



# Australian Population Association

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12th Biennial Conference

population and society: issues, research, policy

15-17 September 2004 - Canberra, Australia

## Pacific instability and youth bulges: the devil in the demography and the economy

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### Abstract

Neo-Malthusianism is out of fashion –even regarded as politically incorrect. Certainly, demographic factors by themselves do not either cause or resolve violent conflict. Yet, in combination with economic factors and mediated through the social system, they can play a significant role. This paper examines the interactions between population growth, age structures, education, urbanization, livelihoods, youth unemployment and migration in Melanesia and Polynesia. It argues that emigration plays a crucial role in defusing potential conflict in Polynesia and has provided a safety valve for Fiji. Conversely, instability will continue to threaten Melanesia for as long as economic growth fails to significantly outstrip population growth and thus to provide employment opportunities for a younger generation no longer satisfied with subsistence farming and fishing. The Malthusian constraint in the Pacific is not an inability to feed growing populations (there is land and sea enough) but an inability to provide opportunities for earning cash to supply requirements beyond mere subsistence. The continuation of movement to the main islands/towns at an accelerating pace, despite the lack of urban employment or economic opportunities, is used to demonstrate the disjunction between desires and delivery when inflamed by Western education and videos.

Paper prepared for the 12<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference of the Australian Population Association, 15-17 September 2004, Canberra.





## INTRODUCTION

Neo-Malthusianism is out of fashion –even regarded as politically incorrect, especially in the peace community. Certainly, demographic factors by themselves do not either cause or resolve violent conflict. Yet, in combination with economic factors and mediated through the social system, they can play a significant role. This paper examines the interactions between population growth, age structures, education, urbanization, livelihoods, youth unemployment and migration in Melanesia and Polynesia. It argues that emigration plays a crucial role in defusing potential conflict in Polynesia and has provided a safety valve for Fiji. Conversely, instability will continue to threaten Melanesia for as long as economic growth fails to significantly outstrip population growth and thus fails to provide employment opportunities for a younger generation no longer satisfied with subsistence farming and fishing. The Malthusian constraint in the Pacific is not an inability to feed growing populations (there is land and sea enough) but an inability to provide sufficient opportunities for earning cash to supply requirements beyond traditional subsistence. Movement to the main islands/towns continues at an accelerating pace, despite the lack of urban employment or economic opportunities. It is this disjunction between the demonstrated desires of those who are prepared to uproot their whole lives and the mutual failure of their government and the economy' to deliver cash incomes which results in civil conflict.

Thus, the basic argument of this paper is simple: violent unrest in the Pacific Island countries (PICs) and Papua New Guinea is increasingly common because of the lack of employment for large cohorts of young people. Whilst youngsters would certainly prefer employment in the formal sector, which usually offers greater security, prestige and physical comfort, opportunities to earn a steady supply of cash from agriculture/fishing would also serve to reduce rootlessness and tensions.

It is further argued that the Polynesian countries, in contrast to Melanesia, have been protected from civil conflict by high levels of emigration. Similarly, Kiribati and Tuvalu have achieved peace at home by sending many of their young men overseas to work as international seamen.

Civil conflict can be understood as involving both a supply of willing participants in violence and a demand for their services. The Pacific supply is found amongst groups of unemployed young men who can be as volatile as heaps of tinder ready to be ignited by a small spark. The demand is a more complex matter. Essentially all that is needed is a small group of leaders who expect to benefit enough from the conflict to make lighting the fire worthwhile. Often these leaders use the excuse of perceived ethnic and/or inter-island discrimination to motivate the young hotheads (for a discussion of 'warlordism' more generally see Schlee 2004 ). Polynesian countries are again at an advantage in this context since most are populated by a single majority ethnic/linguistic group. In a sad irony, moves to stamp out corruption can raise the likelihood of civil strife as public figures who were profiting from simple graft turn to insurrection. The promise of good governance is far from uncontroversial (Casimira 2004) This means that where genuine efforts to remove corruption are underway there is a need to maintain a watch for people who will set to work to stir up violent conflict in the streets. Much of the gossip in Suva on the motivations of the Speight coup centred on the theme that that his supporters were corrupt figures who wanted to continue to practice their corruption and total tax avoidance without let or hindrance,

## A YOUTH BULGE EFFECT?

The majority of the supply of foot soldiers willing to engage in civil conflict usually come from increasingly large cohorts of 'young people'. Cross-national studies have varied in their findings on the relationship between so called 'youth bulges' and conflict. [Looking at the shape of national population pyramids, these are not always exactly bulges since, in the absence of declining fertility, the cohorts of young children who follow may be even larger than the so called youth bulge]. Collier and Hoeffler (2001) failed to find a youth bulge effect. Esty et al (1998) did find such an effect as did Urdal (2004). Urdal (2004) argues that the difference lies in the 'youth bulge measure' used, he used the proportion aged 15-24 to the total adult population 15+; whereas Collier and Hoeffler (2001) used proportion of youth to the total population. None of these studies included data on micro states in the Pacific or elsewhere.

