also reflected a desire "to find new strength in the reassertion of what is unique in Tokelauan values and culture."

When the UN Committee of Twenty-Four next gives consideration to "the question of Tokelau" in July 1996, it will be doing so in a new context: Tokelau will be considered by the full committee (rather than by its subcommittee) separately from other remaining non-self-governing territories, and the committee will receive a submission in person from a faipule for the first time since 1987. Further constitutional progress is expected in July, when the Special Constitution Committee reports to the Fono (following reports submitted to it from three subcommittees).

Against this background of constitutional progress and institutional development, strides toward greater economic self-reliance are likely to be less impressive. The administrator’s Annual Report (for the year ended 30 June 1995) noted the parameters and constraints: a “small population (1600) divided among three widely dispersed atolls, a heritage of subsistence living based on coconuts and fish, paucity of land (tiny islets rarely more than 200 meters wide and not more than five meters above sea level), absence of soil, reliance on rainfall for water, high cost of providing modern services.” The 1991 census described a country with 253 family groups. “Nearly 200 people receive income directly from government, including village officials. In addition 210 people earn much smaller incomes as members of the aumaga or village work force. The total earning capacity is estimated at $2 million. Yet it costs some $6 million to run Tokelau.”

The “big gap to fill” is largely met from New Zealand resources. Direct budget support is NZ$4.3 million, with special project assistance for 1995–96 running at $1.4 million. Tokelau’s contribution has risen in recent years from around 17 percent to about 25 percent of its budgetary requirements, through taxes on local income and charges on local services. Significant funding from overseas sources will be required for the foreseeable future. Projects underway involve electricity generation, telephone and telecommunications services, and other activities associated with the costs of government. Economic realities as well as shared values are among the factors encouraging Tokelau to look toward a future act of national self-determination likely to affirm the virtues of both self-government and a continued national partnership with New Zealand.

STEPHEN LEVINE

Reference

The Kingdom of Tonga
On 25 January 1996 Tongans went to the polls to select their representatives for the 1996–98 parliamentary term. Over 49,000 voters, about half the total population, registered, but only 27,935 people voted, 808 fewer than in 1993. Nevertheless, the small turnout led to some surprises. The only
doubt about the 1993 election was the magnitude of the landslide win for the prodemocracy team. In the 1996 election, confusion within prodemocracy ranks and the conflict that dogged its candidates’ campaign trail made voter behavior more complex. Seven reformers out of the nine People’s Representatives were returned, but they are by no means united as a concerted prodemocracy front. If anything, they are more divided than before the elections, and have been forced to admit that they are unable to work together.

The Tongan Legislative Assembly consists of eleven cabinet ministers, who are personally appointed for life by the monarch; nine Noble’s Representatives elected by the twenty or so of their peers who have been installed in their noble title by the monarch; and nine People’s Representatives, who are elected by the remainder of the population, approximately one hundred thousand commoners. The selection of a small number of well-educated commoners as cabinet ministers is a relatively recent phenomenon. When they are appointed, they become also honorary nobles (‘eiki minisita). As a result, the Tongan parliament usually sees twenty nobles arrayed against nine People’s Representatives. The way the pack is stacked caused many people in Tonga to take up the catch-cry of “more democracy” and give a greater or lesser degree of support to the prodemocracy movement. After six or seven years, however, the cry has lost its novelty and much of its appeal. The prodemocracy movement and its parliamentary representatives have shown no program of action, no clear-cut achievable goals, and no agenda; or, rather, they have many different agendas that are seriously at odds with one another. In 1993, a promising group of reformers was elected to parliament to promote the prodemocracy cause. ‘Akilisi Pohiva, ‘Uhila Liava’a, and Uiliami Fukofuka were returned as People’s Representatives in Tongatapu, ‘Ulii Uata and Teisina Fuko in Ha’apai, and Samiu Vaipulu and Masao Paasi in Vava’u. Tui’pulotu Lauaki became the member for ‘Eua, and ‘Ofa Fusitu’a, the only woman among the members, was returned for the Niuas, the group of small outlying islands in the northernmost part of the Tongan archipelago.

