijian custom and tradition have always enabled the retention of conservatism throughout the Fijian Administration. The efficiency of this organization was tied to the ways in which their members saw best how to fulfill customary functions through this administrative structure. The people look to this organization as the protector of their interests and their rights, and looked to the chiefs and the officers of the Fijian Administration as fulfilling their needs, without raising too many questions as discussed earlier.

Even after the coups, the structural continuity of the FPA has been strengthened further, with the preservation of traditional attitudes maintained. The chiefs and the Great Council of Chiefs still maintain strong control over the affairs of the FPA and the Fijians in the country. For the judiciary, social work, economics and education, a great knowledge of custom, for example customary law, traditional procedures and interpretations was more important than the efficiency of Western law or procedures, although a knowledge of both the traditional and the Western ways of operating was also considered important.

As far as the relationship between information and the FPA was concerned, information as perceived in this study - information as process, knowledge or thing - was not regarded as important. As for the officers of the FPA, it was important that the person was educated and knew how to execute the duties laid down. Whatever information needed to be disseminated to the Fijians in the different provinces, the FPA used the mechanism that existed. In this way it was able to control, select and disseminate the information that management agreed to distribute. Officers, however, were required to know a great deal about historical and traditional information regarding land titles, forests, fishing rights, villages and their membership.

In recent years, however, the growth in the use of new information technology, the growing loss of traditional information and the increasing legal battles over land and chiefly titles, the FPA is forced to look more closely at its operations and information resources, and introduce more on-going structural and functional changes. Changes
have occurred in the way of regionalization or decentralisation. This change is seen as a precondition to accelerating Fijian advancement in commerce, business and developmental areas. The importance of training of officers is recognised. It also recognises the need to improve the information and communication system to be responsive to the people's needs. These changes at the central administration of FPA are still to be felt in the rural villages.

CHANGE AND THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

The first question that needs to be answered is why and how does change occur? Ginsberg had identified factors that may explain social change which have relevance to this study. These factors include: the conscious desire and decisions of individuals to change and to want change; individuals' behaviour influenced by changing conditions; structural changes; external influences; influence of groups; common purpose; and different elements from different sources. When applying political system theory and the elements identified in chapter 2 to explain the changes taking place, it may be found that there are distinct limitations in the performance and the power of the information and communication in enhancing the development of democracy. On one hand, the impact of information and communication will depend on the degree of control by those in power. On the other hand, there are qualities information has which can be beneficial to the people in promoting a more informed and educated population. As suggested by Lerner, this would mobilise people to seek and work towards achieving a better quality of life, political equality and freedom.

Information, Culture and Change

In 1959 Geddes had argued that despite the exposure of the Fijians to many different foreign ways and alien influences, the Fijians have retained their traditional social structure. At this time, the main influencing factors to change in the society would have been literacy, economics, improved roads and communications, religion and education. Almost forty years hence, the same could be said of the Fijians. The social organisation that is highly structured has remained largely intact. What have changed, however, are the functional aspects of the Fijian society, and these include: how

43 This is defined in terms of the "basic human needs" approach of "another development" which was noted in chapter 2 and includes the provision of clean drinking water, decent shelter, education, security of livelihood, adequate transport, assisting people with decision-making and self respect.
people communicate, receive and send information; how they interact; how they think about things such as politics and development; how they are accepting new technology and other associated developments; and how they behave to each other.

Using the village structure as an example, and terms of the structure including the hierarchically organised kinship structure - tokatoka (family), mataqali (clan), yavusa (village) - there has been minimal change. However, functionally, there have been radical changes that are related to education, mobilization, information and communication access, and business, politics and economies. The factors that can be used to analyse change include education, social and economic status, motivation and aspirations, changing authority, and access to and use of information. For example, Fijians who are well informed, educated and have a good job will find that their positions in the structure of the village may remain, but their functional attitudes or behaviour, for example towards politics and village administration, may change. This change may not fall in with the structure of the Fijian village. There are other discrepancies that arise between structural position and functional attitudes. For example: to be involved in income-generating projects is in conflict with the traditional role; accessing information to better the self is not the traditional thing to do; motivations outside the traditional space; awareness of other political systems as well as becoming critical of the traditional communal system. All these are related to the amount of information available to the people. Conflict with the traditional social structure is likely to arise when people become more informed and know how to use information that they can access through various means other than that provided by the government.

The Fijians in the village as explained are strongly conservative, with religion and the chiefly system having strong influence on the individual's behaviour and belief system. The Fijians in the urban area are not subjected to this degree of control, and are freer to make their own decisions on political matters. Since the link between the urban Fijian and the rural is taking different forms and influences, it is becoming clear that both groups of people will have to work together on various matters concerning both the development in the rural village as well as development of the Fijians in the urban areas. The urban Fijians are influenced by the impact of information and new knowledge and can have an effect and change the structural features of the Fijian society. This can be seen as both a positive and a negative thing. There are effects of cultural elements on political participation, decision making, political efficacy and endogeneity as discussed in earlier chapters.
In studying the information flows in developing countries, Vusoniwailala identified a number of patterns. Where there is a two-way information flow controlled ecologically and structurally and determined by culture this can be linked to egalitarianism, characteristic of societies in the pre-European contact period. For example, in the social organizations of Pacific Islands, Vusoniwailala argued that interpersonal communication was the only available channel through which information was transmitted. It was highly organized with low information load and little, if any, information from the outside cultures. This can be identified in the communication within the Fijian village where people have the opportunity to discuss matters.

Where there is a one-way flow, vertical communication of information and no feedback, the environment will be controlled and the political system will be closed. Such a political system can be considered to be hierarchical, traditional and authoritarian. In this situation the sources of the type of information to disseminate is politically determined through persuasion or coercion, the channels of information flow are politically designed by the controller and the information load is increasing slowly. This pattern of flow can be identified in the information flow within the FPA. The chiefs as well as the FPA control the new information flow to the village. In this controlled situation, the Fijian becomes dependent on the formal system of information and accepts what information is communicated to him.

Where there is a free flow of information, the old information systems often conflict with the new. Many channels of communication are encouraged with the use of new information technology seen as making information accessible to all sections of the community. However, in the village, there are those who prefer to maintain the controlled environment and therefore do everything in their power to retain the status quo in information control. There are others who prefer greater access to information through information communication infrastructures as they see these as increasing general mobility, knowledge and participation of people in politics. This developing environment of information flow would be seen in Fiji from the period after independence to the current.

45 Part of the basic evolutionary phases referred to by Fried who hypothesized that political societies develop through four stages: egalitarian, rank, stratified, state. Fried, M. H. (1967), The Evolution of Political Society. New York: Random House.
Where there is a multitude of information flow, people are able to choose and are free to participate in any information flow they wish. They may listen to a radio session, watch television, and receive information from another individual or obtaining information from only one source. In this dynamic environment there is freedom to do what people desire without interfering with others. There are one-way, two-way and vertical communication channels. There is freedom to express an opinion on any matter without fear of being victimized. In such an open communication environment, this can be linked to democracy where there is freedom of speech and freedom to access, select and use information as it is desired. In the village of Levukana, information access is not entirely free and not entirely controlled. People may listen to the radio. They also have access to newspapers occasionally. However, video programmes have been banned from the village for fear that these may affect negatively on the culture. While people are free to express an opinion, this is often under controlled conditions and where matters considered will have to be for the welfare of the whole village and not only one sector or an individual. The whole system seems to be neither democratic nor wholly authoritarian.

Systems and Systems that Inform for Fiji

In chapter 2 the model for a perceived information system and system that inform linking the traditional to the modern is given. In chapter 3 a detailed description of how this system may work for the South Pacific is explained. In this chapter the analysis has highlighted that for Fiji, the use of such a system would be effective in plans for the transition to democracy. In the case of Fiji, communication technologies are developing rapidly compared to economic and social developments. The traditional information and communication systems are in tact but not used effectively.

In the context of the above discussion, the influence of culture in political matters and the growing impact of new information technologies will have to be reconciled in some way. On one hand the government wishes to see that the “Fijian way of life” remains intact, and on the other it tries to ensure that the Fijians get ahead politically, economically and socially. The influence of information and communication cannot be rejected for the sake of rejection as there may be some positive influences which are desirable and which can steer the transformation of the Fijian society at a pace that may be conducive to the Fijian people accepting change. It also must be accepted that the penetration of the information and communication technologies into the rural villages and homes in the urban areas will be rapid in the future. Other technologies
and ideologies are also penetrating the Fijian village and any mechanism of defence or
resistance may not be too effective.

In Levukana, there is much resistance, not indifference, to the introduction of new
technologies such as television, video and films as already noted. The village elders
defend their resistance giving the erosion of culture as one of the main reasons. The
threat to authority, traditional activities, the church, traditional subsistence farming,
family values and cohesion were identified as some of the areas in which modern
information and communication technologies would have unlimited and negative
influences. While these reasons seem reasonable, the fact that many of the villagers
are now based in urban centres and the mobility of the population has increased over
the years, change will come. It is the speed of this change as raised by Deutsch, and
the readiness for change, that will become important considerations when looking at
political change.

In examining the mechanism for transformation in the village, it becomes necessary to
look at the idea of how the cultural factors and belief systems will co-exist with the
modern technologies and changing Fijian attitudes within the wider context of a single
social structure. This view can be extended to the whole of the Fijian society, the rural
and the urban. Conflict of opinions, of morals, of social structure, of beliefs will
appear but these must be resolved if the two systems are to co-exist. For information
and communication the modern elements and the traditional elements could be "re-
interpreted" in the light of a new system as well as the traditional. For example, at the
conceptual level as discussed in chapter 6, we have seen information and
communication to mean different things to the people in the village. The concepts are
related to customs and traditions, beliefs and the ways of doing things that have
survived over the years. Incorporate these with the modern ways of doing things to
establish an information system that inform as suggested in chapter 2 is one way to go
in making information and communication effective not only in the village but also in
the urban areas.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter the role of culture in influencing information and communication in
Fiji is discussed. A detailed description of selected socio-cultural factors that are seen
to be influencing the role and impact of information in democratic development is
provided. These included the "Fijian way of life" and its impact on information
access, related containment issues, the role of the Fijian Provincial Administration in
information dissemination and development, and the control and influence of the Fijian chiefs in information access and political participation. What is highlighted here is the continuing impact culture has on institutions including information institutions, and development. There is every indication that customs and tradition will continue to be the basis of Fijian decision making and actions and any discussion on the development of democratic principles will have to take these into consideration.

At which level and what circumstances do Fijians use traditional structures to access information, and under what conditions and to what extend they use the modern? This chapter, as well as chapter 6, suggests that the Fijians in the village studied rely heavily on the traditional communication structures for their information. The information flow from the top to the bottom is accepted without too many complaints. The information provided through this system is usually of use to the people in terms of developmental information as well as keeping informed about other developments in the Province of Lau and Fiji. It is through this structure that information flows back to the top. The use of these structures is complemented by the use of radios and reading the newspapers when available. Information through visitors to the village is an important source. There are no special conditions on the use of radio and the newspapers for information. The people have radios and they are free to listen to programmes of their choice and the news. Some may use the information gathered for political purpose.

The findings show an information and communication pattern in which the modern and the traditional information systems that inform co-exist rather than interrelate. The Fijian information system was more culturally based and followed a largely top-down communication line promoted by government through the Fijian Affairs Board. The two systems were not connected and tended not to complement each other. In a sense, this separate development of two information and communication systems, isolating the Fijians from the others, has contributed to the survival and preservation of the “Fijian way of life” and the colonial information communication chain. Hence, on one hand, there is a sector in Fiji society that has the freedom to access information using whatever forms of organization it has at its disposal. On the other, the Fijians also have the freedom to access information from various organizations and also receive information through the radio and newspapers.
Dahlgren argued that in nondemocratic societies, the components of the public sphere which include the production of news, views, and ideas in public circulation derive from, mediate, and serve to produce the existing social order. In nondemocratic countries, the state makes sure that this is so. This therefore does not promote the emergence of public opinion and democratic principles. However, alongside this can develop an independent public sphere where people have equal access to information, media, knowledge, and opinion-forming institutions as a political power. The question this then raises is, within a democratic system where the majority of the people have accepted the existing social order and fundamental democratic values as adopted in this study, is there room for two public spheres in Fiji? According to Jakubowicz, "given the inherent conflict between the state and civil society, it is probable that even in a genuinely democratic system, civil society would develop its own public sphere". Within a democratic system, the two public spheres would reflect the differing interests of the government and the people and can co-exist.

From findings, it would seem that overall, both government and the people benefit from information and communication. While such benefits are seen to advance cultural and political life of the people to some degree, there is also evidence that the government may not want an informed society. More information is seen to have potential destructive force on culture and tradition, and the government, being mindful of this, is attempting to introduce information and media legislation to ensure political control is maintained on the free flow of information in the country. Such measures will no doubt affect the development of democracy in Fiji in the sense that the Fijians' right to information may be curtailed to some degree. The measures put in place by the government to control the flow of information in Fiji will be discussed next.

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47 Dahlgren, P. (1987), "Ideology and Information in the Public Sphere", in J. D. Slack et al. (eds), The Ideology of the Information Age, Norwood, New Jersey; Ablex, pp. 24 - 46.
49 Ibid., p.82.
CHAPTER 8
INFORMATION CONTROL IN FIJI

The comparative assessment of the intra-societal penetration of information and communication systems undertaken in chapter 3 suggests that there is a likely correlation between information, communication and democracy. It further suggests that in countries where the essential conditions of democracy exist, there is a high degree of freedom of expression, access to information, including a high degree of freedom of the press. On the other hand, in non-democratic regimes there tends to be more restrictive flow of information and more control on access. Feedback in these countries is poor.

Deutsch argued that the free flow of information and an efficient feedback system was crucial to a stable political system. A good communication system will ensure that feedback reaches the policy makers. He defined feedback as "a communications network that produces action in response to an input of information, and includes the results of its own action in the new information by which it modifies its subsequent behaviour".\(^1\) A feedback network contains arrangements which can react to outside factors in specific ways to achieve the desired results of a political system. If such desired results are not met then adjustments are made until the desired goal has been reached.

Westley and MacLean\(^2\) communications model also recognised the importance of feedback. Where a sender transmits information to a receiver, there is immediate feedback. This immediate feedback has many advantages of learning about the needs and feelings of the receiver. These are transmitted through a gatekeeper to the sender who utilises the information purposefully. This concept of feedback is important for the development of democracy as it prescribes that the gatekeeper ensures that the people have access to information that is important to their lives and to the decision making process. The role of the gatekeeper in this case is as facilitator of both the sender and the receiver and it ensures that only the information that needs to be communicated is relayed. In other words, the gatekeeper can act as the controlling agent for the sender.

According to Robie, "sometimes where feedback in a political system has either broken down or been blocked, serious consequences have arisen for the system as a whole". Robie suggested that such was the case in Fiji at the time of the 1987 coups when the feedback system broke down. Furthermore, this implied that the break down was due largely to the Fiji Government determining and controlling the free flow of information, and to this I would include, the type of information that can be produced, managed, disseminated, and communicated to the public.

This chapter will analyse the suggestion and implication that controlled information flow limits the development of democracy in a country. The three main ways information flow and feedback are controlled in Fiji is by government or political forces, by the information and communication organisations, and by socio-cultural forces. An understanding of the process of these controls is essential to an understanding of the nature of these controls, for while the question of who controls is fundamental, the significance of that control is in the way in which it is, or can be, exercised. Control, in this sense, means the extent to which information and communication are able to shape output. In other words, what is the impact and interplay of these controls to determine the political trends in Fiji? The focus is on government control of the free flow of information between information owner and producer, and information user and government's gatekeeper role. It will refer briefly to the control by information and communication organisations and socio-cultural factors as these have been covered in detail in earlier chapters.

THE RIGHT TO ACCESS INFORMATION

The principle of the right to information holds that, generally, every citizen should have the right to have access to government information. The right to information is a

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5 This is the principle on which information access laws are based. For instance the Australia. Laws, Statutes, etc., Freedom of Information Act of Australia, No. 3 1982, Part I Article 3, gives the object of the Act as "...to extend as far as possible the right of the Australian community to access information in the possession of the Government of the Commonwealth by, (a) making available to the public information about the operations of departments and public authorities...; and (b) creating a general right of access to information in documentary form in the possession of Ministers, departments and public authorities". The New Zealand. Laws, Statutes, etc., New Zealand Official Information Act No. 156 of 1982 has its purpose, "To increase progressively the availability of official information to the people of New Zealand in order, (a) To enable their more effective participation in the making and administration of laws and policies; and (b) To promote the accountability of Ministers of the Crown and officials". This Act was to repeal the Official
democratic right, and when there is no democracy, there is no such right. If this right exists in the constitution but is not enforced, then there is no proper right to information. The struggle for rights is usually based on the belief that this will promote equity between different ethnic, cultural, political, economic and business groups. While information access laws give each citizen the right to access government information, there are also exemptions where a government can withhold information for national security reasons. One country that has long standing laws on access to information and from which we can learn, is Sweden. The country’s information access laws have been in existence since 1776. Other countries that have adopted similar laws but in more recent times include: United States (1966); Denmark (1970); Austria (1974); Netherlands (1978); France (1978); Australia (1982); Canada (1982); and New Zealand (1982). These countries are also signatories to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 19 of which states:

> Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.⁶

Generally, there are three main factors that stand in the way of granting everyone the right to information and communication channels. These are money and government regulations with culture and traditions being important restrictive factors in a number of developing countries, for example Fiji.