Looking at data for the Pacific Island countries, and bearing in mind that Huntington (1996) guesstimated that the cut-off point for real problems would be a youth bulge constituting 20% of the population - the highest youth (15-24) to total adult population proportions (15+) are 19% for Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands but most Pacific Island countries have around 17% of youths as compared with Australia which has 9% (SPC Data Base online). Interestingly emigration does not make too much difference for Samoa (15%) or Tonga but reduces the Cooks to below the Australian proportion. [Pacific proportions are much lower than the African peaks Zambia 42% or Kenya 40% because average PIC life-spans are much longer, especially since AIDS has cut expectations in Africa]. In looking at why a youth bulge is a problem Urdal (2004) demonstrates that the difficulty arises where the economy is not growing fast enough to provide employment for the members of the bulge, with negative per capita GDP growth (as happened in the Solomon Islands) being a harbinger of disaster..

## URBANIZATION

*Many of my friends are civil servants  
With uncivil thoughts  
They smile at my weaknesses  
And thrive on my poverty  
Their bodies weakening though  
From muscular indifference*

*But they cannot erase my existence  
For my plight chimes with the hour  
And my blood they drink at cocktail parties*

*Professor Koni Helu Thaman, University of the South Pacific*

Urbanization in the Pacific is linked to conflict because it creates concentrations of unemployed youths who otherwise might still have been underemployed in the rural areas, but would not have been grouped together standing on the street corners with nothing much to do. Urbanization is also linked to conflict through the difficulties associated with making customary laws relating to landholding work in crowded conditions where there are many strangers and competing claims as to who owns/controls what (O'Carroll 1997;

Forum Secretariat 2001). Land issues are further complicated by the lack of specific forms of urban governance in several Pacific Island countries. Often there is no clear way for squatters on the urban fringes to attempt to regularise their situation (ESCAP 2004).

Urbanization is a recent and non-indigenous phenomenon in the South Pacific. The proportion reported as urban ranges (according to very varied national definitions) from 15-21% in Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu to 32% in Tonga and 46% in Fiji (Table 1). The rate of urban growth is a stunning 6% per annum in the Solomon Islands and 4% in PNG and Vanuatu but 1% or less in Samoa and Tonga (Table 1). Melanesian urbanization proceeds apace reflecting the deficits in the rural areas as much as the attractions of the town's 3 Es of education, employment and entertainment. Polynesian urbanization is much slower because Polynesians who move in search of employment or training often only transit their capitals en route to migration overseas,

High rates of urbanization are symptomatic of the fact that all is not idyllic in the rural areas. People, as individuals and as families, certainly move in a quest for employment, education, medical facilities, bright lights and video stores. Now, however, there is also some muted debate as to how far there are also push factors beginning to emerge associated with overcrowding on the land and severe underemployment in the rural areas and outer islands (Connell 2000; ADB 2002). The available evidence suggests that usually the family or individual would have had an option to stay where they were born in the rural area or on the outer island and fish or farm – but sources of cash income and the core facilities were lacking. The process of out-migration then accelerates as the fewer the people who are left behind the harder it becomes to provide them with modern services such as health centres or electricity. For example, cost cutting means that bank branches outside the capitals are becoming ever rarer. Thus locally designed textbooks require children on the outer islands of Tuvalu, which are accessible only by small boats, to learn business studies as an introduction to eco-tourism whilst they have never seen a tourist or a bank.

It is often suggested that the way to prevent centrifugal migration is to provide better facilities on the periphery, but, except for Papua New Guinea, the scale of the countries makes the creation of more than one true urban centre implausible. Currently the Asian Development Bank is lending three million dollars to the Cook Islands for Outer Island Development, specifically capacity building for island councils to focus on the maintenance of assets. The rationale is that “disparities in level of development between the principal island of Rarotonga and many of the outer islands of the Cook Islands group are significant. The outer islands suffer from underdeveloped services and lack of resources to sustain adequate levels of infrastructure maintenance. The disparity of service and infrastructure is one of the reasons for a population drift from the outer islands to Rarotonga and overseas” (ADB 2002: 18). Three million dollars in training/‘empowering’ outer island councils is not going stem ‘population drift’. The question remains as to whether this is a reasonable goal.