The 1993–96 parliamentary term was marked by vigorous and often stormy debate. Fist fights broke out in the House, a People’s Representative was suspended for fourteen days for throwing a law book at the Speaker, and successive motions were tabled by the People’s Representatives in an unsuccessful attempt to dismiss the repressively anti-prodemocratic minister of police. Outside the House, one of the representatives was no less aggressive, confrontational, and adversarial, and incurred fines, which amounted to many thousands of pa’anga, for his libellous attacks on several men of note in the realm.

One significant step forward emerged from the tumult: the right for the Noble’s and People’s Representatives to present private and public bills in the House. Until 1994, only cabinet ministers could present bills for consideration by the Tongan Parliament. Moves to allow the representatives to do so had been under way for years,
and Paasi, a Tongan lawyer, finally pushed it through. The sheer weight of numbers ranged against the People’s Representatives, however, makes it unlikely that any of their more “radical” bills will be approved. Instead, the right to present bills has provided the more moderate representatives with the rationale to withdraw even further from what they see as their parliamentary colleagues’ excesses.

Paasi distanced himself from a radical prodemocracy position straight after his election in 1993, and recently restated his position. “I believe in working through the House, amending laws and the Constitution. . . . we do not have to rally people and to create a situation where we have to confront government, and demand change or else—the outcome of such an approach would be bloodshed, and I don’t want that to happen” (MT, Oct–Nov 1995, 15).

‘Uhila Liava’a, a former accountant general, also feels that political change demands more intelligent, concerted action in the House by the People’s Representatives. In 1993, his first year of office, his own technical expertise was displayed during the presentation of the country’s annual financial report, when his acute critique led to the minister’s withdrawal and redrafting of the report. He found, however, that he could not work with a number of his colleagues and, like Paasi, clashed repeatedly with Pohiva. In August 1994, the five Tongatapu and Ha’apai representatives formed the People’s Party, Tonga’s first political party, to enable them to present a more united front in the pursuit of prodemocracy issues. The differences between them soon became so great, however, that major divisions appeared within their ranks. These led not only to the collapse of the party but also to any hope that the five might stand together on a single ticket for the elections. The chairman of the People’s Party was ‘Ulii Uata, the president was Uiliami Fuko-Fuko, the vice-president was ‘Akilisi Pohiva, the secretary was ‘Uhila Liava’a, and the treasurer was Teisina Futo. In the first quarter of 1995, Liava’a left the party because of its failure to censure Pohiva’s actions and over their personal and political differences. “We have to cultivate a spirit of co-operation in the House . . . and demonstrate what we can do,” he said. “It is difficult talking to them [the People’s Party] because they do not have anything else to offer, beside talking about taking power off the King” (MT, Oct–Nov 1995, 16).

Uata, Fuko, and Pohiva have spoken of the possibility of the violent wresting of power from the king and his government, although Fuko-Fuko has always remained moderate. His sweet reasonableness earned his disfavor with Pohiva, however, and also with Futa Helu, a leading Tongan scholar and advocate of democracy, who provides much of the intellectual force behind the prodemocracy movement.

The campaigning for the 1996 elections was subdued compared with the run-up to the 1993 elections. Fuko-Fuko withdrew from the prodemocracy movement’s decision to mount nominations for candidates and, finally, stood as an independent. He has always opposed the prodemocracy
movement’s involvement in elections. He believes that the movement should confine its activities to the political education of the electorate. He said, “The public have grasped the fundamentals of democracy, which is majority rule, but they have no concept of how it can be applied to the formation of a government, and that there is, for instance, Liberal Democracy and Christian Democracy” (MT, Jan–Mar 1996, 26). The last distinction masks the deep divide between atheist intellectuals in the movement, who think democracy is an end that will justify radical means, including, if necessary, the sacrifice of family life, and civil disobedience or violence; and others, who revere the more traditional Tongan values respecting the family and the church, even as they continue to strive for lawful political reforms.