It goes without saying that in capitalist systems money talks. It defines who gets access and who does not. Often the people with money and access to electronic systems have easy access to vast amounts of information which they can access themselves from home or their offices. There are others who benefit from this access through the schools, universities, libraries and other institutions. However, for the bulk of the people in developing countries and some living in poverty areas in developed countries the opportunity to access information through any communication system is limited.

Secrets Act of 1951. In Canada, the Access to Information Act, 1982 provides access to information under the control of the Government of Canada in accordance with the principles that government information should be available to the public, that necessary exemptions to the right of information should be limited and specific and the decisions on the disclosure of government information should be reviewed independently by government. In the United States the Freedom of Information Act was enacted in 1966 and went into effect in 1967. The basic concept here is that all records of the federal government and its agencies must be accessible to the public unless specifically exempt from this requirement.

The second factor that controls access to information is government regulation and law. In both developed and developing countries government has the power to make laws that prohibit the free access and flow of certain categories of information to the public. Government also has the power to regulate media industries such as the newspapers, television, radio and more recently modern technology such as the information super highways and related services. These laws automatically have and will continue to define the rights of individuals to access information.

The effects of culture and traditions on information access as discussed in chapter 7 highlights the power of culture to control not only the flow of information but also the content and extent of dissemination. Cultural factors can be manipulative, authoritative and restrictive in their impact. The significant point to note is that cultural factor, on one hand can be in conflict with democratic principles and values, and this could impact directly on the degree of access to information. On the other hand, the control of information flow and access can also affect culture and traditions and influence the way people perceive the value of information to their lives.

Generally, the rights of the individual to access information in different parts of the world vary greatly and reflect largely the three factors mentioned above. In many developing countries where resources are few to ensure government support for information services, access to information is not a right, but a privilege. Other development priorities such as education, infrastructure building and food supply for the people take precedence over information. Further, the government's lack of knowledge about information, its concern for its own interests and its lack of concern for its citizens to have access to information has meant that governments and leaders rarely take clear stands on this complex and controversial matter. Unfortunately, the public, or rather the "information poor", the minorities and the poor who live mainly in the rural areas of the world, suffer most. They are overlooked in national discussions about the development of new information services, and who should benefit. Often the needs of those in the central business areas and the "information rich" are the main concerns of the developers of information services and providers of information. There is often this bias towards this group of users and people. Access to information based solely on who is able to pay and who has access to new communication channels, would mean that many citizens would not be able to access needed information. The potential value of information to those citizens thus becomes worthless. Information and electronic communication channels would remain a tool for the rich which can afford them. The question of information haves and information have-nots becomes serious, and the right of equal access becomes fundamental.
However, it is fair to say that while this concern exists there are people in rural and urban areas who do not know how to access information or why information is useful. Many of the people in this group do not see how they can utilize information to their advantage or to better their lives and standard of living. While education has been given as a solution to improving this outlook, information planners are also at fault as they put in place information systems which are more relevant to the educated and the elite, and not the poor and those in the rural areas. In addition, government regulations and control mechanisms make the right to information even more complex, for instance by charging fees for information provided, or making available information that may be difficult to comprehend. People in rural areas will not be able to pay for information needed or used.

No freedom of information legislation exists in the Pacific and in Fiji. Questions are raised as to the perceived needs for legislation. The Pacific Islands News Agency (PINA) and other journalists are calling for freedom of information with greater access to information, access to review commissions’ reports, and access to bills that will affect the livelihood of the people.

Many of the academics and professionals in the urban areas who were interviewed were concerned about their rights to access and search for information. A researcher noted his frustration when trying to access data from a government department to assist in his study. "First, I had to find out who can give approval for me to access the required information. Second, I had to write a formal letter seeking permission to access and sight the records. Third, after sending in my request letter, I followed up almost daily for over two months to see if I would be allowed to use the records. I finally gave up". Another academic was quite angry about the response he received after requesting a copy of a report on Fijian education. "Too often, if you are from the university or the media seeking information from government, you are looked upon with suspicion. You either get a quick negative response or you are led on a wild goose chase". Increasingly, academics and journalists feel not only threatened but more frustrated, by possible legislation seeking to protect reputations of government officers and politicians, licence the media, control foreign ownership of the media, and the impulsion of journalists to name sources. In recent years there have been cases where the legal mechanism is used to constrain the media which effectively affect the publication of material and the flow of information.

The freedom that The Review and The Weekender had in publishing freely was curtailed in April 1994 when both papers carried reports alleging adultery by the Prime Minister.
In Fiji, the rights of freedom of the press, expression and access to information are guaranteed by the Constitution. That is, freedom of expression is primarily regulated by the Constitution. In Fiji, constitutional law protects this freedom. The model is built on the British and has been influenced by the European model of Human Rights. Free expression is given in a simple statement but there are conditions under which this may be limited: public safety and national security, defense, protection of others, privacy, the protection of confidential information, restrictions imposed on public servants, and others.

However, since the recommendations of the Fijian Provincial Administration review were accepted in 1990, to some extent this influenced existing Western law. An effect of operating under two value systems as far as access to information is concerned is that there is a tension between traditional authority and Western tradition. This is so in Fiji where the freedom of information in the 1990 Constitution is linked to responsibility covered by an additional clause which allows free expression to be limited by law. Further, Fiji’s security laws prohibit the publication of information endangering national security. This is covered under the Internal Security Decree introduced in June 1988. The Decree provides for severe penalties for "printing or publishing subversive material". Hence, while Fiji enjoys a very vibrant and active media, there are growing signs that the government would like to see more controls of information flow in the country. The Fiji News Council established in 1994, however, exists to preserve freedom of the press within Fiji as well as promoting the highest journalistic standards. It is an independent body and funded by the majority of the Fiji media industry. Its main function to date is to deal with complaints received against the media and promote media freedom and standards.

LIMITING INFORMATION FLOW IN FIJI

In a World Press Freedom Day speech, delivered on 3 May 1996, Prime Minister Rabuka raised a number of concerns and questions about the free flow of information in the country. The Prime Minister emphasised commitment, and that of the government, to open government and a free press. At the same time the Prime Minister announced that the government would not hesitate to introduce restrictive media legislation modelled on the Malaysian legislation. In the interest of confidentiality and privacy of the citizens of this country legislation will be necessary. Such contradictory statements immediately bring to the fore a number of questions: In whose interest will media and information legislation be formulated? Is legislation 8

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intended to protect the people or the government? Will people continue to have a constitutional right to information once media laws are in place? If not, can Fiji continue to claim to be "democratic" when it is not?

In the speech, the Prime Minister encouraged ministerial colleagues towards frankness and openness. Citizens of a country would be free to participate in the government, where an effective two-way communication link between the governing and the governed existed, and where the government was fully accountable for its actions to the people. It also meant that there was access to information and government decision-making in a more participatory sense. Compared to the period immediately after the coups and the early 1990s, in 1996 political participation has been allowed to increase through the process of so-called openness by the government. The Constitutional review has impacted on the increase in public political awareness.

Meanwhile, the academic community and the journalists continue to criticize the government openly. Academics often voiced their opinions and criticism of the government and its policies in the media. The press enjoys relative freedom as compared to late 1980s and early 1990s.

On 13th February 1996, the Fiji Government Cabinet agreed that a comprehensive review be undertaken of all legislation pertaining to the mass media in Fiji, particularly that to do with the impending licensing and registration of media outlets. Cabinet also agreed that this review be undertaken by an expert either from Singapore, Malaysia or the United Kingdom. After consultations, The Thompson Foundation of the United Kingdom agreed to provide experts for this review and to cover the costs involved. The experts were Kenneth Morgan and John Prescott. Their terms of reference included looking into licensing, limiting foreign ownership, and cross-media ownership. The review was to cover a study of all existing legislation relating to the media and recommend appropriate changes or new provisions. The review was conducted in September 1996 and the report titled Future Media Legislation and Regulation in Fiji was completed and presented to the Government in December of the same year. The reaction to this review was mixed. According to Usher, it would be fair to say that at this moment any move by the government to introduce new media laws will be seen by many as a means to control the perceived excesses of the media.
Others saw the need for new legislation in some areas of the media as timely and overdue, while even others would prefer the status quo. "It is inevitable that a review will be linked to more control by Government; and this is what we do not need in Fiji", commented Usher. A strong view seemed to be that legislation and statutory controls could be a danger when dictated to by political will and insecurity. If this were the basis for new media laws then it would be a retrograde step for Fiji and its people. A practical basis or philosophy for a review would be one based on the need to inform, educate and build the political consciousness or awareness of people taking into account not only cultural sensitivities but also the influences of culture and tradition in the media process.

A question that can be raised is, why is government stressing responsible reporting and the need for new media legislation? Since the 1987 coups and the term of the present Government, the Government has made complaints against the media and their reporting on government matters. The Government believed that some unfair reporting had been made in relation to these reports encroaching on personal privacy of some ministers and individuals as well as confidentiality. Whatever the argument, it is now becoming increasingly apparent that the anti-corruption movement is linked closely to the proliferation of democracy and free presses. If one of the roles of the media in a country is to expose the truly corrupt in the interest of its citizens then the current and future governments of Fiji should support this work of the media.

The media review report presented to Government reviewed all the major sections of the media. These included: licensing of the media, registration of media outlets, awarding licences for radio, film, video and television, statutory regulations for the media, the setting up of a media council; foreign and cross-ownership of media outlets, professional standards and training. The Report attempted to review existing legislation. The Report made a number of recommendations favouring media freedom. It recommended against media legislation or punitive measures against the media. The consultants did not see the need for a complex, expensive regulatory system of the media, and argued that the most appropriate system for Fiji was to continue with the media council and a code of practice. This will form part of the new media laws to be effectively introduced in July 1998, according to the Minister of Information, Seruwaia Hong Tiy. In a response to a public query on the matter on 25th November 1997, the Minister confirmed that the new media laws would take into account media responsibility and accountability with the aim of effectively regulating media ethical behaviour in society. The Minister added that while the news media...

were relevant and played a vital role in the community, and that the government would protect freedom of the press and the individual to access information, there was a need for fairness and balance in reporting. \textsuperscript{10}

From discussions in the media and the response to the Report by the Government, it would be fair to say that the Government was in support of press freedom and would ensure that media laws were put in place to support this. While accepting the Report the Minister of Information at the time made it clear that the Government did not wish to introduce media licence and that the Newspaper Registration Act be retained. The Fiji Broadcasting Act of 1993 would be repealed by a comprehensive Broadcasting Act. The Television Decree of 1992 would be retained. The two areas of special focus were training for and standards of journalists and advertisements.

While these developments would be seen as encouraging more openness, some people I interviewed still doubt the intention of the government to democratize because, according to them the government is not supporting fully the basic principles of democracy. "As long as the Great Council of Chiefs remains part of the political system, we will not have democracy", was a comment made by an academic. People believe that government has adopted a double standard. They argue that, on one hand, the government allows the public to criticize the government, on the other, it still maintains restrictions on the media, on the dissemination of information on government debates and the Great Council of Chiefs meetings. Some of the people whom I interviewed believe that government would threaten and limit freedom and control the flow of information whenever it felt that critics have gone too far. This view is justified by regular criticisms by the Prime Minister of critics through the media.

Information Control through Legislation

There are many ways controls are instituted by law. These may be linked to registration of newspapers, copyright, internal national security, and defamation. For Fiji the following related legislation exist: the Newspaper Registration Act (1895); Official Secrets Act (1911); Press Correction Act (1949); Copyright Act (1961); Libraries Deposit of Books Act (1971); Defamation Act (1979); Fiji Broadcasting Commission Act (1953); Internal Security Decree (1988); Fair Trading Decree

Fiji's Newspaper Registration Act of 1895 up to now has not been reviewed. Since 1989 the Fiji Government threatened to licence the media as a way of regulating the media operations in the post-coup period. There has been great resistance to registering of newspapers in Fiji from media people mainly. The main reasons seem to relate to the government's intention behind registering. The argument given notes that the automatic registration required of all newspapers, old and new, as it is in many countries, would enable the government to keep in touch with new publications coming out. The registration is a device for ensuring that the names of those responsible for a newspaper are formally recorded and accessible to the public. The Registrar General has no discretion in the matter. Therefore, there is no control over who may wish to set up a newspaper. The Government agreed that this Act would be retained for the purpose of identifying owners and publishers of newspapers. The question of licensing of the media is still to be resolved.

The Act requires the name of the proprietor, printer and publisher. It does not list the editor that is important. If there is a defamation action in respect of a statement in a newspaper, the persons shown in the current register or affidavit will be held as responsible. There are exceptions to registration of newspapers and include such items as government documents, those printed by the Government Printer, professional, business, scientific, scholastic, commercial, trading, religious, social, advertising, political and judicial. The Government has decided that this Act be retained.

Another legislation that worries many journalists and government officers, according to Usher, is the 1911 Official Secrets Act\textsuperscript{11}. This Act is based on the UK law and is still in force in Fiji. The area of danger for the media people is Section 1 which states that, "...any person for any purpose prejudicial to the safety or interest of the state obtains, collects, records or publishes or communicates to any other person any secret official code word, information", who "leaks" information is guilty of an offence. Government can abuse the application of the legislation and is a concern. Criminal law, in relation to the Official Secrets Act, applies to six clearly defined categories of information: security and intelligence; defence; international relations; information useful to criminals; interception and phone tapping; information entrusted in

\textsuperscript{11} Fiji adopted the 1911 Official Secrets Act of United Kingdom. This Act was reviewed in 1985 and 1993. It is currently effective.
confidence to other states or international organisations. The Government agreed that this Act would be revised and replaced by a new Freedom of Information Act.

The Fiji Press Correction Act (1949) Cap. 107 Laws of Fiji is another Act that worries reporters as there is a fine of $1000 and six months jail sentence for "false and distorted statements appearing in the press". This legislation was introduced by the British Colonial Government and is still effective. There is a possibility that this is repealed.

Two pieces of legislation that are important to the free flow of information include the Copyright Act and Libraries (Deposit of Books) Act. The Copyright legislation is currently under review. The Libraries Legal Deposit legislation is current but is not effective. The Act requires all publishers to deposit a copy of newly published books in the National Archives of Fiji and The University of the South Pacific Library. Many publishers in Fiji are still not fulfilling this requirement and it is difficult to ensure that they do unless a penalty is imposed and some publicity or advertisement is made on the publication of a new book.

The Fiji Broadcasting Commission Act of 1953 is currently being reviewed in the light of television services available. The Minister of Information has the power to dictate to the General Manager or others in FBC on matters relating to a particular program, particular allegation, gathering and presentation of news, responsibility of FBC and FijiTV for standards. The Act also does not allow FBC to have dissenting political views. Sections 12 and 13 of the Act allow the Minister to direct or prohibit the broadcast of any material. However, notice of the minister must be given in writing. An Act declaring the Fiji Broadcasting Commission a Corporation has been passed and will come into effect from 1 January 1998.

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12 Copyright Act 1965 (UK) is applicable to Fiji. It is silent on many things including definition of computer programs, recordings. Copyright regulations for libraries were in force in 1961. Laws of Fiji. (1985). Chapter 244. Volume xiii. Revised edition. Suva, Fiji Government. In 1995 a Sub-Regional Seminar on Copyright and Trademarks for the South Pacific was held in Suva, Fiji in March 27 to 30, 1995 organized by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). The purpose of this seminar was to bring to the attention of the different countries in the South Pacific the need to revise their legislation to comply with the World Trade Organisation Agreement which was pushing for more protection of initiatives concerning Intellectual property and large companies to protect their industry from being pirated. While this seems like a good idea, many developing countries who are great or users of copyrighted material than producers will experience some problems in trying to have access and use copyrighted material from abroad. This has grave implications for research and education in developing countries. Fiji is currently undergoing revisions to its legislation based mainly on the copyright law of New Zealand as a model.

Foreign Owned Press

In reviewing the legislation that exists, developments in the information and communication sectors have raised the need for legislation to cover foreign ownership of newspapers as well as issues relating to cross-ownership of the media. In Fiji, as identified by Layton, non-Pacific islanders own 17 titles of private newspapers. Daily newspapers are owned or partly owned by foreign based media corporations. Of the 55 private newspapers identified in the region, 55% is foreign owned. There are no private newspapers totally owned by Fijians. None of the indigenous-owned papers are dailies. Rupert Murdoch’s News Limited owns Fiji Times, Nai Lalakai, Shanti Dut, and Pacific Islands Monthly.

Larmour argued that the existence of more foreign owned press means greater freedom of information and a better chance for a country to develop a democratic system of government. While Fiji may have authoritarian laws as evident in its communal 1990 Constitution, the existing media legislation is fair. However, relationship between the Government and the press has not been congenial. There is concern over the growing foreign owned newspapers in Fiji. There is also the concern of concentration of this ownership to a few conglomerates from outside the country. That the same conglomerates has cross-ownership and also owns non-media business interests influences the attitude of a newspaper’s approach to advertising and business news.

Cross-ownership and cross-provisions may be expected to increase in the future if telecommunications and broadcasting converge. This has policy implications. Decisions on network investment and network architecture will need to be made now. There will be a need for ground rules to tackle the development of service competition especially where different services are competing for access to the public network. If there is to be liberalisation then there will be a need to start off on a level playing field but there is little agreement as to how this may or can be achieved. Discussion on this is outside the scope of this study.