Young people often move on the lottery principle, because they wish to have a try at securing a training place or a paid job not because they have any certainty of securing their goal. The willingness to move with only a small chance of finding work is a measure, not of a lack of information about conditions in town, but of the lack of opportunities in the rural areas. Some parents say that they move not for themselves but in hope of a better future for their children (Mecartney 2001). In terms of implications for conflict, the issue is that young people move to the capital and then cannot find work which leaves them as a rootless potential rag-tag army. Given the poor state of policing, (e.g. only 3% of criminal

suspects appear to be indicted in Papua New Guinea), these youths have very little to lose by joining in with violent civil disturbances. The exception is Fiji where young Fiji Indians need clean police records to emigrate as do young indigenous Fijians (female and male) wanting to join the British army – which is usually the highest paid occupation available to them. There is also a common disincentive to self-employment in the towns in the form of totally inappropriate colonial-style regulations concerning matters such as individual market stalls and selling food and other items in the street.

In urban Papua New Guinea where unemployment rates were 29% in 1995, there were over 32,00 persons who depended “on crime as their main source of income, representing 14.8% of the urban work force” (Levantis 1997). These peoples’ earnings from criminal activity were equivalent to the wages of a semi-skilled labourer in the formal labour force.

## UNEMPLOYMENT DATA

According to the CIA Yearbook for 2003, Kiribati shares with Zimbabwe the dubious honour of having the highest unemployment rate in the world (at 70%). According to the official statistics for individual countries rates of unemployment are less than 10% across the Pacific – but given a context in which there is little reason to report unemployment or maintain accurate figures since there are no unemployment benefits to be paid out or accounted for, these figures mean little. [ILO only records data for Fiji: 6% in 1990, 5% in 1995]. Data from the Pacific Regional Information System for Vanuatu for 1999 shows urban unemployment of 6% as against less than 1% for the rural areas. More credibly Tonga in 1996 recorded unemployment rates of 19% for urban areas, 11% for rural and 32% for males aged 15-24 as compared with 27% for females. Since these Tongan rates are recorded even after the high rates of net emigration of some 1.5% per annum, it can be seen just how vital emigration is as a safety valve. Part of the difficulty in securing accurate information lies in the applicability of the concept of unemployment in a context where there is subsistence agriculture and access to land and fishing for many people to fall back upon.

For most PICs it is possible to count the number of youths completing school each year and then to look at the number of positions falling vacant or being created in the formal sector and to regard the gap between the two figures as a minimum estimate of unemployment since it does not include older workers who become unemployed or have not found work since leaving school. To take Kiribati as an example: “around 1,700 students – soon to reach 2,000 and growing – leave school every year. And 450-500 jobs become available in the formal economy. Even the most optimistic (or unsustainable) economic growth scenarios would yield only an additional 200-300 jobs annually” (ADB 2002:127). The 1,000 a year who cannot secure paid employment are expected to be absorbed by the traditional economy but there are two major reasons why this will not happen: firstly many school leavers have no desire to be fishers or farmers and secondly, even where they do wish to there is a limit to what the technology/ecology can absorb.

The global economic models of civil war discussed below do not include unemployment simply because the data are not available. They do include the proportion of young men who have experienced secondary school education – because the data are available. In general the higher the proportion completing secondary school the lower the

risk of civil war – but this may be an indirect measure of national wealth as much as a measure of the impact of education. One cause of conflict in the region, which it would always be very difficult to measure, is a radical rise in expectations as to what constitutes “a satisfactory standard of living, a desirable occupation and a suitable mix of accessible services and amenities” (Connell 2000:36). It is equally difficult to measure the apparently ubiquitous decline in the prestige of agricultural employment – but the agricultural courses at the University of the South Pacific teeter on the brink of extinction for lack of students.

## SKILLS LEVELS

Endlessly repeated clichés are still not necessarily true. Thus it would be difficult to find a report on economic development in the Pacific which does not contain a reference to the regrettable lack of skills in the labour force - but it is still questionable how far this is valid. There is essentially a major problem of sequencing: educating young people for jobs which do not yet exist is a recipe for discontent and even conflict, but the lack of skilled labour is held to be a break on development in the islands. One way of testing this alleged lack of skills is to look at the training which private sector firms actually provide, since, if there are significant profits to be made they should supply their own training. One major automotive repairer across the region sends its island staff for training in Port Moresby, Sydney and Tokyo – but this may well be a unique example. Vanuatu only has one formal institute for technical and vocational training (INTV) yet, even so, not all of the trained graduates can secure employment. In a country where many people do not have tap water or sewage the demand for plumbers understandably remains limited. One problem with specific skills training in small countries is just how quickly the market becomes over-filled. One course training twenty people in basic travel agent skills such as ticket writing flooded the Vanuatu market. The one skills area for which there would appear to be a genuine shortage across the Pacific would appear to be accountancy. But even in this case, outsiders are sometimes employed not because of an absolute lack of trained locals but because of a knowledge of how hard it is for a local to point out dishonest financial reporting in a very small community where there are only a couple of dozen professionals all of whom are interrelated.

