

FIJI

Fiji remained firmly under military control through 2010, though internal tensions were to become apparent among the senior command. This was a year of grudging acquiescence under the new order but also of shifts in the defining philosophy of the government of military commander Frank Bainimarama. The December 2006 military coup had initially been depicted as an anticorruption “clean-up” campaign, though the newly established Fiji Independent Commission against Corruption (FICAC) found little evidence of corruption. A year later, the focus had shifted to using electoral reform as a tool for combating communal divisions and to persuading usurped politicians of the necessity of those reforms so as to achieve them in a legal manner, but this faded in prominence after the April 2009 abrogation of the 1997 constitution. By 2010, both the cleansing of corruption and electoral reform were largely off the agenda, and the emphasis was firmly on economic development and the alleged inability of elected politicians to bring this about. All three perspectives had as their common denominator—tailor-made for their different epochs—a justification of military seizure and retention of power.

The year opened with a threat of stiff repression. Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) Land Force Commander Brigadier General Pita Driti warned regime opponents to keep a low profile; “otherwise they will be

in for something really hard in terms of how we will treat them this year” (FBC, 5 Jan 2010). That threat was never fully tested. The destruction of the old legal order—coupled with the quashing of defiance associated with plans to hold the Methodist annual conference in August 2009—had silenced most prominent regime opponents. The newspapers no longer carried articles by known critics, though most heavily used Internet blogs still escaped the Ministry of Information censors. Formerly dissident lawyers had signed up to the new legal arrangements or had left the country, or else they were lying low. The public-sector unions had been deeply divided and defeated during the mid-2007 strikes and were now unable to meet under repeatedly renewed emergency regulations. The Great Council of Chiefs had been disbanded, and the fourteen Fijian provincial councils were each either deeply split or overtly pro-Bainimarama. Deposed 2000–2006 Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase was periodically brought before the courts during the year on charges both of manipulating Fijian Holdings Ltd dividends to his family’s advantage while he was director of the Fiji Development Bank in the early 1990s, and of authorizing illegal use of Native Land Trust Board funds for corporate investment purposes in 2004 (RNZ, 19 Jan 2010; *Fiji Sun*, 25 Jan 2011). Other prominent critics of the regime were also harassed by the FICAC or, as in the case of Labour

leader Mahendra Chaudhry, charged with alleged breaches of the public emergency regulations.

Commodore Bainimarama cited the urgency of reform as justification for his clampdown. “We’ll need to shut people up,” he told ABC’s *Foreign Correspondent* program, explaining that “those reforms will never happen if we open everything out to every Tom, Dick and Harry to have their say” (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 Aug 2010). Yet the commodore evidently felt less need by 2010 to elaborate this, and there were no major policy statements throughout the year. Elections remained scheduled for September 2014, but few had much confidence in that commitment. In any case, Bainimarama insisted that none of the established major parties—including Qarase’s Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua (SDL), Chaudhry’s Fiji Labour Party (FLP), and the National Federation Party (NFP)—would be allowed to contest (RNZ, 2 March 2010). Token efforts to engage those political parties in dialogue had been halted in 2009 just prior to the abrogation of the 1997 constitution, and there were no signs of a reversal in that stance. A National Dialogue Forum—without political party involvement—was scheduled to get underway in February 2010 (*Fiji Times*, 27 Jan 2010), but this never eventuated. Dialogue had proved an irritant for Fiji’s new rulers: it had served to give a platform to their internal critics—those who opposed media censorship, wanted the public emergency regulations removed, and insisted that Bainimarama hold to his promise of eventual elections, but who had nevertheless signed up to

the military-led reform project hoping thereby to sway government policy one way or another.