Discussion

In the countries of the Pacific including Fiji, the rights of freedom of the press and expression are guaranteed by the respective constitutions. However, these rights are being increasingly threatened by legislation seeking to protect reputations of individuals, government ministers, and senior government officers. These concerns are very real. In recent months, the government has threatened to fashion media laws on Asian media legislation models. This threat is made despite the existence of a report on a review of media legislation. Any moves to do this will sharply reduce the freedom within which the media can work.

Although the press and radio disseminate government information to the people, the government has continued to control the type of information that could be disseminated. Especially the work of the Cabinet is surrounded with secrecy. All matters are "confidential". Many of the deliberations and reports of committees of the Cabinet are confidential and are for the Cabinet members only. The detailed and formal deliberations of the Great Council of Chiefs are confidential and unavailable to the public. Often, this information is reported selectively later in the newspapers or radio.

Further, people also have no right to public funded reviews and reports on selected activities, for example, the review of the Fiji Ports Authority completed in 1993 or, the Fiji Broadcasting Commission Report of 1994. Many of these reports are considered "confidential". Reports on companies, on reviews of the different departments of government including the Fijian Provincial Administration are also "confidential". Reasons given for the non-disclosure of information is that the reports are especially for a particular department and not for public consumption.

According to Usher, "controls have been in existence since the colonial days and have continued to the present. Under the Alliance Government, attempts were made to uphold the United Nations resolution that defines freedom of information as a fundamental human right. But throughout Fiji's history, occasionally this right was restrained, and the question of control became central to political debates."

16 An interview with Sir Len Usher.
17 Director of Information, 1993.
18 Interview with Sir Len Usher.
Lawson suggested that while under the Alliance Government Fiji was democratic, there was a false sense of freedom and equality based on a very fragile democracy. For instance, the defeat of the Alliance Government in the 1977 elections shocked the country. The Fijians in general did not quite comprehend the significance of this. Fijian people in the rural areas were not certain how the election result would influence their lives. It was clear that the majority of the people in the rural areas were still not certain what democratic elections were supposed to be and do, and they also could not understand that the 1977 election results meant that the existing government had to step down in place of another.

After the loss of the Alliance Government in 1977, general elections and the constitutional crisis that followed, Government’s relationship with the media remained distant. According to Usher, at this time the government ministries were not very receptive to supplying the information needs of the people. Usher commented:

Increasingly, Ratu Mara kept away from being interviewed by the press as he felt they were too irresponsible in their reporting. This was a pity as he could have gained political mileage if his relationship remained cordial with them. He has maintained this distance since.

Since the coup in 1987 the Interim Government has put in place restrictive government decrees regarding information access and censorship. Also since 1987, the degree of government control has fluctuated. Immediately after the 14 May, 1987 coup the Fiji Times and the Fiji Sun were forced to close for a week by the military administration. During the period immediately after the coups the press took on a more cautious stance and practiced a reasonable degree of self-censorship. This meant not reporting on sensitive issues such as that relating to the coups, race conflicts and public outbursts. The freedom to publish freely was limited both economically and legally. It should be noted, however, that prior to the coups, total freedom to publish and disseminate without control of any kind did not exist either. The government and the media were often at loggerheads. Often individual members of the Government attempted to pressure editors or interfere with the independence of the press. Despite this, it would be fair to say as discussed in chapter 5, the media in Fiji has enjoyed a fair degree of freedom to publish and report. In September 1987 the Fiji Sun decided to close, as it did not agree with continuous government censorship. The Fiji Times continued to publish but practised a reasonable degree of self-censorship. It took on a

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20 In 1993 and 1994 calls were made to lift the decrees imposed in 1987 regarding censorship. They still exist. The Internal Security Decree No. 32 of 1988 gave government special powers relating to subversive publications, dissemination of information and censorship.
more cautious and sensible approach to reporting but was not afraid to speak out
against the coup and the coup leaders when necessary. It also published statements
from public figures that speak out against the Government. Although the Public Order
Act prohibit acts of this nature that are likely to incite racial antagonism, there were
no reported arrests for such public statements.

During the Interim Government's administration between 1988 and 1992 the Minister
for Information, Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, made life difficult for members of the media.
The Minister was keen to introduce legislation that required the registering of all
publications including news media outlets. The Minister was also adamant that the
press had too much freedom and tried to put through regulations to curtail this. Within
the Ministry of Information and its decentralised offices, the central office controlled
the preparation of reports and news items by the information officers. The procedures
for approving and vetting every item for publication were bureaucratic. All
Information Officers based in regional offices were responsible to the Central Office
for all their work and reports. No item could be sent directly to the press unless the
central Ministry of Information office approved it.

The government extended control of access to information with the establishment of
the Fiji Intelligence Service (FIS) in September 1990, Decree No. 26. The unit is
under the responsibility of the Minister of Home Affairs. It is answerable to this office
alone. The FIS has the power to call on anyone to help in their investigations, and to
enter any premises if necessary when investigating a case. Questions were raised over
the need for this new body as it was seen as duplicating police work and a senseless
use of resources at a time when the economy was ailing. Various academics and
professionals interviewed indicated that this unit was seen as curbing the free flow of
information in the country as well as limiting access to information. For example,
Baba commented:

The FIS is not necessary. Its presence as the Prime Minister's intelligence unit
provokes uneasiness among many people, in both government and the public,
especially when the powers given to the unit seem to render it above the law. The
part that is frightening about this FIS is that it is able to call on any citizen at any
time to participate in its investigations. This means that my freedom to live in my
home is being curtailed and affected. As a taxpayer and a citizen, I would like
government to explain the reasoning behind the establishment of the FIS. If there is a
justifiable need for it well and good. Right now all I see is another secret police unit
checking on people for any anti-government activity.

This concern was also shared by some of the people I interviewed both Fijians and
Indo-Fijians living in both rural and urban areas. As a Suva businessman commented:
The FIS will be checking on the urban educated people in particular. This is my view. Government is so worried about the image it projects to outsiders and the rural people and the criticisms that can be raised by the educated Fijian that it is doing everything in its power to curtail this.

Despite all these criticisms, the government has continued to argue that the conditions after 1987 have remained largely unchanged from the policies of openness of pre-coup times. The difference now is that people have suddenly realized that information and communication channels that exist are not satisfying their needs. People's information needs and services have outgrown the infrastructure that should meet this need. People are now aware of information and its advantages, and expect to be provided with more by the government than what was being provided in the past twenty years. If this is so, then it can be argued that it is time that the government took an active role in and stop giving lip service to the establishment of a national information service for the country.

There are examples where the press has been forced to retract stories or threatened to be closed by government order. In the mid 1980s the threat to a free press became apparent. The English papers, both the Fiji Times and the Fiji Sun, published stories of non-accountability and corruption by the Mara Government. The emergence of the newly formed Labour Party in 1985 gained the support of the two newspapers, and almost daily the papers were publishing stories of alleged corruption and poor performance by government ministers.

Soon after the SVT Party won the May 1992 elections and after the swearing in of the Cabinet members by the President, Prime Minister Rabuka made it clear to his new Cabinet that the media, particularly the press, were important. Rabuka announced that government supported keeping the people informed of its activities and would maintain an open government. Further, the Prime Minister added that the government would like to cooperate with the media because it was through the media that the government could keep the people informed of government policies and programmes. In addition the people's views were important to guide government planning and the economic and political development of the country. The press welcomed this new direction as a sign of better things to come after a strained five years of reporting government activities. This attitude was reiterated in a news item that appeared in the

21 Information given in an interview with a senior government officer in the Office of the Attorney General.
Despite this, the relationship between the Rabuka Government and the information and communication sector continued to deteriorate. The Rabuka Government had decided that the Fiji Broadcasting Commission was a strain on its finances. FBC had financial and operating problems. The Rabuka Government had indicated that it could not continue financing it at the current high level, and adopted the recommendations made by the accounting firm of Coopers and Lybrand to privatise the FBC completely as noted earlier in chapter 5.

The government's relationship with the newspapers also became strained as these continued to carry reports on the government's poor management and spending since 1992. In November 1994, the Minister of Information, Ratu Josefa Dimuri responded to this by announcing in Parliament that the government was planning to buy shares in the Fiji Times taking out a 51% holding. This was being done so as to control foreign interference in reporting. The Minister had claimed that the editorials in the Fiji Times were being written by foreigners and were always scathing of the Rabuka Government.

Immediately after Dimuri's announcement, the Prime Minister denied the plans of buying the Fiji Times and stressed that the government had no intention to control the Fiji Times. The Prime Minister stressed that since the present government was elected into office in 1992, it has been one of the government's major concerns to support free media. Furthermore, the Prime Minister reminded the press and radio of the government's decision to develop a better working relationship with them and the newly formed Fiji News Council, a self-regulatory body, aimed at finding a balance between freedom to report, and confidentiality and restrictions.

The Prime Minister curtailed the freedom that The Review and The Weekender had in publishing freely in April 1994 when both papers carried reports alleging adultery. This story caused a great deal of controversy in Fiji, and was reported in papers abroad. The government's reaction to these reports was to find out their source. The

24 Government current support to FBC is about $600,000 of its running costs. The remaining 25 per cent is obtained through advertisements. In 1993 the Government contracted the services of Coopers and Lybrand accounting firm to do a review of FBC. Government in November 1994 accepted the recommendations. In 1997, the government has again restructured and downsized FBC quite considerably due to continued losses and inefficiencies.
25 The Fiji News Council was established in 1994.
Minister of Information threatened to close the two magazines. This did not happen. Yet, the outbursts succeeded in moving the focus of the story from the Prime Minister to the responsibility of the press, illustrating the power the government had to manipulate and distort information.

The Right to Information: Responses

In considering the issue of the right to information and the right to be informed, 90% of those interviewed in the urban areas agreed that the public and the individual have a right to access information and to be informed. Some respondents indicated that this right has been restrictive, limited and ignored by government. While Fiji claimed to be a democratic country, the rights of the individual to obtain information and to publish are restricted. The government did not promote this human right to information and continued to use various measures to maintain political control. Respondents placed the blame for restriction and limited access on a number of reasons including: the bureaucratic procedures of government institutions; absence of accountability; no clear national information and related policies; no proper classification of documents and information; little expert local knowledge to deal with these issues; and, most importantly, the lack of commitment of politicians to democracy.

In democratic countries the degree of access to information is high. Hence in cases where there are many controls in the form of regulations or laws in place limiting access to, and the free flow of information, then it can be argued that a country is not democratic. A policy or legislation can guide the people in this area and their need for information. It seems timely to attempt to review some of the problems and difficulties that exist, consolidate some of the suggestions, and attempt to identify the directions that might structurally be pursued particularly through policy for greater information access.

Many of the interviewees in the urban areas and the professional group in particular identified information manipulation by government as a serious and pressing problem. They believed that since 1987 there has been too much propaganda on the radio, newspapers and in particular television. The area that they voiced greatest concern is government accountability and government financial administration. While the news can report on heavy spending by government, it also reports the government's justification of such spending. The truth is not known and this is of great concern to many. In the rural area the response is cautious and difficult to explain. About 80% of
the people know that they are not getting enough information. They are also aware of the overspending of public funds by government and other irresponsible decisions but they voice little public complaints or concern. The majority of the Fijians in the rural area will not voice any opinion that will go against the SVT political party. This action is manifested in other ways. The support for SVT policies in Provincial Meetings as well as support for government ministers who may not be performing can continue with little corrective measures introduced. But a clear example is the outcome of the February 1994 general elections in which the SVT again won the general elections after dissolving Parliament in November 1993 for not being able to pass the budget. A logical development would seem that a government that is not able to pass a budget would lose support. In this case SVT was able to obtain the rural populations' support a second time. Indeed, the Fijians voted on racial lines. For too long the Indo-Fijians have been made a scapegoat in Fiji politics. Through manipulation and communal traditional ways, Fijian politicians play the Fijians against the Indo-Fijians and incite insecurity among the Fijians. Whether a more informed Fijian community will vote differently is difficult to answer.

Regarding access to government information since the coup, different groups are experiencing different responses to information requests and many interviewed blame this on a number of factors. First, the calibre of staff, that staff in key posts in government departments and other sections of the community are not trained and educated to handle this work. They do not know how to access needed and required information and consequently there is great inefficiency and institutions become non-responsive. Second, since the coups there is a great accumulation of information and the management of this has deteriorated. The problem is becoming overwhelming. Government commissioned a study of this problem. Recommendations were made focusing largely on training and the computerisation of this work but the expense that this would cost made improvements prohibitive. People continue to rely on old channels of communication. It has thus become necessary to access information from people - you - know. This is becoming the accepted practice. It saves time and is more productive. It is in this area that people interviewed voiced concern as it seems that those providing information are becoming selective and information is given freely to friends.

Related to the above is the problem of jealousy and envy towards Fijians who are successful financially and politically. One point was clear from interviews and that

was for the Fijians the institution of 'veiqati' or jealousy was prevalent and affected the effectiveness of the accessibility of information for political and economic development. A senior lawyer in the Attorney General's Office at the time, Isikeli Mataitoga, confirmed this as a real problem in the progress of the Fijians and noted:

The institution of veiqati or jealousy works against the progress of the Fijians. It is often brushed aside as unimportant. The fact is, many Fijians could be doing well today if they were only helped along a little more. This communal thinking where the Fijians must develop together at the same pace, where no one should be more financially better off than the rest is negative. If a Fijian is doing well, others work to bring this individual down. This happens in business, education, and trade and in many other areas. I think this is where information can help a great deal to enlighten people to get over this cultural constraint and to concentrate together in development.

Whether the Fijian Provincial Administration will be able to address some of the problems here is difficult to answer but it would seem that a good start would be to aim at building an informed Fijian society. Government, together with the Fijian Provincial Administration, should work on some of the issues highlighted here.

In the responses a number of points can be highlighted. First, for the rural Fijians interpersonal communications and decision making on a communal basis is important. These are also effective in producing change as pointed out in previous chapters. Rogers, for example, observed that in studies conducted on information and communication in the Third World, people listed interpersonal communication as their main source of information and had potential for change. These complement information obtained through the radio and newspapers. One may then ask why interfere with a process and system that has been around a very long time? People were not complaining. Respondents believed that the people were being shortchanged. A scholar had this to say about this situation:

Because Fijians and others in the rural areas do not complain does not mean that they are happy. It also does not mean that they are unhappy and prepared to continue in this state. They have accepted things as they are and trust that the government will take care of their interests. Those people living in the villages have to be content living everyday side by side with each other. Their relationship is symbiotic. Any action that goes against the normal accepted practices is looked down upon. It is very difficult to be different in the village. So in these circumstances it would be ideal if government were to put in clear policies of helping the Fijians in educating them on the importance of information to their lives. Fijians are great followers. If government provided the idea, the resources, the right personnel to help in this area, there is no doubt in my mind that the Fijians will become knowledgeable in information and communication for political development in a short time. But is this what government wants? That is the real issue.
Second, for the urban Fijians, information is seen as very important to their lives. They recognise the importance of information to enable them to compete in the market, business and education. They also realise that information is important to have to ensure that they make the correct decisions on various issues of local, individual and national interest. While they rely on the radio, newspapers and the television for their information they also have access to information available to the villages through the village mata.

Third, making information accessible does not mean the supply of resources and facilities only it also means supplying the means to sustain these facilities as well as get the people to use these facilities effectively. Too often facilities are established in remote areas in the country to fulfill a plan to distribute information and newspapers for instance. These facilities are often managed by some part time personnel who may not have all the interest and skills to maintain the facility. After a period, and without supervision and checks as well as government financial support the service ceases.

Fourth, information from government must continue to reach the people. This implies that access is a two-way supply of information between the people and government and if this is not available then the aim to get people to participate in decision making will not be met. There needs to be more opportunities for the people to reach decisions having available to them various information and divergent facts and figures.

Fifth, having access to information means less control and barriers to information. This study has highlighted the role of culture and culture-bound institutions in limiting the supply of information to the people. While it cannot be argued that the importance of culture to the lives of the people, using culture as an excuse to limit the supply of information is not democratic. It serves only to stifle any plans to get the Fijians more aware of their potential in politics, in decision making and in development in general. Similarly, placing controls on access to information limiting the rights of the people to information only raises questions of whether the government does not want an informed society.

In terms of a number of components that can be used to study democracy from an information and communication perspective discussed in chapter 2, control takes into account political equality, feedback, steering, openness, participation, efficacy. In the following discussion attempts will be made to relate the findings to equity, feedback and openness.
Equity

In Fiji, as in many other countries, the test for democracy is seen in terms of citizen participation in elections. Fijians identify with a Fijian political party when it comes to politics and voting. More specifically, identifying with a party that is backed by the Great Council of Chiefs is important. The same could be said of the Indo-Fijians where they identify with Indo-Fijian parties. For some sections of the population, democratic requirements such as freedom of expression, freedom to form and join organisations, equal participation in voting, eligibility to public office are important. For the Fijian, while some of these freedoms are important the concept of collectivism would be more important in the rural areas.