## POLYNESIA: MIGRATION AS A SAFETY VALVE

*“If I plant a tree, will my children be here to see it grow?”*

*Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop (1994) quoting a Samoan villager with 5 of her 8 children and her husband having migrated overseas.*

*We have sold our national pride  
And dreamt for our children  
Destinies in foreign lands  
Feeding the bloodline of dependency*

*Noumea Simi, Senior official, Department of Foreign Affairs, Samoa*

Apart from some anti-GST riots and politically inspired murders in Samoa which were rapidly swept under the mat, there has been little in the way of civil disturbance in Polynesia. This paper argues that this is because Polynesia has an emigration safety valve which is not available to less well-educated Melanesians rather than because Polynesian societies are more authoritarian and hierarchical and therefore better able to control dissent. For Samoa and Tonga “emigration is normal, expected and anticipated, and it is an important element in national social and economic systems” (Connell 2000:43).

Emigration acts as a safety valve in several ways. Potentially hot-headed young men go and play rugby or work in abattoirs in New Zealand or elsewhere and those who go send back money to their families and churches which helps the wider economy as well as the individual groups involved. Overall Melanesia has an annual population growth rate of 2.3% as compared with 1.2% for Polynesia (Table 1). As well as emigration, Polynesia also has lower birth rates than Melanesia partly because of smaller families but also because many of the young adults of peak childbearing ages are overseas.

Exporting people is a deliberate and valid strategy for Samoa, Tonga and the Cooks (Table 3 presents estimates for Polynesian and Melanesian populations around the Pacific Rim). Kiribati and Tuvalu send sea men to work on foreign boats and send back remittances which average close to ten times the per capita GDP per sailor. Indeed it is a trap for the unwary that Kiribati's GNP of \$160 million in 2001 is almost twice as big as its GDP owing to remittances, investment income and fisheries payments (ADB 2002:xviii). Some commentators worry that remittances from individuals dry up over time, the evidence is mixed on this point but at a national level this is not significant if overall emigration continues. A different concern is that remittances are not used for productive investments – but this is economically rational since there are better returns available, and able to be kept within the nuclear family, from investing in Australia, New Zealand or America. Besides education expenditure may well represent the best investment for Pacific Islanders. If migration overseas is indeed viewed as a substitute for development at home, is this such an unreasonable choice? As Epeli Hau'ofa has pointed out the migration/remittances path of 'transnational corporations of kin' as described by Bertram (1985) is one which Polynesians invented and developed for themselves (USP 1993:12). Unlike many other development plans it was never imposed from outside. [Conversely Melanesians who were once forced to emigrate in the notorious 'blackbird' trade no longer do so – but that is another story].

For Tonga, Campbell (2003:346) recounts how external factors have been an important component of Tonga's prosperity and stability. "High rates of population increase since World War II gave rise by the 1960s to alarming population projections, followed in the mid-1970s by a perceived land shortage. Opportunities for work in New Zealand, followed by increased migration opportunities first there, and later to Australia and the United States, alleviated these pressures to the extent that the 'population bomb' failed to materialize. The population 'safety valve' was almost certainly a social and political one also, and certainly alleviated the kind of social problems that overcrowding and underemployment might have created. Without emigration on the scale of the last quarter of the twentieth century, Tonga's population would probably have been about fifty percent larger by 2000 than it was". The land question is particularly crucial in Tonga since every adult male is guaranteed by law a minimum allocation of both urban and rural land – and, sexism apart, population growth already means that there is not enough land in existence for this requirement to be met.

The recent ADB Report on Kiribati argues that emigration in search of greater economic opportunity should be "explicitly recognized in the social and economic plans of Kiribati as a legitimate aspect of economic and social change" (ADB 2002:134).

## FIJI

Owing to the multiple ways in which ethnic and religious divides, set between indigenous Fijians and the descendants of Indians brought in as indentured labourers a century ago, are manipulated from democratic elections to coups, Fiji presents a special case of emigration as a valve for the release of political tensions in the Pacific. Emigration