Not only had the main parties been excluded from dialogue, but their organizational bases were also under attack. Dissolution of the municipal councils in early 2009 had demolished a residual presence of the SDL, FLP, and NFP in urban local-level government. The abolition of the Fiji Sugar Corporation’s automatic deduction of union dues in February 2010 was a further blow, both for the FLP’s National Farmers Union (NFU) and for remnants of the NFP’s Fiji Cane Growers Association. The formerly elected Sugar Cane Growers Council, which had been controlled by the NFU before it was disbanded in 2009, was reconstituted as a slimmed-down (eleven-member) government-nominated body (*Fiji Times*, 8 April 2010). NFU General Secretary Mahendra Chaudhry attacked the decision as “iniquitous and injudicious,” partly because the farmers were required to pay for this, and reminded the authorities that “one of the first acts of the military government when it took office in December 2006 was to dismiss the eight government nominees on the Sugar Cane Growers Council as an affront to the democratic process” (Chaudhry 2010). The SDL offices were raided in February after reports of a petition allegedly signed by 600,000 demanding a return to democracy—though this number turned out to be based on claimed party membership rather than actual signatures (RNZ, 23 Feb 2010). By midyear, the SDL had run out of money; its website, after only a brief appearance, had vanished; and former spokesman Peceli Kinivuwai was off

harvesting onions in Griffith, Australia. Qarase, by now seventy years old, spent much time over the year in his Mavana village on the remote island of Vanuabalavu, returning to Suva mainly for periodic court appearances. In vain, the FLP had appealed for “the Commodore not to paint all political parties with the same brush” (FLP, 2 March 2010). Yet by July, Chaudhry too was before the courts, facing money-laundering and tax-evasion charges, based on the exposés of 2008 (see Fraenkel 2009). In October, the Labour leader was again arrested, this time for allegedly holding an illegal National Farmers Union meeting in Rakiraki.

Attorney General Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum’s declared intention, in early 2010, was for a media decree to replace the public emergency regulations (FijiLive, 8 April 2010). Finalized on 28 June, the decree prohibited foreign ownership of more than 10 percent of media organizations. This threatened the closure of the foreign-owned *Fiji Times*, which would have put 180 employees out of work. Instead, two weeks ahead of the 28 September deadline, Rupert Murdoch’s News Ltd sold the paper to Mahendra Patel’s Motibhai Group, and long-serving editor and government critic Netani Rika soon departed. Some remaining appeal to the righteousness of the 2006 coup may have helped the FLP website to escape the grip of the Ministry of Information censors, but soon this site too was pulled into line after allegations of “posting media press releases on its website calculated either to undermine government generally or to bring disrepute to particular government

officials” (Smith-Johns 2010). Despite the new media decree, the public emergency regulations remained in place.

Control over the media did not exhaust efforts to extinguish the voices of coup opponents. “We will stop pension payments to all those who speak against the Government or all citizens seen to halt Government’s work on moving the country forward,” announced the permanent secretary for Information, Lieutenant-Colonel Neumi Leweni, in January (*Fiji Sun*, 13 Jan 2010). Sitiveni Rabuka, the 1987 coup leader and 1992–1999 prime minister, had his pension canceled, and his official car was seized while he was out collecting coconuts in Natewa Bay. Payments to other former prime ministers were also halted. In April, it was reported that the retirement benefits of thirty-five SDL leaders had been terminated, including those of former Finance Minister Jone Kubuabola, the brother of serving foreign minister, Ratu Inoke Kubuabola (RNZ, 20 April 2010). The destruction of the old political order evidently entailed little sympathy for kinship links with the new, though some speculated that a strategy of personal economic ruin might rather be calculated to entice siblings to assume positions in the new regime and thus boost government credibility. There had been few concrete steps in that direction: the one SDL minister who had joined Bainimarama’s cabinet, Jonetani Navakamocea, was sacked in January 2008.

Nevertheless, mid-2010 saw some signs of moderation in the core confrontation generated by the December 2006 takeover, pit-

ting the coup makers against Fijian paramount chiefs, Methodist leaders, and the deposed SDL. By May, the pensions decree had been revoked, and soon other signs emerged that the regime was easing off in response to growing ethnic Fijian acquiescence. Ro Teimumu Kepa, Rewa chief and deposed education minister in Qarase's government, had been arrested for her readiness to host the Methodist annual conference in August 2009, but proceedings against her were dropped in September 2010. In November, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) threw out charges against thirty-six Methodist ministers for conspiring in the planned insurrection. In theory, the DPP Office was independent. During 2007–2008, it had proved a constant irritant for the coup-spawned government. Yet Director Josaia Naigalevu had resigned after the April 2009 abrogation, and since then the office had been restructured as a tool of military retribution. Withdrawal of those charges was nevertheless sensible: to prosecute a traditional leader, or the churchmen, would only have served to inflame those “undercurrents or resentments” that Peceli Vocea, Fiji's representative at the United Nation's Human Rights Council, used to justify continuation of the public emergency regulations when these came under scrutiny in Geneva (ABC, 12 Feb 2010). Yet these were the actions of the victors in Fiji, aware that the security threat had abated, and they did not preclude the continuation of vendettas against arch-opponents: Qarase continued to be denied his pension.