Overall, it can be said that the political system in Fiji over the years from 1970 to 1997 was generally responsive with sections of the community feeling alienated. It was not till 1987 that the "democratic" system collapsed, highlighting the fragile nature of democracy that existed. There was political inequality and citizen participation in elections has not been encouraging for the period after 1987. In terms of the probability of information and communication exerting pressure and influence on the political system, it can be assumed that with the uncertainty that surrounds media legislation and control of media outlets, and monopolised telecommunication services, participation opportunities may not be high. The people have manifested the contribution of political inequality to the process of any transition to democracy mainly in the lack of responsive participation.

Feedback

With feedback it is assumed that information will be fed up to the top or to a mediating section for action. However, feedback does not guarantee the Fijians active participation in elections or politics as the information disseminated from the central government of the FPA- can be carefully screened or manipulated. People respond to information generated from the top. The impact of this is that the people responding to the direction of their leaders are not able to make an individual decision in political participation.

Openness

Openness here means the conditions in Fiji society that allow and enhance political equality and feedback to enable the Fijians to participate more in elections and politics. In chapter 5 Fiji society was described in terms of access to information in
the different periods in Fiji's political history. The findings in earlier chapters suggest that openness is limited in Fiji as there is a general lack of feedback. After the 1987 coups, there was a sense of uncertainty in information access. However, government officers would remind the people that the individual's right to access information was enshrined in the constitution. However, this right was far from the norm. Hence, there was a need to invest resources to ensure that there was greater openness so as to allow greater participation by the people in democratic development. It was assumed with greater access to information the Fijians would become less passive and more active in participating in elections and politics in general.

POLICY

An important function of government is policy formulation. Policy issues are concerned with the socio-economic context. This includes the functioning of the economy, foreign affairs, the social welfare system, national sovereignty, pollution, environment, education, research, trade, information and other related matters. A government policy may mean a detailed plan of action involving extensive action involving legislation, regulations and expenditures. Policy formulation proceeds through a number of steps. The first step is to establish the issue or the problem that needs to be addressed and trying to find an innovative way to deal with the problem.

Policy formulation particularly in relation to information freedom and access in many developing countries has received little attention from governments, policy-makers and educators alike. A review of the literature on the subject suggests that few developing countries are engaged in any systematic planning of the information and communication sector. Policy formulation is not a priority. As noted in chapter 3 and earlier in this chapter, only the developed countries have information policies relating to freedom of information. Those countries which have freedom of information policies include Canada, the United States, Norway, Switzerland, Sweden, Australia, and New Zealand. These countries have embraced the production and services associated with the information and communication sector as a vehicle for political expansion and political power. These countries are directed to achieve significant degrees of sovereignty or autonomous development. It is suggested that the growth of democracy correlates
to the growth of a more liberal information policy. A policy should try and integrate the notion of information in all its aspects.

In many developing countries in Latin America, the Middle East, Asia, Africa and the South Pacific there are no information and communication policies. In many of these countries political unrest, famines, civil strife and poverty take precedence over an information policy. For those countries which are considering the introduction of an information and communication policy the main themes that flow through include: (1) the preservation of cultural and social heritage; (2) fear of political and economic sanctions for failure to comply with intellectual property rights laws of developed countries; (3) the concern that advances in information technology will increase the gap between the rich and poor nations of the world.²

The introduction, convergence and uses of new technologies have made development of a policy even more difficult. Much of the literature and studies undertaken as discussed in chapter 2, focus on developed countries. Little is known about the conditions, influences and variables that may affect information and communication policy decisions in countries of the developing world. Most analyses focus on developed countries where information and communication are seen as important for economic growth. This is not the same for developing countries where development plans exist to cover education, population, the economy, fisheries, agriculture, mining, tourism, and the environment. These have guided development in these different sectors in the developing countries highlighting government commitment. One would hope that information policy would benefit from the experience gained in the above endeavours.

My review of the literature on policy found that writers on information and communication in developing countries have often adopted one of two approaches. One is more administrative in focus and sees policy formulation as a bureaucratic, politically neutral exercise.²⁸ The other²⁹ looks at the situation globally to establish the role of information and communication in the international division of labour. Few writers have looked at information and communication policy formulation from a political, cultural and historical


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These last considerations are important in deciding the usefulness of policy. As Fejes claimed:

...emphasis should be placed on trying to understand the specific historical and political conditions behind the development of specific policies and how such policies reflect the specific configuration of political forces.30

However, as noted by Aucoin, recent developments in public management, and that of policy formulation, has “entailed a greater politicisation of governance”.31 This is where the “common perception that public management must first and foremost be re-established as a responsibility of those elected to govern as the delegates or agents of citizens”.32 The citizens are regarded as the “clients” or “customers”. Increasingly, citizens particularly in developing countries are not happy with the failure of government policies and become very cynical regarding the institutions of representative government. Government is mistrusted because those elected to public office think more of their own interests than the people they were elected to serve do. Politicians are viewed as driven by their own personal survival in office rather than by the public interest to govern well.

Faced with these realities, governments are increasingly targeted by the media in an environment where their performance is under public scrutiny. It can be argued that such is the result of governments operating an open style of government, especially where they have adopted access to information legislation. In addition governments have allowed greater public access to information and have encouraged formal mechanisms for public consultation as in Canada, Australia and New Zealand.33

These changes will require public servants to adjust to them. Those involved in policy formulation and the advisory function will have to expect that the public as well as others outside government will be ready to challenge any new policy that may be flawed. Public servants and policy makers are increasingly losing their anonymity, as there is public demand for their accountability. The present government in Fiji does not welcome this new reality in public management. This is evident from the lack of a policy on information access and developments over the years regarding information access and use.

32 Ibid.
The need for a freedom of information policy was not considered seriously at any time in Fiji's past until 1996. Information and communication policy in Fiji may rest on a number of assumptions on the state of information in the country. First, there is little government support for indigenous systems of information and communication, technology, use of local skilled personnel, and institutional information networks. Second, Fiji relies heavily on imported hardware and software. There is no possibility that the country will be able to produce its own information equipment. This raises the question of dependence on foreign companies for a service that the country has agreed it will have. It can be argued that the national capabilities must be developed first before considering a policy of any kind. Government economic, social, political cultural policies have promoted firms in the information and communication business, for example Digital and Vodafone.

An analysis of the interviews on the need for a policy provided the following information. When asked about the need for an information and communication policy for Fiji the response I received was mixed. Professor Andrew Horn of the University of the South Pacific, for instance, believed that a policy would only put in place more restrictions and this would stifle creativity. Horn argued that policies were not a good thing and that their introduction would allow government to put in place unnecessary controls. Legislation will not guarantee the complete access to information. On the other hand, Ganeshan Rao, Pacific Islands Marine Resources Information System Coordinator at the University of the South Pacific, supported the need for a policy as this would provide a more equitable distribution of information originating from government offices. A policy would also give the user the right to access information from government departments.

A number of government officials I interviewed had indicated that policies were worse than the irresponsibility of the press. They felt that the reporters were abusing the freedom to carry out their jobs, that reporters did not report well and that often stories were distorted. A senior government officer (who cannot be named) had this to say to me about this matter:

I do not trust journalists these days as much as I want to. I have been a long time supporter of reporters and journalists. However, the quality of reporting is not only poor but often I get reported on falsely. I do not like this. I believe in reporting the truth and I expect the reporters to do just that. I now do not give press interviews. I prepare statements on issues I think important and which the public should know. These statements are then given to them to report. Even then I cannot guarantee that these statements will not also be tampered. What would a policy do in this case? I realise the need for some guidelines for information access and to monitor
What becomes important is trying to balance the need to report truthfully and to maintain the interest of the audience. When this balance is achieved the press can be said to be on firm ground. When it is not, they put their place in society at risk and may even force the introduction of regulations from those who find the freedom of information irritating rather than a good thing.

Wesley-Tanaskovic\(^\text{34}\) offers the view that there are cases that even where the importance of information services are appreciated by high-level policy makers and scholars, the need for a coherent and systematic national information policy and plan may not be appreciated. Consequently, without an information policy closely linked to development plans, information services become haphazard and decision making tends to be ad hoc because all the relevant information is not available in the beginning, for example the introduction of television in Fiji was not based on any plans or policy.

When interviewing people on the need for a national information policy a number of questions were directed at the respondents. These questions covered the forms of information and communication channels that exist; the social, cultural and political situation in the country; the forms of communication that the policy should cover; and how information policy can be linked to political development. A number of questions were prepared and directed at the academics and professionals. The first concerned the basis of the policy. This is given in Table 8.1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Yes %</th>
<th>No %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Those academics and professionals interviewed recognised that an information policy must have a number of broad goals. These goals should reflect the social, cultural, economic and political situation of the country. The policy should take into account all forms of information and communication channels that exist. See Table 8.2

Table 8.2: Academics and Professionals: What the policy should be compatible with.

Q. Should a national information and communication policy be compatible with and built on:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Response %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal forms of communication</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional forms of communication</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern forms of communication</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination of the above three</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of these</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents noted that Fiji is a multiracial society, and communication channels need to build common links. There was a need to be sensitive to the various traditional modes of communication, and the press in particular should be mindful of this. This is evident from responses received on the question of whether information and communication policy makers should give greater importance to devising ways whereby the management of the newspapers and radio stations be democratic, at the same time respecting national customs and traditions. A high 82% agreed to this, 17% did not, and 11% did not know. There were some feelings about the impact of Fiji's cultural fragmentation as preventing effective policy implementation. There was also some concern that the Fijian news and broadcasts appeared to be different from that broadcast in English and Hindustani as noted in chapters 5 and 6. This was seen as not democratic because this can be regarded as manipulation by the government. The rural people do not know that the news that they receive is different from that broadcast in English and Hindustani. A question was asked on whether information communicated to the public be documented. The responses received showed general agreement to this. See Table 8.3 below.
Q. Should information for public access be documented, written and broadcast in Fijian, Hindi and English?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindustani</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ASPECTS OF A POLICY FOR FIJI

Normally a policy is planned with the objective of satisfying the information needs of all sectors of the community. For a country that is divided ethnically as well as by factors of economics, education, class, religion, culture and tradition, finding a policy to suit all people and to meet all needs may not be easy. Government may develop a general national policy that is broadly based, try to meet all types of needs, and take into consideration all types of institutions. There are various options and scope that the government can consider. One option is for the government to develop partial policies for different sectors within the information and communication sector. Another option is that an information and communication component can be included in the different policies which already exist for sectors of the economy for example, in agriculture, health, education and trade.

Questions concerning other aspects considered necessary to include in an information and communication policy for Fiji were directed at the academics and professionals. The following were given as necessary: the right to information; information and communication needs of all groups; expanded public participation in decision-making at local, rural and national levels; educating grass roots people on accessing and using information; and consideration of excluded material. Greater public participation was recommended at all levels, rural, urban and national. It was also suggested that government arranged more frequent press interviews and press releases.

Respondents felt that there was a need for a policy so that the people will have some guidelines as to know how and where to go to access the required information. Of those responding in the academic and professional group 97% felt that the infrastructure was inadequate, and 3% felt it was adequate. Those who indicated that the infrastructure was inadequate added that both radio and
television are too commercial and to a lesser extent government controlled. Advertisements, commercials and many programmes promote lifestyles and needs that are damaging or unsustainable to the majority of the people in Fiji. They believed that the programmes could be improved. The areas that needed improvement included: community information centres, broadcasting, television, outreach information officers, print, library services, postal services, in that order of priority.

A number of people interviewed noted that street theatre, songs, and dance were also important effective mediums for communicating community or any type of message of social significance. It can be used to promote political awareness as well. In addition to these, information can also be further communicated and disseminated through writings by national authors in the vernacular, more educational programmes made on audio and visual tapes, national book production, rural radio and religious radio network. Writing in all languages for children, adolescents and adults needed to be encouraged. Organisations including academic institutions, non-government organisations, women's networks, and youth clubs need to be encouraged to be involved in the production and collection of information.

While the newspapers, radios, television and libraries provided information there was a need to get information better communicated to the people in the rural areas and the poor in the urban areas. A number of ways were suggested as best fulfilling this role. These include: the use of health and hospital centres in both the rural and urban areas; shops; commercial public transport system; markets, community centres; agricultural officers; district officers, women's interest officers; schools; youth and women's clubs.

A number of interviewees saw an information policy integrating communication and information into development. There are a number of considerations that have to be made. Some of these include the use of human links in the information system. In questioning the importance of this a 100% response was received. The role of face-to-face communication and the use of the individual as the medium of communication were considered the most effective way in communicating information at any level. This would guarantee feedback and also clarification of information that is conveyed to the receiver. This would ensure that the receiver would be getting the correct information, an important aspect in decision making and political participation.
Regarding language in promoting information/communication policies for development respondents agreed that special attention needed to be given to the use of non-technical language, comprehensible symbols, images and forms to ensure popular understanding of development issues and goals. Efforts should be made to integrate music, dance and theatre into the information system as a means of caring and conveying messages.

To ensure that the needs of all members of the community are taken into consideration, it is necessary to include in the policy the role of both the traditional and modern information and communication systems complementing each other as they now do as described in chapters 2, 3, and 6. People interviewed in all the three groups support this need. They supported the use of communication modes, both new and traditional, being integrated. A high response of 89% supported the idea of merging the old and the new information and communication systems for political and other purposes, while 11% did not.

The formulation of policies needs trained and skilled people. Many of the people whom I interviewed were convinced that a wide representation of people from government, academic, the media, business, the public and other interested groups and individuals were needed to draft and prepare good policies. It was important to involve as many people as possible to ensure that needs of all the different sectors of the community were incorporated. By taking this approach it is possible to include in a policy the possible links that need to be developed between the government and the different ministries, and how these links function. The exchange of information between sender and receiver would greatly improve. This is confirmed by respondents on the question of the status of communication between the different sectors of the community and selected ministries. See Table 8.4.

Respondents identified many reasons for the poor communication and information dissemination with these ministries. Some of these include:

- The existence of too much one-way, top-down communication. The Native Land Trust Board and the District Offices are too bureaucratic facilitating and encouraging a certain type of political order that allows for capital accumulation rather than the well being of individuals in the communities they are serving;
• The lack of openness, and this has created public suspicion concerning the
government offices noted in Table 8.4 except for Environment management;
• The need to disseminate information quickly and to as many people as
possible, especially to the grass roots population. Information must be put out
regularly and be simple;
• The highly centralised system of operations;
• The distance from the mass of people they are suppose to be serving.
Consequently there is insufficient information, staff are unsuitably prepared
to assist with information access and utilisation, and information is
unattractively presented;
• The lack of trained staff in the rural areas and the existence of bureaucrats who
lack communication skills. All these go to making these institutions less
approachable and ineffective.

Table 8.4: Academics and Professionals: Communication links with selected ministries

Q. Are the information and communication link between the community and the following
institutions satisfactory?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ministry</th>
<th>Response %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Women, Culture and Social Welfare</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Land Trust Board</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Advisory Council</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Offices</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment management</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These perceived problems highlight the need for more awareness training of the
population in the rural and urban areas. The question of whether education would
mobilise the rural people to want more information and become more active in
political affairs received general support. The question on whether educational
systems should prepare young people for communication and information
activities such as how to read the newspapers, books, and evaluate broadcast
programmes by introducing them at primary and secondary levels was supported
by 90% of respondents (academic and professional). This compared to 10% of
respondents that did not. A strong comment from the academics noted the need to
demystify the media as well as imparting information and communication skills to
all children in both rural and urban areas from Class 4 through to the secondary
school. These courses can be integrated into work in language, social studies, and
the sciences. Media studies should also be formally inserted in the curriculum and
most importantly, trained teachers should be found to teach in this area. The 10% who did not agree with this idea believed that educating children in communication and information skills is not necessary, as the school curricular was already too full. They proposed that information and communication is an extracurricular activity.

The formulation of an information and communication policy is a complex task. There are many factors to consider including the needs of the producers and senders of information. However, it is important that some policy or guideline is formulated to provide some direction to receivers on how and where to go to access needed information. The rapid developments and changes that are taking place in the development of new information and communication technology together with the new and expanded needs of receivers make it necessary that some policy be formulated. So far, the introduction of television, Internet facilities, media ownership, and networking in the country has happened in an ad hoc manner without resorting to a master plan. Similarly, for users of information there is a need for some direction and guide as to where to go to access information, how to access information and what or which source to use to access needed information. Without the necessary information plans this sector can grow rapidly and become unmanageable financially and administratively. It is in the interest of government, users of information and media owners that policies be formulated soon.

CONCLUSION

It is inevitable that government should have a number of roles in the communication of information: as a collector, manager, supplier, protector and controller of information as discussed here. On one hand the government has a duty to ensure that the people have access to information that is collected and that the communication channels operate efficiently. On the other hand, the government also has the duty of protecting its citizens from the misuse of stored information. The role of government as protector and supplier of information is a manifestation of democracy. Citizens are ensured of being kept informed about matters that they have the right to know, and at the same time, their privacy is protected. These issues are important in democracies for it can be argued that where there is lack of access to information and the people's right to information is restrained; and where the government does not have a protective role of its citizens then the democratic process is affected. The Government in protecting itself and its interest may not provide the people with the information
that will allow them to make an informed choice. People who vote may do so without being fully informed.

There is a conflict. On one hand there is the responsibility for government to collect and disseminate information. Yet on the other it is concerned with secrecy. Such a situation raises questions about the role of government in controlling the free flow of information in a democratic society and how much control should government have, if at all, of the press, television and the radio.