by Indians has allowed indigenous Fiji Islanders to clearly establish their majority status in national politics since almost 90% of emigrants from Fiji have been Indo-Fijians. However, contrary to popular stereotypes of skills losses, only 8,669 of the 75,800 emigrants between 1987 and 2001 were professionals (Voigt-Graf 2003). Views vary on the nature of the impact of this emigration. Some see it as a regrettable brain drain, others see it as a benefit, releasing more jobs for those left behind. Given that there are 17,000 new job seekers per year in Fiji and only 1,500 to 2,000 new jobs, the brain drain view needs to be subject to sceptical examination. In the specific case of teachers, the brain drain interpretation is only valid in so far as more experienced teachers who leave were superior to the newly trained teachers who replace them (the teacher student ratio at the secondary level has remained at less than 1:20). In a context where more recently qualified and younger teachers have often received superior education and training this is not necessarily the case. Also for political reasons and to keep down educated unemployment Fiji trains far more teachers than it needs/ can afford to pay . Thus there are over 3,500 secondary school teachers employed in the profession in Fiji and 3,000 qualified teachers who have emigrated. Had these teachers stayed there could have been almost 3,000 discontented unemployed secondary school teachers marching in the streets of Fiji. It is also useful to bear in mind that both the Indian community and the politically influential teachers' unions (which are divided along ethnic lines) have political reasons for bemoaning the emigration of skilled manpower. As shown above, the statistics suggest that Fiji where only some 50 teachers representing 1.4% of secondary teachers retire (44) or die (6) each year needs to lose these teachers in order to provide positions for newly trained teachers to occupy. In the case of medical personnel, Connell (2004) concluded that training an excess supply to export was a highly rational strategy.

The Reserve Bank of Fiji reviewed "The impact of brain drain in Fiji" in 2002 presenting a nuanced picture of gains and losses from the depart of some 75,800 people from 1987-2001 (i.e. about 8% of the total population). The author noted that this level of departures had done nothing to reduce an official unemployment rate of 5-7% suggesting that there exists "a degree of surplus labour in Fiji" (RBF 2002:42). There had also been an unremarked immigration of some 30,000 people

## EXPANDING ECONOMIC MODELS OF CIVIL WAR USING PACIFIC CASE STUDIES

Although economic models of the causes of civil war vary, one area where there would be near universal agreement is that, whilst a failure to achieve economic growth poses severe challenges, a poor country which actually experiences declining GDP per capita is at grave risk of civil unrest possibly escalating to mass violence.

The Forum Secretariat contracted Ron Crocombe (2000), an old Pacific hand to tour around the Pacific asking questions about how to enhance security in the Pacific. Interestingly, he found greater differences in view within countries than across countries. However, there was general agreement about four common and often co-existing threats to security leading to overt conflict. They were ethnic tensions (including with foreign immigrants); land disputes; marked economic disparities between citizens and a lack of confidence in the government's ability or willingness to solve the first three problems. He also pointed out that all these security issues were at bottom integrity issues – trust had been lost that other stakeholders and the individual island governments would act honestly.

Taking a cue from Sambanis (2003) it is possible to use case studies to explore the economic models of civil war proposed by the leaders in the field. Sambanis also

raises the interesting question as to how far civil war really is a distinct category of violence (as required in the statistical models beloved by the World Bank). Why and how far is raskal violence in Port Moresby different from Eagle-force or Freedom-fighter violence in Honiara ? The case study method is especially useful in the Pacific context since international definitions of what constitutes civil war are often in terms of absolute numbers of deaths (e.g. at least 1,000 deaths overall and at least 100 deaths on the government side). Whilst these numbers are small in a context such as Nigeria they could be massive in the Pacific.

As Bougainville has witnessed the Pacific's only civil war to date (see below) case studies for the rest of the Pacific involve the equally valid approach of examining why political conflict has not escalated to civil war. This paper has argued that Polynesia escapes through emigration and the economic benefits of remittance income. Fiji has experienced three largely bloodless coups without moving on to fighting in the streets because of the remarkable restraint demonstrated by Indians and Fijians alike. An economic explanation of this restraint is that people have too much to lose. A migration explanation would be that dissatisfied Indians if educated can leave and that Fijians have the option of well-paid service in the British army or UN peace-keeping forces. Many would regard the Solomon Islands as having been saved from all out civil war by the intervention of armed force from outside through RAMSI, others would argue that the Solomon Islands risked anarchy and break up as a country but did not have a government strong enough to prosecute a civil war.

#### BOUGAINVILLE: THE ONLY GREEN CIVIL WAR ?

*The land is a mother, it is wealth, it is life, food and health. It is where we will be born and die. When the land is taken away, we are nothing.*

*Bougainville women quoted by Ruby Mirinka, former matron of Arawa Hospital when arguing to the First Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States Barbados 1994 that the Panguna Mine should stay closed in perpetuity.*

Bougainville is the Pacific's one civil war to date.[Many standard definitions would exclude the Solomon Islands because they require at least 100 deaths among government troops – assuming that all governments are defended by national armies]. Bougainville would appear to be unique in that the objective of the rebels was to close and keep the mine closed rather than to seize the mineral wealth. Such concern to protect the environment and the social structure does not fit within the econometric models of greed or grievance.