The changed political climate opened scope for the military to

consolidate its influence. Behind the scenes, the Methodist church leadership was being steadily reconstructed, prompting 2010's most popular dissident website, Coup Four Point Five, to accuse the church of “bending over for Bainimarama” (29 March 2010). In January, Bainimarama had demanded the resignations of Methodist Church President Ame Tugaue and the general secretary, the Reverend Tuikilakila Waqairatu, on the grounds that both had been meddling in politics and were closely allied with the deposed Qarase government. A church leader more acceptable to the military, the Reverend Tevita Nawadra, insisted that “the Holy Spirit works in different ways” after he was appointed as “acting” general secretary. He pointed out that no decision could be made on substantive appointments unless, in accordance with church rules, this was done at an annual conference (Fiji TV News, 25 March 2010). The other option was for Tugaue and Waqairatu to stand down voluntarily (FBC, 19 April 2010), but this they refused to do. In December, Bainimarama offered Methodist leaders a truce, including freedom to hold an annual convention in 2011, though only for a day. This was a concession of sorts, but it also opened the path to the church legally removing those associated with ongoing defiance against the new order. Days later, Qarase and the Reverend Tomasi Kanailagi, former church general secretary and SDL senator, spoke from the pulpit at Sunday services at the Centenary Church in Suva, prompting Bainimarama to threaten to again cancel the annual conference. That he did not do so indicated a new preference for exert-

ing behind-the-scenes influence rather than seeking to force change via direct confrontation.

In early 2010, Bainimarama embarked on a public relations tour, visiting the islands of Kadavu and Koro, as well as historically dissident areas like Daku, in Tailevu Province. In Daku, local-level chiefs apologized for forbidding the commander to enter their village in 2007–2008 and embraced the government's People's Charter—conveying a symbolic message of acquiescence under the new order rather than any meaningful commitment to its little-known and confusing reform agenda. Bainimarama was by now often welcomed at *yaqona* ceremonies in Fijian villages as if he were a conquering warrior chief, to be granted ceremonial honors by the *iTaukei* (people of the land)—as the Fijian Affairs Amendment Decree insisted indigenous Fijians were henceforth to be officially called (Fiji Village, 7 July 2010). On the island of Kadavu, Tui Tavuki Ratu Joni Duikete was in defiance of his paramount chief, Rewa's Ro Teimumu Kepa, when he expressed support for the government and applauded its local road-building program. In the chiefly village of Ucuivanua in Verata (Tailevu Province), Bainimarama promised to help with the water supply, roads, and seawall protection in recognition of longstanding loyalty (*Fiji Sun*, 26 Jan 2010). On Koro, amid the Lomaiviti islands, the fourteen villages presented a *matanigasau* (traditional apology), together with a *tabua* (whale's tooth), in contrition for past insults. The Koro Methodist Church's Maika Ravoka compared Commodore Bainimarama to Moses leading

the Israelites to the Promised Land after forty years in the wilderness, while also graciously acknowledging the government's assistance in building a new copra mill in Nacamaki (Fiji Village, 10 March 2010). Those responses were choreographed for Fiji TV and the newspapers, and then echoed in official government statements back in Suva to indicate growing support for the regime.