In some developing countries, for example Singapore and Indonesia, the governments exercise substantial control over the output of these communication channels. However, recent telecommunications developments have changed the power governments have to interfere in information dissemination. Their control is undermined by the power of the owners of the satellite news service such as Star television, BBC World Service Television and other information outlets. These outlets choose what can and cannot be disseminated thus affecting the type of information that countries receive. Hence, control is transferred to media owners and operators. They can manipulate and control the flow of information in the countries that have access to their services. This makes the media owners in any country very powerful.

Governments may regard information as an inherent feature of power and so too is its control, use and regulation. Governments in developing countries tend to have more control of the collection, storage and dissemination of information. Take away this role from government and you take away a fundamental tool for its power. This may be seen to be a desirable thing or it may not. But to take away this power from government could mean transferring that power to some other organisation that would then control information and its use. This development could develop new centres of power and organisations outside of government. There are now many other organisations that provide people with information. A government may now find itself in competition with these organisations, and in limiting the free flow of information and protecting its interest by secrecy, cannot continue. Generally, for governments there is a distinction between public and private information just as there is a distinction between government as a provider of factual information and government as promoter of propaganda.

To answer the question of the extent of the impact of controls on outputs of the political system, the fundamental premise is that for any information and communication service to serve the citizens of the country, information must be easily
available to every citizen who wishes access. While there is limited formal legislation or policy dealing with access to information, personal privacy and freedom of information, the right to information in Fiji, however, has not been a simple matter, as the controls will continue to limit access by all citizens of the country.
CHAPTER 9

OVERVIEW AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis was to test the hypothesis that access to information is a political necessity for democracy, and that any measures taken to ensure information access would be constrained by cultural, social, political and technical factors. I tested this hypothesis by examining the correlation that may exist between information, communication and democracy at the global and national levels. The global analysis was undertaken by first, establishing the distribution of information and communication globally, and second, by making a comparative assessment of the intra-societal penetration of information and communication systems. The national or micro-level analysis comprised a detailed case study of the relationship between information, communication and democracy in one country, Fiji. In the preceding chapters I detailed my findings and analysis of key issues examined. These issues incorporated socio-political and socio-cultural factors that affect the information and communication environment, which in turn have direct or indirect impact on the phase of democracy the country has reached. In this concluding chapter, the findings of the study will be summarised and conclusions brought together, and the prospects of whether more information will lead to democracy or not will be discussed.

Using Information and Communication as Indicators for Democracy

The findings highlight a number of issues. In its attempt to analyze whether there is a relationship between information, communication and democracy, the findings and arguments in chapter 3 suggest that a possible relationship exists at the global level. In correlating the Information Access Index and democracy, a number of conclusions can be drawn. One, in more democratic countries more information is accessible to the citizens; information infrastructures and management are organised; and people know the value of information. Two, information provided through the newspapers, radio and television is more extensive in developed countries than in developing where information availability and use are low. Three, in countries where democratic principles are absent, free access to information is also absent. Furthermore, findings at the global level and the case study show that there is a clear link between income and the provision of information, between literacy and the use of available information, and between government regulations and the provision of information to the people. This is further confirmed in the comparison of the distribution of information between the developed and developing countries suggesting that overall,
there seems to be no balance between the distribution and provision of information between the developed and developing countries. Chapter 3 confirmed that since the MacBride Report in 1978 and an assessment of the information situation in 1992 very little had changed. The developing countries still have poor access to information and the developed countries not only have extensive access but are also suffering from an overload of information problem. This is the current situation today.

What, then, is the role of information in the democratic process? From the findings in chapters 3 to 8, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that information can be regarded as "tools" to facilitate as well as control democratic development, and therefore could be used as indicators for political development. The theoretical argument in chapter 2 highlights the fact that information and communication can have both positive and negative effects. In relating theory to reality, the evidence from this study confirms this. For instance, in the comparative study in chapter 3, all the countries that have a high information index correlated to governments which are democratic. The opposite was also true. Countries with low degree of access to information such as Singapore, Malaysia and Mexico are emerging democracies in terms defined in this study. However, it is clear from the findings that in all countries that are communist states, absolute monarchies, and authoritarian or have military governments, the degree of access to information is low. It can also be confirmed by the case study for Fiji, that in the period under the Interim government after the military coups of 1987, free access to information was constrained. In Fiji during this time, and in countries under military, authoritarian and communist governments, information and communication, as argued by Schramm and Rogers, can be used to manipulate people's minds and views so as to maintain political control. In other words, it is possible to argue that in countries with insecure governments and authoritarian philosophies, the trend will be to control information access and content.

Also from the review of the development of information access in the different periods of Fiji's political history, it is possible to correlate the degree of access to information to the different phases of democracy. During the pre-independent phase and the period of the Interim Government, the authoritarian regimes clamped down on the media as governments in these periods recognised their subversive potential quality. The relationship between the media and the government during these periods and the earlier years of the Rabuka Government was distant. Repressive measures were introduced in the period immediately after the 1987 coups as a way of "silencing" the media and any criticism against the government.
Complementing the Traditional and the Modern: the Role of Culture

This study suggests that there is strong indication that culture will continue to be the basis of Fijian decision making, politics and actions, and any discussion on the development of democratic principles in the country cannot ignore this factor. Lipset claimed that culture is one of the most important reasons that explain the success or failure of democracy. This statement is supported by evidence raised in chapters 3, and 5 to 8. In these chapters it is clear that there are important factors to consider when examining the impact of information and communication on democracy in the country. For Fiji, these factors include: the perception of information and communication held by the Fijians; the role of information in development in the Fijian community; the attitudes of chiefs on the free flow of information; the reaction and attitude of the Fijians on the importance of information and communication for political participation.

From fieldwork findings, it was noted that Fijians accessed information from a variety of sources. The information obtained from the newspapers, radio and television and other sources had considerable significance in moulding and modifying Fijian traditional ideology. The responses of the Fijians in the urban areas on the different questions posed to them were influenced by the information available that they received through the radio, newspapers, television and traditional sources, and had the possible impact of creating a change in attitude.

The findings in chapter 6 suggest that the Fijians in the urban areas are more often in a dilemma as they face responding to both the modern and the traditional information and communication systems. Some Fijians have managed a way to handle a system that demands their traditional allegiance, and also react to their own needs in using the modern information and communication system. When it comes to voting, the urban Fijians are often more aware and are more individualistic in their decision on who to vote for in an election. They also are more informed regarding national issues as well as political.

The Fijians in the rural village studied, while exposed to the modern information systems and having access to information available nationally through the radio or the newspapers, are often loyal and answer to the chiefs, and respond to the Fijian Provincial Administration information and communication system of which the

village system is part. A number of those interviewed may have their own individual views over a national issue but collectively, find it difficult not to go along with the rest of the people in the village community irrespective of whether the decision made is a correct one or not. In this sense, it can be argued that no matter how much information is available and accessible, in traditional societies the impact of culture, traditions and loyalty to a system take precedence over every other form of information and communication system which may exist.

In theory, access to information by Fijians should improve their political participation and awareness of political issues. However, in reality this is not the case. There are conflicting demands made on the individual and community. On one hand, the concern of rural Fijians, as individuals, to acquire more information is low. On the other, there are Fijians in the rural village who are interested to acquire more information through the traditional and modern means of communication. To what extent Fijians used this system to acquire information for political purposes cannot be clearly determined, as Fijians are generally silent about their political beliefs. They nevertheless take part in elections (voting is not compulsory) and normally vote for candidates supported by their village chief. Chiefs, however, do not publicly assert or influence voters to vote for a chief or the person supported by the village and province. There is a tacit understanding between chief and his people on how voting should take place.

Taking the description of the political system and the information and communication sector in Fijian society in chapters 5 and 7, and the findings of these chapters, it can be argued that at the heart of the philosophy and operations of these institutions there seems to be a conflict between democratic values and cultural values. The institutions are operating under a democratic Constitution in terms of the fact that people have the opportunity to change the government, yet many of the respective policies are authoritarian. This raises a dilemma. Should democracy override culture or vice versa when a conflict between these two value systems cannot be resolved? When should individualism override collectivism?

Any model that is developed to explain the role of information and communication in any move towards democracy will have to take into consideration these questions as well as the different ethnic communities that exist in Fiji, and the social and economic conditions. It will also have to consider the existence of two separate but autonomous administrations of the central government and the Fijian Provincial Administration,
and the roles these play in informing, mobilising or containing the people toward any form of political participation.

As evident from the findings in chapters 6 and 7, the concept of information, communication and democracy can be related to customs and traditions, beliefs and the ways people do things. Combine these with the modern information technologies and new information systems should prove useful in making information and communication effective in the rural village as well as the urban areas.

In chapter 2, this study developed a model for an information and communication system to be used in a developing country environment. The argument given here is that the use of the traditional and oral communication channels and infrastructure to assist in the democratic process is not recognised. The importance of interpersonal communications and the central role of balancing the old and the new forms of communication to aid in the democratic process should be encouraged. In other words, the traditional and the modern information systems should complement and not compete with each other. This system acknowledges the rapid developments taking place in the world today and the hold to traditions by developing countries. I covered this argument in chapters 3 and 5 to 8 of this thesis. The blending of the old and the new information and communication system would allow information to flow more freely not only to the "bottom" or the rural area, but also back to the "top", the decision makers. Information will also flow horizontally and diagonally. In fact, these different methods of information flow exist at the national level in Fiji. What remains to be done is to formalise the system where the traditional information flow is recognised and used for political purposes. This system could also apply and used in other development areas.

Information Controls

Three of the main constraints or controls placed on the free flow of information in Fiji have largely been government regulations, culture and socio-political organisations. These have impacted on democracy in many ways. As argued in chapter 2, the control of information flow can be equated with political power. Politics has always shaped the degree of information access in a country as is confirmed also in chapter 3 by the global comparative analysis. In countries where democratic principles are absent, government ownership and control of information are common. This is borne out in the Fiji case study during the period of the Interim Government in 1987 to 1992,
later in the years under the Rabuka Government in 1992 to 1994. There were talks of licensing the media as well as placing controls over broadcasting and transmission.

However, Fiji Government has not moved towards the formulation of an information guideline and policy that would ensure some form of information access and use for a number of reasons. Apart from the difficulty in drawing up such a policy, having a policy on information access may mean that government could lose its control over what information is disseminated to the people. However, new media laws are being planned for 1998, which should ensure greater information, access. Developing an informed society may not be what government wants and government's support for more open access could be only rhetoric.

As concluded in chapter 8, governments may regard information as an inherent feature of power and so too is its control, use and regulation. If government's power to control information collection, storage, dissemination and management is taken away, a fundamental tool for its power may be lost. This could mean transferring that power to some other organisation that will then control information and its use. This suggests that new centres of power organisations may develop outside government. A government may in future find itself in competition with such organisations.

Democracy in Fiji

In Fiji the democracy debate follows two streams: one strong pro-democracy stance, on one hand, and the strong anti-democracy stance on the other. Each of these two arguments has strong support in academic, political and business circles. The anti-democracy camp is staunchly critical of the definition of democracy as used in chapter 2. They argue that this notion of democracy is "alien" to Fiji, and that democracy as an "indigenous" notion already exists in its own way in Fiji. The Western introduced forms of democracy are irrelevant or incompatible with it. For instance, as evidenced from the interviews and discussion in both the rural and urban areas many people did not think that democracy was the best thing for Fiji. As noted earlier Ravuvu had referred to democracy as a facade. Democracy was flawed and served to benefit only a few of the elites. Ravuvu rejected the British colonial oppressive structures that

1 Stephanie Lawson is a strong proponent of this as covered in her writings, for example, Lawson, Stephanie. (1991), The Failure of Democratic Politics in Fiji. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2 Ravuvu is strongly supportive of this view. This can be found in his writings, for example, Ravuvu, A. (1991), The Facade of Democracy: Fijian Struggles for Political Control: 1830 - 1987. Suva: Reader Publishing House; Ravuvu, A. (1988), Development or Dependency: The Pattern of Change in a Fijian Village. Suva: USP.

3 Ibid.
exploited the Fijians for the past two centuries. The Fijian people "have been made to feel helpless, and lose confidence in themselves and in their ability to determine their own destinies".5 Furthermore, the colonial structures for allowing an immigration policy that brought Indians into the country as labourers to work on the sugarcane plantations have led to ethnic conflicts. Now,

Under the ‘facade of democracy’ and ‘equality of opportunity’, immigrants have secured for themselves many diverse positions in the country. They dominate the commercial sector, the professions, the public services and higher education. They emphasise equal opportunity and individual rights, often without realising that they may be depriving Fijians of their inherited rights. Many also counteract or undermine any move for positive discrimination to help Fijians who are lagging behind to achieve real equality of wealth, education, health and welfare.6

Ravuvu advocated that positive discrimination be practiced in favour of the Fijians in the areas of education, politics, the commercial sector, business and the professions. These are areas in which the Fijians are "lagging behind". Positive discrimination towards Fijians was seen as important and should continue "until the (Fijians) are on par with those who have been well established through close contact with colonial and capitalist elites and institutions".7 Since the 1987 coups, this idea of the Fijians being "preferred" to others in all aspects of development has increased in intensity in the sense that not only the power of the FPA has become part of the government machinery, but the idea is promoted of a total Fijian government where the affairs of the country are managed and controlled by a Fijian majority with very little say from the other races in Fiji. The Fijians are led by the government to believe that they must stick together as a people to counter any threats, political or economic, from the vulegis or foreigners or visitors. This feeling of "togetherness" penetrates all aspects of life - work, social gatherings, business, economics, and politics. The preferential policies or special rights given to the Fijians by the British during the colonial days and now continued by the national government primarily because the Fijians, politically dominant, perceive themselves to be backward in business, commerce and education relative to the Indo-Fijians promote this feeling of "togetherness". As noted by Ng,

...the impetus for preferential policies in Fiji first came about due to increasing Fijian nationalism, which was stirred up by some politicians for political gain. Later, they were extended as a response to the perceived loss of power by the Fijians in the 1987 elections. In their eyes, not only were they more disadvantaged than the Indians, but their hold on political control was also more precarious than they had realised. Thus,

1 Ibid. p. 97.
2 Ibid. p. x.
3 Ibid. p. 99.
Ravuvu's view supplies some explanation as to why the past and present governments have maintained a separate Fijian administration to manage the affairs of the Fijians. It also explains why the 1990 Constitution ensures that power remains in the hands of the Fijians. For Fiji, it seems, therefore, that the most important factor that affects political stability is the political system whereby the Fijians maintain political hegemony and the control of their land. Many of the Fijians I interviewed and those in the rural village maintained this view. If such is the case, then democracy as defined in this study does not exist. It would seem that for the Fijians in the rural village as well as many of the Fijians in the urban areas, if democracy means the loss of power of the Fijians through elections, that democracy might not be what they want. It would seem that the growing concerns over government mismanagement and inefficiencies would not override Fijian hegemony. If such "feelings" or belief in the superiority of the Fijians are allowed to continue, then I think democracy will be very difficult to attain. The transition to democracy should be a joint effort by the Fijians, Indo-Fijians and others, where no one sector of the community is considered, or preferred, above another.

While leaders consider the type of political system that is best for the people and the country, there is still the problem of democracy from the bottom, that is, people's participation. It can be argued that, to some degree, the continuance of the containment policies by the government is to ensure that the Fijians were subservient to the Fijian political and chiefly system. However, this situation cannot continue. As more Fijians get educated and informed, the greater the likelihood that they will question the legitimacy and accountability of their leaders. While the majority of the people in rural village still prefer their leaders to decide their future and they will vote for their leaders as a group, the majority of those in the urban areas have changed. This was evident from the findings. People in the urban areas, and to some extent those in the rural village, were questioning the desirability of good government, where their leaders were accountable and would actually attend to their basic needs. With the acceptance of the review report of the 1990 Constitution together with the Joint Parliamentary and Senate Select Committee Report, the political future of Fiji of moving towards a democratic political system has been decided. The people of Fiji will have to be educated and informed to understand exactly what this means, and the

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use of the old and new information and communication system should play an effective role in this process. It is important that the Fijians are informed and educated about the government, land policies and issues and how the government makes decisions for them.

Application of Theory

Using the information and communication based theories to explain the emergence of democracy for both the global and national micro-level analysis has proven useful and effective. In application of the theories it is possible to make some conclusions based on findings. In the application of the correlation theory, it is possible to say that information and communication should be considered as preconditions for democracy. With the political efficacy theory, findings from this study indicate that the argument that better communication and information can bring about greater political awareness and social change that may affect the way people vote for their leaders is not conclusive. The influence and control of culture cannot be predicted and is little understood. The elite theory is relevant in Fiji considering the role chiefs play in the control of information flow and the influence they have to limit freedom of the people to access information and to vote freely for their leaders.

Fijian leadership is important in the Fijian polity. Since Fiji’s independence, there have been two political leaders in Fiji, Ratu Mara and Major General Rabuka. It can be argued that both have tried to steer the country towards democracy in their own different ways. While Ratu Mara can be regarded as a soft-line leader keen to bring about a multi-racial Fiji and consolidate democracy in the country, Major General Rabuka, the coup leader and a more hard-liner, is also keen to see Fiji get back on the path of democracy. Many arguments can be put forward on the styles of leadership of these two leaders, however, this is not my purpose here.