#### VIOLENCE IN THE PACIFIC: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND SUICIDE

In general, except for law and order issues in Papua New Guinea, the PICs have a very peaceful image in keeping with the tourist vision of palm trees and coral sands. In part this is a superficial view. For women, the reality can be very different. In Papua New Guinea surveys report that 66% of wives said that they had been hit by their husbands and 60% of men said that they had themselves participated in gang rape (sources in Singh 2004). In Fiji 48% of wives said that they had been forced to have sex with their husbands and 34% of women had been hit whilst pregnant (Fiji Women's Crisis Centre 2001). In Samoa 17% of women interviewed said that they had been physically abused by their

partners (Samoa Family Health and Safety Study 2003). These very high levels of violence are the result of cultures where such violence is accepted as normal.

Suicide is another form of violence which ill fits the palm tree image. Yet the PICs have some of the highest reported suicide levels in the world (Booth 1999). It has been argued that a significant rise in youth suicide in Samoa in the early 1980s was the direct result of the broken dreams of young people who were not able to emigrate to New Zealand (Macphersons 1987). The Asian Development bank's current loan programme for Samoa recognises the urgency of youth development "in view of the increasing problems of youth delinquency, crime, drug and substance abuse. and suicide" (ADB 2001: 34). Demographic statistics for the Pacific are generally quite good but there is little data on violence and limited motivation to collect it, although rising levels might well act as a warning signal for civil conflict (Sambanis 2003)

## THE ROLE OF EDUCATION: EDUCATION FOR SUBSISTENCE?

"Democracy, yes; free enterprise, yes; but at the same time we should not allow the process of change to alienate Tongans within their own country" (Fonua 1994:9).

Writing about development in the Pacific abounds in meaningless clichés. Often the problem is an understandable unwillingness to acknowledge that obedience to all the dictates of neo-liberalism does not guarantee economic growth to small countries with limited resources. If the thought experiment is performed of envisaging the World Bank running the PICs along strict neo-liberal principles it is still difficult to envisage a Kiribati achieving self-sufficiency without some windfall such as tv.com has provided for Tuvalu.

Hence the Asian Development Bank "public investment in education, particularly at the primary level, should pay dividends in maintaining high literacy rates and providing a base for the development of a skilled work force with potential for productive participation in economic activity" – unfortunately the ADB (2001:118) does not go on to clarify what a skilled workforce based in Kiribati might be doing in a country with a total population of 85,000 on 811 square kilometres of land spread over 3.5 million square kilometres of sea and a total GDP of some \$100 million.

Almost every report which deal with education in the Pacific makes the point that, since only a small proportion of school leavers can expect to secure employment in the formal sector, education should provide more for the subsistence sector. The problem with this laudable sentiment is that neither parents nor students wish schools to move away from a model which focuses on eventual white collar employment. Parents on outer islands understand that their children may have as little chance of white collar employment as of winning the lottery but they still want their children to take a ticket in the job lottery through bookish, academic education. They are also well aware that very few school teachers would wish their children to return to the subsistence sector. In addition they know that if their children should want to emigrate the more western style education they have the better.

There is also the issue that school teachers are almost certainly not the best people to teach about subsistence skills or traditional life since they are already removed from it by training which meant spending years in institutions often as boarders far removed from their home villages. Therefore whilst there is a need to review the role of education in the Pacific islands it is not clear how this could or should be done (Crossley and Watson 2003). The very informative Report of the 2000 Fiji Education Commission Review had to

be published without overall recommendations since there was no broad agreement on goals, outcomes or how to achieve them.

The question of the language of instruction shows just some of the hard choices to be made. Teaching in the local language may work at younger ages for larger language groups such as Samoan or Tongan but children who only learn a Pacific language may well protect their culture at the cost of their employability and links with the wider world. Vanuatu, however, has over 110 languages (not dialects) for a population of 200,000 and it is near impossible to envisage teaching school beyond simple literacy in these languages, many spoken by only some 2,000 people. There is also the little discussed issue that speaking a common language could help in building a national identity for divided countries such as the Solomon Islands. The Fiji Education Commission in 2000 proposed that schools should teach entrepreneurship – the teachers may not be very skilled in this area either but at least it is something which students wish to learn.

## CONCLUSION: NEO-MALTHUSIAN POLICY IMPLICATIONS

*“What kind of economic policy should our small islands opt for to ensure over the next decade or two an annual growth of at least 7%, which in real terms means only 4% given the population growth rate ? ... what can we tell our people to whom economic growth still stands for breakdown of traditional social relationships. urban problems, pollution, destruction of the environment, foreign investment” ( Maxime Carlot Korman, speaking as Prime Minister of Vanuatu, 9 September. 1993).*

If the arguments of this paper are valid then there a number of policy implications which follow. Thus, for Polynesia if emigration is, indeed, a crucial safety valve, then maintaining access to Australia, New Zealand and the United States becomes a security issue. For Kiribati and Tuvalu maintaining access to work as international seamen for the men, plus possibly work as nurses aids for the women, is an equally important strategy to avoid the build up of economic stress and civil strife.