Among the former is Professor Futa Helu, director of the ‘Atenisi Institute. Given the intransigence of the Pro-democracy Movement Committee, which decided not to mount a team of pro-democracy candidates after Fukofuka’s withdrawal, Helu proceeded to announce his own. His political campaign was the most active and best organized of all. He used the ‘Atenisi Ex-Students Association to hold kava parties in the villages and also used to good effect radio and Taimi ‘o Tonga newspaper publicity. He was not as successful as he had been in former elections because, he claimed, “too many candidates went on the Pro-Democracy Movement tickets. They just labelled themselves as Pro-Democracy, but they are not active in the Pro-Democracy Movement” (MT, Jan–Mar 1996, 26). Only three of his nominees were elected: Pohiva in Tongatapu, and Fuko and Uata in Ha’apai. Pohiva later commented, “Because there was a split among us, we could not unite in this election, we all went in as individuals and that’s terrible. . . . we can’t afford to let the people see us as individuals who are trying to work together and fail to unite” (MT, Jan–Mar 1996, 26).

In Tongatapu, Fukofuka succeeded on his own, but Liava’a lost his seat to a surprise candidate, a former minister of finance and a longtime resident of Auckland, Mahe‘Uli‘Uli Tupouniuia. The only woman member, ‘Ofa Fusitu’a, failed to gain reelection for the Niuas and was replaced by ‘Aisea Ta‘ofi. Local issues, particularly rivalry between Nuiafou and Niuatoputapu, rather than wider political considerations, were probably the decisive factors in her defeat. The strongest feature of the election was the overwhelming support shown for ‘Akilisi Pohiva who again gained over 64 percent of the votes in his electorate, this time polling a massive 9145 votes. In its March issue, a local newspaper, Ko ‘Ofa ki Tonga, published by the Tokaikolo Church Fellowship, presented the results of a small survey it had conducted after the elections. It showed that personal knowledge of the candidates still plays an important role in their political support: “relatives and friends/acquaintances” accounted for almost 60 percent of the vote for Fuko and over 30 percent for Vaipulu. In ‘Aisa’s and Uata’s cases, the factor of personal relationships accounted for around 15 to 16 percent of their votes. It accounted for 12 percent of Fukofuka’s vote but only 6 per-
cent of Tupouniua’s, and a low 2.2 percent of Pohiva’s.

The old-style politics has not quite disappeared: over 71 percent of Uata’s supporters said they voted for him because they find his boats useful (he runs a small fleet of interisland cargo vessels). His work for democracy and his experience in parliament accounted for almost another 13 percent of his support. The last two factors together accounted for almost 38 percent, however, of his running mate, Fuko’s, vote. Paasi, who is Tonga’s most experienced parliamentarian, having first entered the House in 1966 at the age of 29, acquired over 70 percent of his votes because of his parliamentary experience. Vaipulu gained over 48 percent of his vote from a combination of his work for change and his experience in parliament, but gained almost another 15 percent of his support from the votes cast by the members of one church in which he and his family are active.

Fukofuka gained almost 50 percent of his vote because he is a Christian and supports Christian Democracy, a movement he began late in 1995. He gained a further 30 percent because of his good parliamentary record. Mahe Tupouniua gathered almost 50 percent of his support from the fact that he is already experienced in the ministerial role, although it is now so long ago that only middle-aged people would be likely to remember it or recall accurately the government circumstances in which it was carried out. He gained another 31 percent because he is a “sensible candidate,” a moderate man who conducts himself well. He gained 12 percent because he is believed to be working for gentle or gradual change. The man who ran away with the votes, however, with a margin of over 4500 votes from Tupouniua, his nearest rival, was ‘Akilisi Pohiva. Five percent of his supporters found him moving or inspirational, and to be at the heart of change. Over 83 percent declared, more enthusiastically, that they voted for him because he “talks straight and is honest” (‘Ofa ki Tonga 11 [March 1996]: 5,16).