Another variation in this elite theory is the role of the political opposition in Fiji, mainly of one ethnic group, in influencing the process of democracy. During the years of independence, it can be argued that the role of the opposition was to ensure equality, freedom of expression and stability. A number of key issues preoccupied the opposition: land leases, the economy and education. After the 1987 coups, the opposition concentrated on strategies to get Fiji back to the path of democracy. However, being a weak opposition the road to democracy would not be easy.

Lawson, S. (1991), The Failure of Democratic Politics in Fiji. Oxford: Clarendon Press. Lawson argues that a strong opposition is a necessary precondition for the transition to democracy. This did not exist in Fiji after the coups.

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Participation theory was relevant and applicable to chapters 6 and 7. Findings reflect the extent to which participation by the people who were interviewed was absent for a number of reasons, the main one being that people must be encouraged to participate in political matters. While people voiced their opinions and disappointment about the lack of opportunities to participate in a number of government decisions, the people should be proactive and take some action themselves. It was recognised that a number of constraints such as poor leadership, inadequate government information infrastructures, inadequate government support, and authoritarian structures constrain participation in politics.

In applying the equity theory at the global and national levels, the findings in this study imply that the desired global equal distribution of information and communication systems cannot be attained despite the developments taking place in new information and telecommunication technologies. There are problems of physical access, of finance, of trained and skilled staff and of making people aware of the importance of information to their lives. However, equity must continue to be a major concern in many societies that look to information and communication as a promise to bring about development particularly in the rural areas.

The systems theory was applicable when dealing with the controls placed on information flow and its impact on political development in Fiji. The political system in Fiji is affected, for instance, by government or political forces, by the information and communication organisations, and by socio-cultural forces. This study was able to identify and analyse a number of controls on political trends in Fiji. It highlighted that government can control the free flow of information between information owner and producer, and information user, as it wishes. Government was also the gatekeeper and therefore controlled the type and content of the message which is being disseminated.

My use of these theories to examine whether there is a causal link between information, communication and democracy cannot be viewed as comprehensive. However, it highlights the point that it is possible to take a number of theories and apply these to reality.

CONCLUSION

The primary objective of this thesis was to test the hypothesis that access to information is a political necessity for democracy, and that measures taken to ensure information access would be constrained by cultural, social, political and technical
factors. From the findings of this study, it is possible to conclude that socio-political and socio-cultural factors affect access and the free flow of information in a society, and these affect political participation. For Fiji, these factors affect the polity where the containment of class conflict particularly between the Fijian chiefly elite and the ordinary, educated Fijian is a growing concern for the chiefs. Coupled with this is the need for the government to manage the inter-ethnic conflict between the Fijians and the Indo-Fijians if the government is serious about a transition to democracy. The fact that the Great Council of Chiefs and aspects of the “Fijian way of life” are being entrenched in a new Constitution for the country would likely mean that the development of democracy in Fiji would have to be conscious of these institutions. Looked at in this light, it may be possible to understand Fiji democracy where participation in politics is open and free, but at the same time the extent of this participation is limited.

It is also possible to conclude that the lack of information is not the problem for the Fijians, but rather, the difficulty is inherent in a number of factors: the way people perceive information, communication and democracy and their role in all this; the impact of culture including the "Fijian way of life" on the control of information; the general negative attitudes on information held by leaders in Fiji; and the lack of an organised information communication system. Fijians in both the urban areas and the rural village did not know what exactly information could and could not do for them.

In conclusion, the evidence in this study supports on one hand the hypothesis that there is a correlation between information, communication and democracy, and that the degree of this correlation is influenced and controlled by cultural, political, economic, and social factors. The recent drive towards democracy in developing countries particularly those in Asia could be interpreted as resulting, at least in part, from the growth in the information industry, literacy and the rapid economic development of the countries. On the other hand, in drawing a correlation between the Information Access Index for these countries, for example Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, and South Korea, and their political systems, it confirms that information and communication are neither necessary nor a sufficient condition for democratic transition. Information alone may not be enough to bring about democracy and there are other factors that influence the growth of democracy in a country. Nevertheless, despite these conflicting outcomes, it seems clear that in all democratic countries, there is a high information access ratio. It would, therefore, be plausible to posit that perhaps it is not information and communication that "cause" democracy, but rather that access to information is a manifestation of democracy.
These findings and the issues examined in this thesis should be of interest to a wide range of people in government, academia, and the private sector and non-government organisations. The thesis emphasises the need for the government and the Fijian Provincial Administration to recognise the importance of information and communication in the development of the Fijians, and look at policies and implementation plans on how these could be included and adopted as development tools. This thesis suggests that the co-existence of the modern information/communication systems and the old, redefined and reinterpreted as covered in the thesis could be effective in building a more informed and politically aware Fijian society. This development should be considered seriously by government.

This need is further strengthened as implications of the impact of information and new communication technologies on politics are becoming real. With the intra-societal penetration of these technologies, there is no doubt that information dissemination in and between countries, both developed and developing will improve and extend to greater heights. While concerns have been raised regarding the impact of these developments on society, the reality is that information and communication will not only bring about freedom everywhere but will continue to directly and indirectly affect the transition to democracy in major ways.
In July 1997, the President of the Republic of the Fiji Islands, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, signed the new Constitution Amendment Bill. Work on drafting a new Constitution has begun and this should be ready for the next national general elections in 1999. At the time of writing the final of this thesis, aspects of the new Constitution were still being finalised and thus not included in this work.

Important aspects of the new Constitution are freedom of expression, assembly, and information and freedom of the press. These were strongly supported by the Constitution Review Committee and approved by the Joint Parliamentary and Senate Select Committee to include in the new Constitution. The right to freedom of expression for the purpose of protecting the rights and freedoms of others in the public interest will also be included. These rights form the basis of new media legislation.

In most developed countries, and this should be the case for developing countries, the Constitution sets the framework for information and communication policy. For Fiji, the framework has been established. However, it would be fair to assume that the process of drafting and implementing new media legislation in Fiji as well as a new Constitution is ambitious. Fiji has set itself major tasks to complete in a short period of time. These tasks include: the launching of a new Constitution and new political system; the introduction of new electoral boundaries; the introduction of compulsory voting; and the introduction of new media laws. These have the common desired objectives of achieving racial harmony, raising understanding between the different racial groups in the country and the maintenance of political stability.

How effective the new Constitution and new media legislation will be is difficult to predict. It is too early to be certain of the success of these developments let alone their acceptance by the people. For instance, while it can be argued that a multi-party system of government may be more workable and fairer than the 1990 Constitution, its interpretation and implementation may cause some organisational and political difficulties. Similarly, while Parliament has accepted the principle of the right of the
individual to have access to government information as well as support freedom of
information, in reality, government continues to place controls on the free flow of
information in Fiji society, and that of the media.

The uncertainty prevailing over government’s actions in dealing with the new media
legislation will bound to have negative impact on the society. It seems that Fiji
Government needs to decide speedily on a number of policy issues so that work on
drafting fair and acceptable media laws can begin. These issues would include: a
decision on how much to invest in information and communication particularly in the
establishment of an effective national information system; a decision on how much
freedom to allow its citizens to access and use information, or how much control to
impose; a decision on how much culture should be allowed to control the flow of
information in the society; a decision on how much information and communication
responsibility and development should be transferred to the private sector.

In the absence of an information and communication policy which can be used to
guide the political transition in the country, and given the ethnic and population
characteristic of Fiji, it is not surprising that the “one person, one vote” democracies
do not find support here. In societies where ministers try to control access to
information and the media, and where the community is suspicious of government, it
is difficult to see how and what should guide the information and communication
process. There can be no guarantee that the path to a responsible and political
information and communication system will be easy.

In the light of these statements and uncertainty of Fiji Government’s actions on
information and the media, it may be important to get an information and
communication policy in place, particularly one that can be implemented easily. This
is vital to the development of democracy in the country.
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<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mas</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
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<td>26</td>
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Averages

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<td>128</td>
<td>390</td>
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* Index calculated by indexing raw scores for literacy, newspaper, radio, television and telephone diffusion for each country against the average score for the item, then totalling the scores for all items and indexing the total against the average of all countries’ total scores.

** Estimated figures for unified Germany.
RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

PERSONAL INFORMATION

DATE:
NAME (OPTIONAL):
AGE:
KORO:
OTHER ADDRESS:
SEX:
STATUS:
CHILDREN:
EMPLOYMENT:

INFORMATION SOURCE

1. Newspapers: Fiji Times Fiji Post Volagauna Shanti Dut Nai Lalakai
   Read: Daily Weekly When available
   Accessed by: Purchase Library Friend Other source
   Do you find the papers: Useful Informative Valuable Enjoyable Educational
   What do you use the paper for mainly?
   General information
   Advertisements
   Notices
   Sales
   World news
   Regional news
   Letters to the Editor
   Political News
   Community News
   Other
   In your view, is the reporting and coverage good? Yes No

346
   Read: Daily Weekly When available
   Accessed by: Purchase Library Friend Other source
   Do you find the magazines: Useful Informative Valuable Enjoyable

   What do you use the magazines for mainly?
   General information
   Advertisements
   Notices
   Sales
   World news
   Regional news
   Letters to the Editor
   Political News
   Community News
   Other

   In your view, is the reporting and coverage good? Yes No
   If Yes, Give your reason:
   If No, Give your reason:

3. Radio
   Do you have a radio in the house? Yes No
   Do you have more than one? Yes No Number

   Which is your favourite station?
   Radio Fiji
   FM104
   FM96

   Which Station do you listen to mainly? English Fijian Hindi

   How many hours daily do you spend listening to the radio?

   Which is your favourite program(s)?

   Do you find you get enough community news over the radio? Yes No
What about government news?

4. Television

Do you have a TV?
How often do you watch?
Do you have a favourite program?
Do you like TV? Yes No
If Yes, why?
If No, give your reason
Do you think T should continue? Yes No

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Do you think that through the Newspapers, Radio, TV you are getting adequate information on what your Government is doing for instance on Education, Health, etc.?

If Yes, can you comment?
If Not, what do you think should be done?

What is your area of greatest interest?
If you need to find out any information on this or anything what do you do?
Do you get sufficient help from this source?
Do you approach any government department or other organization?
Which give you most assistance?
If there is one thing you would like improved what would this be?
Are you able to participate in making this happen? Yes No
If No, Give you reasons:

How do you get information about village activities?
Radio Message Newspaper Other

How often do you get this information?
Is the information sufficient?

How much is the work of the Fijian Administration-Fijian Affairs board affecting you?
Do you participate in decision making for the village?

Yes  No

If Not, would you like to?

Yes  No

Any ideas on how this can be done?
RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

PLEASE CIRCLE YOUR ANSWERS

A. Information Needs

1. Which categories of information do you need most for work and everyday activity?
   a. central government
   b. local government
   c. public records
   d. non-government organizations
   e. organizational or institutional: i) business; ii) church; iii) union; v) other
   f. other
   g. academic

2. What do you rely on for most of your information needs?
   a. traditional information means-print, books, etc.
   b. visual and audio channels
   c. new information technologies-computers, CD-ROMS, etc.
   d. human networks

B. Democratization of Information and Communication

3. Is the right to information, right to be informed, the right to inform, and the right to participate in public communication in Fiji
   a. restrictive and limited
   b. ignored
   c. encouraged
   d. promoted

4. In restriction caused by
   a. bureaucratic procedures of government institutions
b. absence of accountability  

c. no proper classification of documents and information  

d. other  

5. In areas where reasonable restrictions in the control of information may be considered necessary, should such restrictions be provided for by law, subject to judicial review?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>

6. Should attention be given to the information and communication needs of such groups as  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. women</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. children and youth</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. unemployed</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. rural population</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. the aged</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. handicapped</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. other</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Are the current decision makers able to perceive the wider media problems facing the community?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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</table>

8. If not, should measures be adopted to expand public participation in the decision-making process?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>

9. This will be best achieved by:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. enlarging sources of information needed by citizens</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. developing vertical (up and down) and horizontal communication channels</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>c. utilizing mass-based communication resource such as a community centre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>d. concentrating on the quality and content of the message from government on any subject</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. making frequent visits be made by the District Officers to talk and listen to people in the community - urban as well as rural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. other</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. Is the media's role in contributing to promoting the "Just cause" of people  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. effective</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. ineffective</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>c. obscure</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

11. Do the following promote partisan politics:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Radio Fiji</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. FM96</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Fiji Times</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Fiji Post</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Volaguna</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Shanti Dut</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12. Does ethnic orientation of the media structure in Fiji accentuate racial politics?
   Yes  No

C. Strengthening Capacities

13. Are the essential elements of Fiji's communication and information system adequately meeting and serving your information needs and that of the population?
   Yes  No

14. If not, which areas need improvement?
   a. postal services
   b. library services
   c. print
   d. broadcasting
   e. television
   f. community information centres
   g. outreach information officers
   h. others
   i. all of the above

15. Which of the following best foster cultural identity and artistic creativity and enable various grassroots groups to be heard?
   a. radio
   b. newspapers
   c. TV
   d. community papers
   e. outreach information officers

16. Are the national news agencies - including, where appropriate, regional networks - improving Fiji's national news reporting?
   Yes  No

17. If not, what should be done?

18. Which of the following dissemination methods need to be encouraged?
   a. national book production
   b. writing by national authors in various languages
   c. educational programs on audio and visual tapes
   d. rural radio
   e. religious networks

19. Is there a need for the establishment of a distribution network for newspapers, periodicals and community leaflets?
   Yes  No

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20. If yes, suggest one practical way that this can be achieved?

21. Are the national radio networks adequate community information channels?
   Yes  No

22. If your answer is, Yes or No, give your reason(s)?

23. Should radio programs in the different languages be mixed?
   Yes  No

24. Should the development of television take priority over the development of electricity capacities in the country?
   Yes  No

D. Responsibility of Journalists

25. Journalists require broad educational preparation and specific professional training, but are available training opportunities for journalists
   a. adequate
   b. inadequate

26. If inadequate, have you suggestions for improvement?

27. Do the (i) news media and (ii) journalists' organizations foster among journalists
   a. higher standards of professionalism
   b. responsibility
   c. respect for truthfulness, accuracy and human rights
   d. all of the above
   e. other

28. As in other professions, journalists and media organizations serve the public directly; should the public, through such devices as media councils or ombudsmen, be entitled to hold journalists accountable for actions?
   Yes  No

29. Should the professional independence and integrity of all those involved in the collection and dissemination of news, information and views to the public be safeguarded?
   Yes  No

30. How can this best be achieved?
31. Does Fiji need a comprehensive communication/information policy to allow free access to information?  
   - Yes  
   - No  
   - Don't know

32. If yes, should the policy be linked to overall social, cultural, economic and political goals?  
   - Yes  
   - No

33. Should a national information/communication policy be compatible with the built on:  
   - a. interpersonal forms of communication  
   - b. traditional forms of communication  
   - c. modern forms of communication  
   - d. combination of a - c  
   - e. none of these  
   - f. other

34. Should information and communication policy-makers (i) give far greater importance to devising ways whereby the management of the newspapers and radio be democratic; (ii) at the same time respecting national customs and characteristics?  
   (i) Yes  
   (ii) Yes  
   (iii) No

35. Should information for public access be documented, written and broadcasted in:  
   - a. Fijian  
   - b. Hindi  
   - c. English

F. Integrating Communication and Information into Development

36. Priority should be given to the use of human communication and information links to promote development in the country?  
   - Yes  
   - No

37. In promoting information/communication policies for development should special attention be given to the use of (i) non-technical language; (ii) comprehensible symbols, image and forms to ensure population understanding of development issues and goals:  
   (i) a. music  
   (ii) a. music  
   - Yes  
   - No

38. Should more use of communication modes, both new and traditional, be made to help integrate people into the community rather than isolating people from one another.  
   - Yes  
   - No
39. Should the radio (generally) and newspapers encourage their audiences to play a more active role in information and communication by allocating more newspaper space, or broadcasting time, for the views of individual members of the public or organised social groups?
Yes No

G. Basic Needs

40. It is essential that government increases financial support towards information and communication development. Is this provision possible?
Yes No

41. If not, are there alternative ways to get this development moving?
   a. incorporating information/communication developments as components of development projects
   b. community assistance
   c. aid
   d. other

2. Should non-commercial forms of mass communication for example, media supported through public funding and non-government organisation networks be actively involved in information/communication development and policy-making?
   Yes No

43. While acknowledging the need of the media for revenue, what are some ways and means to reduce the effects that the influence of market and commercial considerations have in the organization and content or national information flows?
   a. government assistance
   b. information exchange
   c. other

44. Is there a need for the development of
   a. rural community press
   b. resources centres in rural areas and small town?
   c. human communication link and channel

45. What priority role should a community centre have?
   a. provide print and information support
   b. promote literacy
   c. information referral and advisory centre
   d. receive community complaints and ideas
   e. encourage two-way communication with the public
   f. provide meeting facilities

46. Is the communication and information link between the community (general public and various committees, rural and urban) and the following institutions satisfactory?
   a. Department of Women, Culture and Social Welfare
   b. Native Land Trust Board
   c. Fijian Affairs Board
   d. Indian Advisory Council

Yes No Yes No Yes No
e. District Officers  Yes  No
f. Environmental Management Unit  Yes  No

47. If your answer is 'No', give your reason(s).

48. Should educational systems prepare young people for communication/information activities such as how to read the newspapers, books, and evaluate broadcast programs, etc. by introducing them at primary and secondary levels.  
Yes  No
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE
LEVUKANA VILLAGE

PART I: PERSONAL HISTORIES
TUKUTUKU BAleta NA LEWE NI Koro

1. Name:
   Yaca:

2. Birthplace:
   Vusau e sucu kina:

3. Birthdate:
   Tiki ni siga e suatu kina:

4. Age:
   Yabaki:

5. Clan:
   Mataqali:

6. Religion:
   Lota:

7. Members in the family:
   Lewe ni vale:

8. Children at school:
   Gone e ra vuli:

9. Children living elsewhere:
   Era na gone e ra tu tani mai na koro:

10. Working children:
    Era na gone na ra cakacaka tu:

11. Work:
    Cakacaka:

12. If you were born in the village when did you leave:
    Ena yabaki cava koni a biuta kina na koro:

13. Why did you leave the village:
    A cava na vuna ni zonu biuta na koro:
14. Do you own your own land:
E tu na nomu qele:

15. Do you use mataqali land:
Ko teitei e na qele ni mataqali:

16. What is the size of the land you plant on:
E vica na eka na levu ni nomu i teitei:

17. What do you plant:
Na cava seti ko ia tu:

18. Is the produce for sale or for consumption by the family:
E volitaki e na kacana e rawa mai e na teitei se vakayagataki e na vuvale:

PART II: PEOPLES' LEVEL OF INFORMATION AWARENESS
NA VAKATAGEDEGEDE NI NODRA KILA NA VEI TUKUTUKU E SO

19. Please define your meaning of information?
Na cava na nomu nanuma ni balebale ni tukutuku?

20. Please define your meaning of communication?
Na cava na nomu nanuma ni balebale ni vakautukutuku?

21. What are your information needs?
Na cava na nomu gagadre baleta na tukutuku ni vamua rawa.

22. Have you a radio?
E tiko na nomu walesi?

23. How do you satisfy these needs? Do you listen to the radio? Do you read the newspapers? Do you access information through other people? Or through other institutions or organizations?
Tukuna mada na cava na i vurevure se sala ni nomusi kila na vei kila e so ni vakararogo ki na walesi, se koni wilika na niusipepa, se koni veitaratara kei ira e so o ra div kila tu na ka, se koni rogoca na tukutuku mai vei ira na levu ni bose ni matanitu?