For Melanesia, a crucial question is what can be done for young people to provide discipline and income. One possibility, raised by the Australian Senate Inquiry into Relations with the Pacific is temporary work in Australia in seasonal unskilled occupations such as fruit picking. Two further areas are agriculture (largely defined to include seaweed and fish farming) and tourism. Small countries do not need vast flows of tourists in order to make a significant contribution to national wealth. The Maldives even manages to preserve its culture and profit from mass tourism by allocating specific islands to the tourists and denying them access to the remaining atolls. . Papua New Guinea faces a crucial sequencing issue of how to achieve law and order and economic progress when each is dependant on the other. `As has been pointed out above, clichés abound about the role of education in creating a skilled workforce. The reality is that where there is a strong demand for skilled labour, employers will provide the training. Employers may continue to bemoan a lack of skills, but what they are usually too polite and politic to say is that the attributes they are looking for are not formal educational qualifications but attitudes towards work: punctuality, hours put in and avoidance of special treatment for relatives and ethnic kinspersons. Many of these attributes can only be acquired at the cost of substantial changes to existing values and social systems which many Pacific Islanders do not wish to pay, and this is their considered choice.

This paper began with a reference to Neo-Malthusianism and it ends on the same note. The addition of more citizens will not of itself benefit any Pacific Island country (unless they are significant investors). On the other hand, greater open publicity for and access to birth control could improve women and children's health and lives, help combat the spread of HIV/AIDS and reduce pressures on education systems and national economies – all at a minimal cost.

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Table 1

COUNTRY/ TERRITORY	POPULATION	BIRTH RATE	GROWTH RATE*	MIGRATION ESTIMATE+	URBANIZATION #	DENSITY Circa 2000
<b>MELANESIA</b>	<b>6,475,900</b>	<b>33.3</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>- 0.4</b>	<b>21 3.6</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>FIJI 1996</b>	775,077	25.4	1.6	- 3.7	46 2.6	45
<b>NEW CALEDONIA 1996</b>	196,836	21.2	1.8	2.4	71 2.1	11
PAPUA NEW GUINEA 2000	5,190,786	34.4	2.3	0.0	15 4.1	10
<b>SOLOMON ISLANDS 1999</b>	409,042	40.0	3.4	0.0	13 ...6.2	16
<b>VANUATU 1999</b>	186,678	36.0	3.0	0.0	21 4.3	16
<b>MICRONESIA</b>	<b>516,100</b>	<b>29.6</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>- 1.2</b>	<b>48 2.8</b>	<b>161</b>
<b>FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA 2000</b>	107,008	31.1	1.9	- 5.9	27 0.4	168
<b>GUAM 2000</b>	154,805	25.8	1.0	- 10.8	38 1.9	274
<b>KIRIBATI 200</b>	84,494	33.1	2.5	0.0	37 2,2	112
<b>MARSHALL ISLANDS 1999</b>	50,840	41.8	2.0	-20.0	65 1.8	286
<b>NAURU 1992</b>	9,919	22.9	1.8	- 0.2	100 1.8	545
<b>NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS 2000</b>	69,221	25.2	5.5	33.5	90 5.6	163
<b>PALAU 2000</b>	19,129	21.1	2.2	8.1	71 2.9	39
<b>POLYNESIA</b>	<b>613,100</b>	<b>25.9</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>- 8.4</b>	<b>39 1.7</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>AMERICAN SAMOA 2000</b>	57,291	30.0	2.9	2.7	48 4.6	321
<b>COOK ISLANDS 1996</b>	19,103	23.1	- 0.5	- 21.7	59 0.5	79
<b>FRENCH POLYNESIA 2000</b>	245,405	21.2	1.6	0.0	53 1.4	66
<b>NIUE 2001</b>	1,788	18.3	- 3.1	- 43.2	35 1,2	7
<b>PITCAIRN ISLANDS 1999</b>	47	-	0	-	none	1
<b>SAMOA 2000</b>	176,848	30.3	0.6	- 17.6	21 1.2	58
<b>TOKELAU 2001</b>	1,537	33.1	0	- 24.9	none	125
<b>TONGA 1996</b>	97,748	27.2	0.6	- 15.1	32 0.8	154
<b>TUVALU 2002</b>	9,561	21.4	0.9	- 5.2	42 4.8	381
<b>WALLIS &amp; FUTUNA 1996</b>	14,166	21.7	0.7	- 8.7	none	57

SOURCE SPC DEMOGRAPHIC DATA BASE (Because of varying dates totals for regions are not totals for figures given for individual states)

NOTES \* This is the estimate used in SPC projections

+ Crude net migration rate (per 000)

# In the urbanization column the first figure is the percentage urban using the local definition and the second figure is the annual intercensal urban growth rate (%).