Over 60 candidates, including five women, contested the nine people’s seats, showing the growth of interest in politics. Some, the people had never heard of; others had professional qualifications, were retired civil servants, prominent businessmen, or agricultural growers. None of them came near ‘Akilisi Pohiva. Vaipulu, who moved to the number one position from the number two position in Vava’u, summed up the general feeling, “I don’t think the Tongatapu people voted for ‘Akilisi Pohiva because he was labelled as a Pro-Democracy candidate, rather it was because ‘Akilisi captured their attention with the work he is doing” (MT, Jan–Mar 1996, 26). This view is shared by other keen observers of the election (compare Campbell 1996). People in villages dislike what they hear about corruption among officials and the unfair advantages granted to an already prosperous elite, but they are powerless to redress the issues and are reluctant to express their views for fear of the repercussions and retribution that can come swiftly and sharply from those in power. To them, Pohiva is a champion of the underdogs’ rights. They do not understand or, in most cases, care
about the strange exotic flower, democracy, but they understand that Pohiva will take on the most powerful men in the land on behalf of the common people.

The People’s Representatives for the current three-year term are Pohiva, Uata, and Fuko, who believe that the king should relinquish his power but remain as a figurehead. They want the people to elect all the members of parliament, including nobles, from whom the king could appoint his ministers. They believe that by mobilizing public support at the village level they can force the government to make major changes. Fukofuka might believe this too, but his approach is more moderate; so is Tupouniu’a’s, although he is as yet untried. Lauaki and Ta’oﬁ see themselves as independents who support change according to their own lights. Paasi and Vaipulu from Vava’u would wish to let the king’s appointment of his ministers stand; they emphasize that political changes can be negotiated in the House if the People’s Representatives are sufficiently capable and can convince the nobles and government that the laws and constitution should be amended in line with progressive social and economic trends (MT, Jan–Mar 1996, 24).

Apart from the three who believe that public pressure can force the government’s hand, the others all seem to accept that, given the structure of the House, no change can take place without the assent of the powerful majority. Also, there are certain face-saving exercises to be considered. Tonga has a powerful and paternalistic government and monarch who are very conscious of their dignity. In the greater interests of reform and of the nation at large, it would be unwise to make either of them look as if their hands were being forced into change. Indeed, as the king has his government in place with all the sanction of law, it is hard to see how their mighty hands could be forced. Widespread civil strife is a desperate option, and unlikely to occur.

One surprise during the election campaign was the sudden appointment as minister of police of one of the candidates, Clive Edwards, OBE, a lawyer who has lived for many years in Auckland. This followed immediately on the death of the previous minister, the Honourable ‘Akau’ola, after a long illness. Edwards, who spoke about reform in his election campaign, was not long in making his conservative presence felt. The police have been told to smarten up, people in possession of firearms have been brought in for questioning, and, more particularly, he has come down hard on illegal immigrants in what he maintains is the enforcement of the existing Immigration Act.

By May 1996, about fifty people had been ordered to leave the country. Most of them were Indians, with one or two Chinese, who were illegally running businesses in Tonga while on visitors’ permits. Edwards is also targeting people who have permits but whom he thinks should not be there. The future status of over 51 percent of the Tongatapu small business community is in question, and up to a thousand foreign residents may be told to leave. Much of his reasoning seems no more than schoolboy retaliation for the way New Zealand and other Pacific rim governments have cracked
down on Tongan “overstayers” and his recent decisions may be overturned in parliamentary debate in the new Legislative Assembly, which commenced on 28 May 1996. His actions have drawn attention, however, to anomalies in the Immigration Act and the need to establish clear policy guidelines and create new visa categories.

The decisions also have repercussions for the future of foreign investment in Tonga. The actions of the police minister, coupled with a curious statement from the Ministry of Labour, Commerce and Industries listing the ventures that foreigners may not invest in, has led to puzzlement, anger, and unease among the business community. The Tonga Chamber of Commerce has appealed to the government to consider carefully its position with regard to the foreign business people established in Tonga, many of whom have invested a great deal of effort and money in their ventures.