24. Where else do you source information?
Tukuna mada kevaka e so tale na vanua koni rawata mai kina na tukutuku rawa ni noda vamua.

25. Is the information you have access to adequate for your basic needs?
Tukuna mada se rauta na tukutuku koni rogoca se taura me baleta na rawati mai na vei kila koni gadreva.

26. If not, give your reasons.
Kevaka e sega ni kilikili kei na nomu gagadre tukuna mada e so na ia a vakadredretaki na kena tauri na i tukutuku e so.
PART III: FIJIAN COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

VAKAUTUKUTUKU VAKATAUEI

27. What communication channels do you use to voice any concerns you may have?
Kevaka e dua tiko na nomu taro se gagadre, e dau tukuni li vei cel. E vakau vacava na taro oqo.

28. How often do you have Bose Vakoro?
E dau vala vakavica na bose ni koroi?

29. How regular are the Tikina Council meetings?
Vakaavie na Bose ni Tikina.

30. How do you voice your concerns to the Tikina Council?
E rawa mo ni kaua na nomu i tukutuku ni gagadre ki na Bose ni Tikina?

31. How are the decisions of the various meetings communicated to you?
Ko ni taura se rogoca vakacava na tukutuku ni bose e so oqo.

32. Is the information useful to you?
E yaga vei iko na tukutuku oqo.

33. Are you satisfied with the way the information is communicated to you?
Koni nanuma e volganiti tiko li na tukutuku e vakau mai.

34. Do you think the Tikina Council and the Bose ni Yasana are effective communication channels?
Cava na nomu nanuma baleta na tukutuku na cakacaka ka ni Yasana e na Bose ni Tikina kei na Bose ni Yasana.

35. If not, what is your reason?
Kevaka e sega, na cava na yona.

36. Do you think the existing channels of communication within the Fijian Administration (6 steps) slows down decision making and effective response to the village and your developmental needs?
E tu beka e so na vakasama me baleta na kena vinakati me teso tu vakatotolo na cakacaka ni vei Bose ni Taukei e tu.

PART IV: THE MEANING OF DEVELOPMENT

NA I BALEBALE NI VEIVAKATOROCAKETAKI

37. Please define your meaning of development?
A cava ni balebale ni veivalatorocaketaki.

38. Describe some issues of national development
Vakmacalataka mada e so na vakasama ka okati ena isawa ni veivalatorocaketaki raraba.
39. How do you feel about the type of development that has been taking place since independence in 1970?
Na cava e nomuni namuna baleta na veivakatorocaketaki ka sa yaco tiko mai me tekivu mai na 1970.

40. Are there any aspects of development that you are unhappy about, and want some change?
E tu beka e so na gaacagaca ni veivakatorocaketaki ka koni sega soti ni taleitaka, se so na veisau koni gadreva.

41. Describe the type of development that you would like to see take place and that you would participate in?
Tukana noda se mataqali veivakatorocaketaki vakacava koni gadreva.

42. How do you learn about what is happening nationally in the economic and political areas?
Na cava na i vurevure se sala ni nomuni kila na veika lelevu e so ena noda vanua.

43. Does access to information assist in bringing about political and economic development?
E kilikili na kena kilai na veika e so kei na veivakatorocaketaki.

44. Do you think that information alone can bring about change?
Koni nanuma ni vure na veisau baleta na kena rawarawa ni tauri na takututu ni veivakatorocaketaki; se tu tele e so na kena vanua.

PART V: THE FIJIAN WAY OF LIFE
BULA VEIMALIWAI VAKAITAUEKI

45. Do you think that there is a Fijian way of life?
Koni nanuma beka ni tiko e dua na i vakarau ni bula se i tovo ni bula vakaitaukei?

46. Are there special essential features? Can you describe some of these features?
Koni nanuma ni tu na yavutu e so ka i takele se i vakadci ni bula vakaitei. Vakamacalataka.

47. Do you think it is necessary to keep these features?
E dodonu beka me ra maroroi tu na veiyavu oqori?

48. Do you think that the existing Fijian communications channels are necessary to support this way of life?
Koni nanuma beka na vakarau e ta baleta na vakautukutuku e ganiti kei na vakarau ni bula vakaitaukei.

49. What kinds of village activities do you contribute to?
Na vei oga vakaitaukei cava soti koni dau vakaitavi tu kina.

50. Why do you take part in these activities?
E baleta na cava kona vakaitavi era vei oga oqo.

51. Do you think there have been any changes in such activities since independence?
Koni sa tava raiva rawa beka e so na veisau ena bula vakaitaukei me tekivu mai na gauva e tu vakaitaukei na noda vanua.
52. Do you think you have changed your participation in such activities?
Koni nanuma beka ni sa veisau na i vakara ni nomuni vakalavi ena vei oga vakalatsakci e so.
Na cava na vuna.

53. If you were not given the choice would you leave the village?
Kevaka e soli vei kemuni na galala koni na bau gadreva beka moni na bliuta na koro. Na cava na vuna.

54. Which of the following developmental issues do you feel need the most urgent attention by government: education, health, business, land leases, unemployment? Give your reason.
A cava koni nanuma me baleta e so na gaacaga ni veivakatorocaketaki ko ni gadreva vakaleva sara me vakadreva vakamatailalai ni matanitu me vakavinaakata ko me veisau, me vakak na vuli, na bula, na binini, na lini ni qele, kei ina era sega tu ni cakacaka.
Please read this before completing the questionnaire

You are asked to please circle your score represented in a continuum on the basis of "most agree" to "most disagree", like so:

National policies should foster cultural identity and artistic creativity and enable various grassroots groups to be heard through the radio, newspapers, TV and community papers.

Circling 10 or 9 would mean that you strongly agree with the use of the radio, newspapers and television to integrate people in the community rather than isolating them from one another.

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Strengthening Independence and Self-Reliance

A. Information and Communication Policies

1. All nations, including Fiji, should formulate comprehensive communication/information policies linked to overall social, cultural, economic and political goals. 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

2. The goal of national information/communication policies should be to utilize information available and the unique capacity of each form of communication, from interpersonal and traditional to the most modern, to foster the growth of individuals and communities within the wider frame of national development and interdependent world. 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

3. All languages, including Fijian, Hindi and
English should be adequately developed to serve the complex and diverse requirements of modern communication.

A primary objective of national information/communication policies should be to make elementary education available to all and to wipe out illiteracy.

B. Strengthening Capacities

5. Developing nations should take specific measures to establish or develop essential elements of their communication/information system, including postal services, print, broadcast media, etc.

6. Strong national news agencies—including, where appropriate, regional networks—are vital for improving each country’s national and international news reporting.

7. National book production, including the stimulation of works by national authors in various languages, should be encouraged and accompanied by the establishment of a distribution network for books, newspapers and periodicals.

8. In developing nations, the building of comprehensive national radio networks capable of reaching remote areas should take priority over development of television, which ought to be encouraged only where appropriate.

9. National capacity for producing broadcast materials is necessary to offset dependence on external sources over and beyond desirable program exchange.
10. Adequate educational and training facilities are necessary to supply personnel for the media and production organizations, including managers, technicians and maintenance personnel.

C. Basic Needs

11. Adequate financing should be devoted to the information/communication component in development projects involving agriculture, marine, environment, health and family planning, education, religion, industry, etc.

12. The development of the community press and resources centers in rural areas and small towns would provide print and information support for economic and social activities as well as promote literacy.

13. The educational and informational use of communication should be given equal priority with entertainment.

14. Educational systems should prepare young people for communication/information activities by introducing them at primary and secondary levels to the forms and uses of the means of communication, such as how to read newspapers, books and evaluate broadcast programs, etc.

15. Organization of community listening and viewing groups could in certain circumstances widen both entertainment and educational opportunities.

16. Where possible, activities that accentuate communication/information skills should be grouped to create local communication resource centres for entertainment, education, information dissemination and cultural exchange.

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17. Special sources of investment finance - such as differential communication policies that would place larger burdens on more prosperous urban and elite groups, to mention one possible example - should be identified to provide funding support for information and communication in national development.

18. A major national research and development effort should be undertaken to promote indigenous writing and publishing.

19. Efforts should be made to eliminate or reduce tariffs and rate structures that serve as obstacles in the free and balanced flow of news, including the transport of newspapers, periodicals, books and audiovisual material.

20. Natural resources that are finite and limit broadcasting capabilities - such as the electromagnetic spectrum and geostationary orbit - should be more equitably shared as the common property of mankind.

II. Social Consequences and New Tasks

A. Integrating Communication and Information into Development

21. A central component of both communication/information and development policies should be widespread dialogue involving a nation's decision-makers and its different social sectors.

22. In promoting information/communication policies, special attention should be given to the use
of non-technical language and comprehensible symbols, images and forms such as music, dance and drama to ensure popular understanding of development issues and goals.

B. Facing the Challenge

23. National mechanisms - such as technological and social/political impact surveys - should be set up to promote participation and discussion of social priorities in the acquisition or extension of new information and communication technologies; similarly for the use of traditional communication modes.

24. In developing countries, autonomous research about the use of traditional communication modes and development of technology should be promoted and linked to specific national and regional projects dealing with the satisfaction of basic needs.

25. National and international measures - such as agreements and reform of existing patent laws and conventions - should be taken to counteract the concentration of communications technology in a relatively few developed countries and transnational corporations.

C. Strengthening Cultural Identity

26. National policies should foster cultural identity and artistic creativity and enable various grassroots groups to be heard through the radio, newspapers, TV and community papers.
27. Guidelines dealing with advertising content and the values and attitudes advertising fosters should be developed in accordance with national standards and practice.

D. Reducing the Commercialization of Information and Communication

28. In expanding information and communication systems, preference should be given to non-commercial forms of mass communication, for example, media supported through public funding and non-government organization networks.

29. While acknowledging the need of the media for revenues, ways and means should be considered to reduce the effects that the influence of market and commercial considerations have in the organization and content of national and international communication flows.

E. Access to Information

30. Developing countries should pay particular attention to correlating education, scientific and information and communication policies and making sure technical skills and equipment are available to handle essential data processing activities.

31. Developed countries should foster exchanges of information of all kinds, particularly technical information, on the principle that all countries have equal rights to full access to available information.
32. Transnational corporations should supply to the authorities of the countries in which they operate, upon request and on a regular basis as specified by local laws and regulations, all information required for legislative and administrative purposes relevant to their activities and specifically needed to assess the performance of such entities.

III. Professional Integrity and Standards

A. Responsibility of Journalists

33. To be treated as professionals, journalists require broad educational preparation and specific professional training.

34. News media and journalists’ organizations should help in fostering among journalists higher standards of professionalism, responsibility and respect for truthfulness, accuracy and human rights.

35. As in other professions, journalists and media organizations serve the public directly; as a result, the public, through such devices as media councils or ombudsmen, should be entitled to hold journalists accountable for their actions.

36. The adoption of codes of ethics at national and, in some cases, at the regional level is desirable, provided that such codes are prepared and adopted by the profession itself without governmental interference.
B. Towards Improved International Reporting

37. All countries should take steps to assure admittance of foreign correspondents and facilitate the collection and transmission of news by the correspondents.

38. Conventional standards of news selection and reporting, and many accepted news values, need to be reassessed if readers and listeners around the world are to receive a more faithful and comprehensive account of events, movements and trends in both developing and developed countries.

39. Reporters being assigned to foreign posts or visiting journalists should have the benefit of language training and acquaintances with the history, institutions, politics, economics and cultural environment of the country or region in which they will be serving.

40. The press and broadcasters in the industrialized world should allot more space and time to reporting, professionally and without bias, events in and background material about foreign countries in general and news from the developing world in particular.

41. To offset the negative effects of inaccurate or malicious reporting of international news, particularly news of and from developing countries, consideration should be given to establishing a right of reply and correction on a voluntary basis.
C. Protection of Journalists

42. The professional independence and integrity of all those involved in the collection and dissemination of news, information and views to the public should be safeguarded.

IV. Democratization of Information and Communication

A. Human Rights

43. The media should contribute to promoting the just cause of people struggling for freedom and independence and their right to live in peace and equality without internal, foreign and other interference.

44. Information and communication needs in a democratic society should be met by the establishment of right to communicate that encompasses such specific rights as the right to information, right to be informed, the right to inform, the right to privacy and the right to participate in public communication.

B. Removal of Obstacles

45. All countries should adopt measures to expand public participation in the decision-making process by enlarging sources of information needed by citizens.

46. Censorship or arbitrary control of information should be abolished.

47. In areas where reasonable restrictions in the control of information may be considered necessary, such restrictions should be provided for by law, subject to judicial review and in line with the principles.
and instruments adopted by the community of nations.

C. Diversity and Choice

48. Attention should be given to the information and communication needs of such groups as women, children and youth, rural populations, the aged and the handicapped.

D. Integration and Participation

49. More use of communication modes, both new and traditional, should be made to help integrate people into the community rather than isolating people from one another.

50. Those in charge of the radio and newspaper should encourage their audiences to play a more active role in information and communication by allocating more newspaper space, or broadcasting time, for the views of individual members of the public or organized social groups.

51. Information and Communication policy-makers should give far greater importance to devising ways whereby the management of the newspapers and radio a could be democratic, at the same time respecting national customs and characteristics.

V. Fostering International Cooperation

A. Partners for Development

52. National and international measures should be taken that would foster progressively the setting up of a new world information and communication order.
The close relationship between the establishment of a new international economic order and a new world information and communication order should be carefully considered by those bodies dealing with these issues.

B. Strengthening Collective Self-Reliance

Joint activities in the field of information and communication which are under way between developing countries should be developed further, including especially cooperation among national information networks, for both developmental and general information, news agencies, development of News Agencies Pool and exchange on a regular basis of documents, broadcast programming, and films.

Cooperation in the field of technical information, particularly in economic matters of a non strategic nature, should be given a high priority through the establishment of national/regional and sub-regional data banks and information processing centres and specialized documentation centres.

Particular efforts should be undertaken to ensure that news about other developing countries within or outside the region, or country receive more attention and space in the media.

C. International Mechanisms

The United Nations as an organization should be equipped with a more effective information system, including a broadcast capability of its own and
possibly access to a satellite system.

D. Towards International Understanding

58. National information and communication policies should be consistent with adopted international information and communication principles, and should seek to create a climate of mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence among nations.

59. All forms of cooperation among information and communication professionals and their associations, which contribute to the better knowledge of other nations and cultures, should be encouraged and promoted.

60. In reporting on international events or developments in individual countries during situations of crisis and tension, news media should seek to carry out this special communication role with objectivity, sensitivity and integrity.

THANK YOU. PLEASE SEND THE COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE IN THE ENCLOSED SELF ADDRESSED AND POSTAGE PAID ENVELOPE.
Fiji's Political Development: A Chronology

1643 On February 6th, Abel Tasman, the Dutch explorer, sighted the northern tip of Taveuni and low-lying islands near Nanuku Passage. He later sighted Cikobia.

1774 On June 2nd, Captain Cook sighted Southern Lau group and various other parts of Fiji including Vatesa and Vusa Vatesa.

1789; 1792 Captain William Bligh sighted Fiji.

1800 - 1804 Runaway convicts and sailors from New South Wales settled.

1800 - 1814 European sailors, traders and beachcombers exploited sandalwood and beche-de-mer (1820s - 1850s).