TABLE 2 POLITICAL AND MIGRATION STATUS SPC STATES AND TERRITORIES

COUNTRY/ TERRITORY	INDEPEN DANCE	STATUS	MIGRATION FREEDOM	GNI 2001* CURRENCY
<b>POLYNESIA</b>				
American Samoa	NONE	Unincorp & unorg territory of US	Full access mainland USA	N/A US \$
Cook Islands	NONE	Self-governing in free association with NZ	Full access to NZ	\$3,020 NZ \$
French Polynesia	NONE	Overseas territory of France	Full access to France	N/A Pacific franc
Niue	NONE	Self-governing in free association with NZ	Full access to NZ	\$,2220 NZ \$
Pitcairn Islands	NONE	Overseas territory of UK	Full access to NZ	N/A NZ \$
Samoa	1962 UN	Constitutional monarchy ;chief -	1,100 annual quota to NZ	\$1,490 Tala
Tokelau	NONE	Self-administering territory of NZ	Full access to NZ	\$980 NZ \$
Tonga	1970 UN	Constitutional Monarchy: King		\$1,530 Pa'anga
Tuvalu	1978 UN	Q	Special deal German merchant marine	\$1,140 Aus \$
Wallis & Fortuna	NONE	Overseas Territory of France	Full access to France	N/A Pacific franc
<b>MICRONESIA</b>				
Federated States of Micronesia	1986 UN	Constitutional govt. in free association with the USA	Full access to USA	\$2,150 US \$
Guam	NONE	Organized, unincorp territory of USA	Full access to US mainland	N/A US \$
Kiribati	1979 UN	Republic	Special deal Japanese merchant marine	\$960 Aus \$

Marshall Islands	1986 UN	Republic in free association with USA	Full access to US mainland	\$2,330 US \$
Nauru	1968 UN	Republic		\$2,860 Aus \$
Northern Marianna Islands	NONE	Self-governing commonwealth in political union with USA	Full access to US	N/A US \$
Palau	1978 UN	Republic in free association with USA		N/A US \$
<b>MELANESIA</b>				
Fiji	1970 UN	Republic		\$2,130 Fiji \$
New Caledonia	NONE	French territory in transition vote due 2014-18	Full access to France	N/A Pacific franc/Euro
Papua New Guinea	1975 UN	Q		\$580 Kina
Solomon Islands	1978 UN	Q		\$590 SI \$
Vanuatu	1980 UN	Republic		\$1,050Vatu

Source: SPC Data GNI =World Bank data

Notes: Q Status is officially constitutional monarchy with Governor-General appointed on advice of Prime Minister by Queen Elizabeth,

*UN Voting Member of United Nations*

- GNI data for small states varies from year to year and is
- exceptionally unreliable.

**Table 3** PACIFIC ISLANDERS ACROSS THE REGION

COUNTRY	AT HOME	2001 IN AUSTRALIA	2001 IN AUSTRALIA	2001 IN NEW ZEALAND	2001 IN NEW ZEALAND	2000 IN USA
		BIRTHPLACE	ANCESTRY	BIRTHPLACE	ETHNICITY	RACE
POLYNESIA						TOTAL 583,889 (incl Hawaiians 401,162) All Samoans 133,281
American Samoa	51,000 (2000)	152		399		
Samoa	170,900 (2001)	13,254	28,090	47,118	115,017	
Cook Islands	17,500 (2001)	4,742	8,154	15,222	52,569	
New Zealand Maori	526,281 (2001)		72,956	513,128 language 494,679	526,281	
Nauru	9,919 (1992)	465		222		
Niue	1,600 (2001)	491	1,301	5,328	19,776	
Tokelau	1,500 (2001)	262		1,662	6,204	
Tonga	97,400 (1996)	7,692	14,889	18,054	40,716	36,840
Tuvalu	9,300 2002	97		1,017	1,935	

MELANESIA						
Fiji	Total:775,077 (1996)	44,261		25,722		13,581
Fijians	395,000	E15,000	16,620	7,197	6.978	
Fijian Indians	336,597	27,048		12,108		
Solomon Islands	380,000 (1999)	1,326	769	507		575 (all other Melanesians)
Papua New Guinea	5,180,000 (2000)	E15,773 (23,616)	9,441	1,149		
Vanuatu	182,900 (1999)	898	311	276		
MICRONESIA			282 + 358	588		115,247 All Micronesians
Kiribati	83,000 (2000)	407	358	504		

Source: 2001 Census Australia, 2001 Census New Zealand; 2000 Census of USA, PIC national censuses

Notes: E denotes an estimate