Edwards has also closely monitored the activities of the prodemocracy group and given suspended sentences to two prodemocracy supporters who wrote highly defamatory letters about him to the Taimi ‘o Tonga. In particular, he warned Pohiva and two others before they traveled to Vava’u to promote the movement that they were not to make criminal statements about the corruption of ministers or create anger and hatred against the government and the king as these were both expressly prohibited by section 48 of the Criminal Offences Act (MT, Apr–Jun 1996, 13). Pohiva claimed that Edwards was effectively muzzling the movement but the minister denied this, and added, “I believe there is a need for some changes in government, to improve the electoral right of the people and I still believe in that. But we should go through parliament and get the King to agree to changes” (MT, Apr–Jun 1996, 12).

According to its acting chairman, the Reverend Simote Vea, the prodemocracy committee is planning a march to the palace later in the year to present a petition requesting that the king make “major political changes” (MT, Apr–Jun 1996, 13). Vea denied allegations that the visits to Vava’u (and Ha’apai) were to encourage people to reject the present form of government and said they were part of a long-planned education program to explain the benefits of having the king appoint cabinet ministers from elected members of the House. The Awareness and Education Programme run by the prodemocracy committee is funded largely by overseas organizations, including Bread for the World, which collects money through Christian churches in Germany. Vea said the prodemocracy committee is trying to formalize its operation with guidelines and a constitution. Although its main function should be education and not political campaigns, he sees the eventual formation, in perhaps three to five years, of a political wing. It seems clear that some changes will take place in the Tongan system of government, beginning, perhaps, over the current parliamentary term.

It seems equally clear, however, from the numbers of moderate independents among the People’s Representatives and the statements of the new minister for police, who is rumored to be planning a committee to consider
reforms, that the changes are likely to be establishment-guided and will have to be establishment-approved.

Kerry James

References

‘Ofa ki Tonga. Tongan newspaper.


Western Samoa

Western Samoa experienced a tumultuous year that saw the birth of a new political party and the merger of two others, legal challenges by the government’s former controller and chief auditor and an anti-tax group, and an emergency hospital visit by the nation’s top politician. Dengue fever and destructive African snails put in sudden and unwelcome appearances. Women’s issues, particularly spousal abuse, were also debated, and the independent media took aim at the government for ignoring poverty and the explosion of child labor in Apia. The media also found themselves criticized by the government for being too critical of government activities. All of this was capped off by a highly contentious national election that saw the governing party returned for a further five years.

The Value Added Goods and Services Tax, which adds 10 percent to all purchases (inaugurated at the beginning of 1995), topped the list of controversial measures introduced by the government. Prime Minster Tofilau Eti Alesana and his party, the Human Rights Protection Party (HRPP), maintain that the public sector requires a source of revenue in order to provide services and undertake public projects. Opponents, including Opposition Leader Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese of the Samoa National Development Party (SNDP), and Matatumua Maimoaga, the founder of the newest political party, the Samoa All People’s Party (SAPP), angrily denounced the measure saying it imposes too onerous a burden on the poorest Samoans. While denying they are a political party, Tumua and Pule, an opposition group, took to the streets to demonstrate against the value-added tax in early 1994. They subsequently attempted to deliver a petition allegedly signed by 133,000 citizens to the head of state but were rebuffed by the government. A fourteen-member government-appointed commission of inquiry later dismissed the petition as a fabrication, because they could only verify eleven of the signatures. Two of Tumua and Pule’s leaders, Faamatuani Tala Mailei and Toleapaialii Toesulusulu, had sedition charges brought against them by the government, but these were dismissed in June 1995. They planned to counter-sue the government, claiming obstruction of their constitutional rights to free speech and freedom of assembly. Court action on their suit is still pending at the time of writing.

The Samoan business community, which pledged to support implementation of the value-added tax, has also