1820 The Russian explorer, von Bellinghausen, discovered Ono and Turukuru islands in Southern Lau.

1820s - 1850s American explorer, Wilkes, examined various parts of Fiji making the first reliable charts.

1827 The French explorer, Dumont d'Urville searching for La Perouse.

1830 Arrival of the two Tahitian missionaries of the London Missionary Society in the Lau Island.

1835 First Wesleyan missionaries, William Cargill and David Cross, arrived in Lakeba, Lau.

1839 First book printed in Fijian (the catechism).

1840 The United States appointed a vice consul at Levuka.

1844 First Roman Catholic missionaries arrive.

1847 Mata'afu entered the Lau Group from Tonga.

1849 American Consul John Williams house burned to the ground during 4 July celebrations. Lakebau was held accountable for the debt of US$43,000.

1850s - Paramount chiefs started meeting from time to time. Since then people have looked to the Great Council of Chiefs for guidance and advice on matters concerning them. Today the Great Council of Chiefs is actively taking part in politics, its party being the Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei (SVT) representing Fijians.
1853 King George Tupou of Tonga appointed Ma'afu to oversee the welfare of the Tongans now living in the Lau Group.

1854 Ratu Seru Cakobau, Chief of Bau, converted to Christianity.

1855 Lovoni people burn European section of Levuka.

1858 William Pritchard, British consul, arrived and suggested that Cakobau cede Fiji to Britain in return for Britain paying the American debt.

1860 Britain sends envoy to Fiji to investigate offer of cession.

1862 This offer was rejected.

1865 Confederacy of independent kingdoms formed.

1869 The Fiji Times was first published.

1871 Ratu Seru Cakobau established a national monarchy. He was proclaimed 'King' and formed his government. Blackbirding, alienation of land and commercial swindling by Europeans led Ratu Cakobau and other chiefs to seek British protection.

1871 The "Royal Army" formed comprising 1,000 men under British officers.

1872 - 1876 The "Royal Army" continues its 'pacification' duties against rebellious Fijian tribes.

1872 Ratu Cakobau asked Germany for protection but this was refused.

1874 With the collapse of the Cakobau government, a fresh offer was made to Britain. This was accepted. Ratu Seru Cakobau and eleven paramount chiefs signed a deed of session to Britain in return for a pledge of protection of Fijian rights, privileges, and general welfare. Tribal wars halted and British law was established.

1874 The Fiji Royal Gazette was started and in October 1987. It changed its name to Fiji Gazette and continue to report on government and community activities.

1874 Na mala commenced and reported on government news and activities in the Fijian language. It is a very useful monthly newsletter.

1875 Measles epidemic where over forty thousand Fijians died. Introduced by sailors on visiting warships.

1875 Sir Arthur Gordon, first resident colonial governor, arrived.

1875 The Fijian Administration was established giving the Fijians an opportunity to manage their own affairs.
The Royal Army retitled "The Armed Native Constabulary" with 2,000 men under British officers. "Pacification" operations continue in the Sigatoka area.

First group of indentured labourers arrived from India. They worked for the Australian Colonial Sugar Refining Company.

13th May 1881 Rotuma annexed to Britain and became part of Fiji.

Capital moved from Levuka to Suva.

Colonial Sugar Refining Co. Ltd. (CSR) of Australia began operating a large sugar mill in Nausori.


First elected European member of Legislative Council.

Armed Native Constabulary amalgamated with the Fiji Constabulary (the police).

The Colonial government outlawed all sales of land and commenced recording existing indigenous Fijian landownership.

Official Secrets Act. This was adopted from the British Official Secrets Act of 1911 and applied to Fiji as an Imperial Act. It has not been reviewed and is still in force. The Act assumes that all official information is Government property which should not be given to anyone or made accessible without specific reason or authorisation. Criminal or disciplinary sanctions apply for any information "wrongfully" disseminated. A maximum punishment of two years imprisonment was given to those found simply receiving such information.

Fiji contingents served in World War I in Italy and France.

Importation of labourers from India ceased. A total of 60,639 Indian men, women and children had arrived in Fiji during the period, 1879 - 1916.

Influenza epidemic.

Military troops to restore order in Suva and Nausori areas following the "Indian strike".

The office of the secretary of native affairs was abolished and its responsibilities were transferred to the Colonial Secretary's office. The district commissioners were placed in charge of provincial matters. Five years later these changes were reversed. After World War the Fijian administrative structure was revised again.
1929
The first Indians were elected to the Colonial Legislative Council.

1934
Fiji Native Teachers’ Association established; now the Fijian Teachers’ Association

1937
The revised Legislative Council assigned equal numbers of seats for Europeans, Fijians and Indians.

1940
The Native Land Trust Board was established to administer all native land.

1940s
In the early 1940s the Public relations office was established and in 1942 it came directly under the Colonial Secretary’s office.

1941 - 1945
Fiji Military Forces served against Japanese in Solomon Islands and Bougainville.

1942
Rabi formed part of the nation of Fiji.

1943
Sir Leonard Usher became Government Public Relations Officer.

1945
Sir Lee was appointed first head of the Government Public Relations. He retired from Government service in 1957.

1949
Press Correction Act

1952 - 1956
Fiji Infantry regiment, First battalion serves against terrorists in Malaya.

1953

1953
Suva declared a city

1953
Volagauna, Fijian newspaper, published.

1954
Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna appointed first Speaker of the Legislative Council.

1958
Sir Leonard Usher became Editor and executive Director of Fiji Times and Herald Ltd.

1959
Dockworkers strike.

1960
The National Federation Party was established.

1962
Reconstitution of the Legislative Council, franchise extended to women and Fijian directly elect members for the first time.

1962
Nai Lalakai, Fijian weekly newspaper, first published.

1964
Racially separate rolls began.
1966 The Alliance Party was established. Its first leader, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, became the first Chief Minister under the self-government constitution of 1966.


1966 The Agricultural Landlord and Tenant Ordinance (ALTO) was enacted. It came into effect in December 1967. Amending legislation was approved by Parliament and came into effect in September 1977 as the Agricultural Landlord and Tenant Act (ALTA). The purpose of this legislation was to give primary producers on leased land a guaranteed period of security of tenure and owners of the leased land a guaranteed rental income. The rents are based on the unimproved value of the land. A number of leases expired in 1997. Apart from a review of the 1990 Constitution, ALTA is the other urgent matter that government had promised to deal with.

1967 A council of ministers replaces the old executive council.

1968 The University of the South Pacific was established in Suva. Fiji was one of the 11 countries that signed the agreement to establish this regional university.

1970 A new Constitution was adopted and Fiji attained independence from Britain on 10 October, 96 years after session.

1971 Fiji joined the South Pacific Commission.

1971 First South Pacific Arts Festival held in Suva.


April 1972 Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara led the Alliance Party to victory in the elections of 1972.

1972 Fiji led the movement to establish the South Pacific Forum. Suva became the venue for the Forum Secretariat.

1973 Ratu Sir George Cakobau appointed Governor-General.

1973 Fiji Government purchased the Colonial Sugar Refining Co. Ltd.'s shares in South Pacific Sugar Mills, and also the company's freehold land. This formed the basis of the Fiji Sugar Corporation.

1974 The Pacific Islands News Agency was formed.

1974 Fijian Nationalist Party (now Fijian Christian Nationalist Party) led by Sakeasi Butadroka was formed.

June 1975 Royal Fiji Military Forces Naval Squadron formed.
1976 Lautoka declared a city

1976 Fiji Sugar Marketing Co. Ltd. formed.

1977 Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara led the Alliance Party but was defeated in April general elections by the Federation Party. Unable to form a government Mr. S. Koya and the Federation Party suggested a coalition government. The Alliance Party rejected this. Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara was appointed Prime Minister by the Governor General.


1979 South Pacific Distilleries Ltd. formed.

1979 Fiji joined the South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement (SPARTECA).


1982 Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara led the Alliance Party to victory in the general elections.

1982 Fiji Contingent to Multi-national Force and Observers in Sinai, Egypt.

1983 Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau becomes Governor General. Hurricane Oscar causes $100 million in damage. Monasavu hydroelectric power station opens.

1984 New Reserve Bank of Fiji building opens.

July 6 1985 Fiji Labour Party officially established.

1985 FM96 a private radio station owned by Communications Fiji Ltd., was established. In 1989 Navtarang, the Hindi station owned by the same company, was established.

1986 Year of the National census.

1986 The original Fiji News Council was set up and operated briefly in 1986 but became inactive after the coups in 1987. In 1993 efforts were made to revive the Council with an established Constitution and working rules and guidelines. But a lack of secretarial staff, opposition from the Journalism Association, antagonism from the Government and the apathy of members hampered its work. In 1994 the Council was reorganized. The purpose of the Council is to promote high journalistic standards, enhance the image of the media, safeguard its independence and deal with public complaints against the media.
April 1987  The Taukei Movement was established.

April 1987  The Federation Party and the Labour Party Coalition won the general elections and Dr. Timoci Bavadra became Prime Minister after Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara's seventeen years of leadership.

April 13 1987  Dr. Bavadra sworn in as Prime Minister of Fiji.

May 12 1987  First meeting of Parliament under the Bavadra Government.

May 14 1987  First military coup in Fiji, led by Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka. Military ties with Australia and New Zealand were suspended. Fiji's Commonwealth membership lapsed.

September 25 1987  Last issue of the Fiji Sun. Disapproved with the censorship and restrictions imposed on publishing by the military government.

September 25 1987  Second military coup in Fiji led again by Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka.

October 7 1987  Fiji becomes a Republic.

1987  Viti Civil Servants Association established.

1987  The Reserve Bank devalued the Fijian currency by 35% and place strict controls on exchange, salaries as well as reduced grants to the public sectors.

1987  Sunday Observance Decree (Fiji Gazette 1(15) 9 November 1987) imposed a strict observance of the Sabbath. This banned all recreational and sporting activities together with the operation of public transport, commerce and trade, cinemas. Debate has continued on the possible lifting of the ban.

December 1987  A Civilian Government was reinstated.

1988  Fiji turned to France, China, Taiwan and Malaysia for new military and economic partnerships.

1988  Fiji military observer mission to UN forces in Afghanistan.

June 1988  Internal Security Decree (ISD) of 17th June 1988. This is still in force.


October 2 1989  Daily Post's first issue.
1990 The government closed the Embassy of India in retaliation for India's lobbying against the readmission of Fiji into the Commonwealth.

June 1990 The Great Council of Chiefs approved the formation of the Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei (SVT) or Fijian Political Party.

1990 General Voters Party established.

July 25 1990 A new Constitution of Fiji was adopted with 70 elected members comprising 37 Fijian seats, 27 Indians, 5 General voters and 1 for Ronumans. Under the 1970 Constitution there were 52 members, 26 for Fijians and 26 for Indians.

1990 The Great Council of Chiefs endorsed the recommendations made in a Review of the Fijian Provincial Administration by Rodney Cole completed in 1984 recommending the enforcement of Fijian traditional social and political systems including the court system which was introduced in 1876 and operated between 1944 and 1967 when it was abolished.

1991 Fair Trading Decree

June 1991 Rabuka joined Ratu Mara's interim Government.

June 1991 All National Congress led by Apisai Tora was launched.

October 3 1991 TV was introduced to Fiji. Temporary licence granted to TVNZ to November 6th. In October 31 this licence was extended to February 1992. In 1993 a consortium comprising the Fiji Development Bank, TVNZ and public shareholders was formed to set up a permanent service. The Fiji Development Bank holds 51% of FijiTV shares in trust for Yasana Holdings, the holding company of the 14 provinces in Fiji, until FijiTV begins to return dividends by 2006.


April 1992 The Great Council of Chiefs confirmed the appointment of Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau as President.

May 1992 First democratic general elections after the 1987 military coups were held. The newly formed Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei (SVT) whose membership were traditional ethnic Fijians led by major General Sitiveni Rabuka won the elections.

July 1992 The $10 million Tony Stephens deed of settlement revealed. Rabuka's comments on Australian television that "Fiji would be better off if Indians returned to India" prompted the Indian opposition to walk out of Parliament. It was later clarified that there was some mischievous editing and this statement was not placed in context.
December 1992

Government of National Unity introduced by the Prime Minister for consideration by the people and Parliament.

January 5 1993

Court of Appeal ruled Jim Ah Koy to vote as a Fijian in the 1994 General Elections.

January 1993

Discussions on a Government of National Unity continues. Concept still not explained clearly by the PM.

February 1993

The Weekender, a new magazine was published. Ceased to operate in April 1994 due to government pressure and financial difficulties.

April 1993

Saddiq Koys, former leader of the Opposition, died.

June 23 1993

Mahendra Chaudhry led his Labour colleagues out of Parliament dissatisfied with slow developments on a review of the Constitution.

September 1993

Kermode enquiry into the Tony Stephens affair concludes that Rabuka had a "prima facie" case to answer.

November 1993

1994 Budget defeated in House of Representatives. Seven Government backbenchers led by Josevata Kamikamica joined the opposition in voting against the Budget. They were subsequently expelled from the SVT.

November 30 1993

Prorogation and dissolution of Parliament by Acting President, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara.

December 1993

The Fijian Association, a new political party, was established.

December 16 1993

The Tui Cakau and President, Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau died.

January 12 1994

The Great Council of Chiefs approved Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara for President.

January 15 1994

The Fijian Association Party (FAP) officially launched.

January 17 1994

Lau Provincial Meeting held in Tubou, Lakeba aligned itself to the Fijian Association Party.

January 29 1994

Ratu William Toganivalu died. Was nominated to represent the province of Tailevu in the general elections.

February 18 – 25 1994

Second general elections after the military coups held. Major General Sitiveni Rabuka led his SVT Party to victory again. Sitiveni Rabuka became Prime Minister.
March 1994  Rabuka admits to adultery at SVT caucus meeting but his apologies are accepted and he stays on as Prime Minister.

June 1994  Discussions on the need for the Fiji Intelligence Service (FIS) unit escalates. Seen as duplicating work of the police special branch and therefore was an unjustified cost.

November 1994  Budget was passed but government departments had overspent by 26million dollars. Moves made by Government to privatise the Fiji Broadcasting Commission. The future of television in Fiji remains uncertain.

January 1995  Public Trustee loan scandal made public.

January 1995  External audit of the National Bank of Fiji by Senators Aidney and Dickson.

February-March 1995  Government decision to bring in Chinese immigrants, proposal to lift the Sunday ban, and proposal that “Fijian” be the common name attracts criticism from SVT supporters.

March 1995  Harold Powell resigns as Minister for Civil Aviation over disagreement with Rabuka.

April 1995  Rabuka survives backbench rebellion.

April 1995  Constitution Review Committee members sworn in by the President. Members include: Sir Paul Reeves (Chairperson), Mr. Tom Vakatora, and Professor Brij Lal.

May 1995  Government announces it will take a back seat on ALTA and let the landowners directly decide on the future of agricultural leases on native land.

June 1995  Minister for Fijian Affairs, Adi Samanunu Talakuli resigns over dual citizenship saga.

June 30 1995  Visanti Makrava, General Manager of the National Bank of Fiji goes on leave.


October 1995  Victory for Manasa Seniloli, SVT candidate for the Tailevu Fijian by-election. Kamikamica standing for the Fijian Association Party was beaten by 3678 to 2789 votes with Vanua Democratic Party Iliesa Duvuloco taking 1707 votes.

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October 1995  Public informed through the media that government will seek parliamentary approval to bail out the National Bank of Fiji's $30 million - now standing at $200 million dollar - debt. This attracts a great deal of criticism and calls for prosecution of bad debtors. Bad loan accounts published in the November issue of The Review.

October 10 1995  Fiji celebrates 25th anniversary of independence.

November 1995  Fiji celebrates 25th anniversary of independence.

January 1996  Media under fire from Rabuka and the government over the National Bank of Fiji reports and list of bad debtors.

March 1996  Government Shipyard sold to a new company - Shipbuilding Fiji Ltd.

June 1996  Hawaii-based TV Company note interest to enter Fiji, O'ahu Wireless.

September 1996  Review of Fiji media laws by Kenneth Morgan and John Prescott of the Thompson Foundation, UK.

September 1996  Constitution Review Committee completed the review and report titled, Towards A United Future.


June 19 1997  Fiji's first shipment of lead free petrol announced by Shell.

July 4 1997  Mock funeral for the Fijian race at Suva's Sukuna Park led by Butadroka, Duvuloco, Tabu.

July 17 1997  Prime Minister first announces multiparty Cabinet plans.

July 18 1997  80 vacant positions for doctors.

July 22 1997  AUSTEO Report on Australia's relations with the South Pacific countries out.

July 22 1997  Four sugar mills on strike.

July 26 1997  President Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara signs the new Constitution Amendment Bill.
July 31 1997  FijiTV temporary allowed to operate in Fiji on an exclusive licence after
the High Court grants an injunction against the government’s decision to
cancel its exclusive licence.

August 5 1997  Crushing at the sugar mills resumes.

August 8 1997  Act passed by Parliament approving the change in the operations of the
Fiji Broadcasting Corporation to become a fully operating business
enterprise. FBC’s new name will be Island Networks Corporation Ltd.
This will be effective from 1 January 1998.

August 8 1997  Rabuka appoints a new Cabinet that includes FAP Ratu Finau Mara as
Minister of Fijian Affairs and Jim Ah Xoy as Finance Minister.