Not all of rural indigenous Fiji was as fulsome in its support for the government. Paramount chiefs of Fiji's three confederacies—Burebasaga, Kubuna, and Tovata (the organizational divisions used in pre-coup Great Council of Chiefs deliberations)—had remained bitterly opposed through 2006–2009, but under their jurisdiction signs of accommodation emerged. Rewa's Ro Teimumu Kepa remained aloof, but her Burebasaga confederacy—which stretches across the south of Fiji's main island of Viti Levu and to the nearby southern islands of Beqa and Kadavu—was divided. Not only had chiefs on Kadavu joined the pro-Bainimarama celebrations, but Tui Namosi Ratu Suliano Matanitobua—another former minister in Qarase's cabinet—was also to ceremonially apologize to the commodore in December 2010. Even within Burebasaga's power center in the Rewa delta, Ro Teimumu's *vunivalu* (warrior chief), Ro Epeli Mataitini, was closely associated with Bainimarama, and other opponents of the Roko Tui Dreketi were not averse to using modern schisms to pursue ancient rivalries.

The Kubuna confederacy—which stretches around the northeastern side of Viti Levu and eastward to the Lomaiviti group of islands but

centers on tiny Bau Island (Tailevu Province)—has lacked an installed paramount chief (vunivalu) since the death of Ratu Sir George Cakobau in 1989. Among the claimants are Ratu George's children, Ratu Epenisa Cakobau and his half-sister Adi Samanunu Cakobau, but they were closely associated with the Speight coup and were bitter enemies of Commodore Bainimarama (see Fraenkel 2000). Ratu Epenisa had been arrested for punching Bainimarama's son in a Suva nightclub in 2007. Nevertheless, in May, Bau chiefs Ratu Epenisa and Adi Samanunu watched as their fourth cousin Ratu Tu'uakitau Cokanauto presented a *tabua* to Bainimarama and assured him that "all the chiefs" in the province had agreed to confirm "Tailevu's allegiance to the government that is leading us today" (Fiji TV, 11 Feb 2010; Fiji Village, 10 Feb 2010). The submission of the Cakobau siblings—and indeed many others—was obvious duplicity: behind the scenes, they still nurtured deep grievances, but this mattered little for the time being. Public displays of contrition from Bau reinforced a constant stream of pro-regime propaganda in the vernacular on the radio stations, and there were several eminent Tailevu citizens willing to take up positions in the new order, such as Provincial Council Chairman Josefa Serulagilagi who became chairman of both the Public Service Commission and the new Fiji Co-operative Dairy Limited. Tailevu's politics were complicated by the fact that Commodore Bainimarama is from the village of Kuiva, within the province, and because the new president, Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, was among the contenders for the Bau Vunivalu title, although

the earlier rejection of his nomination as vice president by the Great Council of Chiefs in April 2007 had tarnished his standing within the traditional order.

Fiji's third confederacy, Tovata, straddles the country's second largest island of Vanua Levu and, in theory, all the smaller southern islands of the Tongan-influenced Lau group. It centers on Taveuni Island's Somo-somo village, in Cakaudrove Province—the seat of power of Tui Cakau Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu, another former minister in Qarase's cabinet who remained antagonistic toward Bainimarama. Yet schisms were also apparent on Vanua Levu. The Tui Macuata, Ratu Aisea Katonivere, had been among the first of the provincial chiefs to back Bainimarama's administration, and provincial officials in income-poor Bua Province were soon also attracted by the promise of government development projects. In May, the Cakaudrove Provincial Council at Savusavu prevaricated as to whether or not to endorse the People's Charter, referring the matter back to the Bose Vanua (district chiefs council) (FBC, 31 May 2010). The Roko Tui Cakaudrove, Ro Aca Mataitini, told the media in October that the province, including its paramount chief, now supported the government (Fiji Village, 20 Oct 2010; *Fiji Sun*, 20 Oct 2010). On Ratu Naiqama's Cakaudrove Province website, the Vanua of Cakau contested this, insisting that the Roko Tui Cakaudrove had in fact been denied entry to the meeting (Cakaudrove Province 2010). "Allow the Chiefs of Fiji to come together and discuss the reconciliation plan for the people of Fiji,"

Ratu Naiqama had urged in a speech marking the launch of Crime Free Day at Somosomo in June, which was never reported in the national media (Lalabalavu 2010). The Tui Cakau met with Commodore Bainimarama on 20 December and conveyed to him concerns about the economic downturn in Fiji, the impact of cuts in civil service employment, and the rise in the value-added tax (VAT), and he renewed his earlier call for the chiefs to participate in official decision making; “the only way forward for Fiji is to reconvene the Great Council of Chiefs,” he urged, and “the Gone Turaga Bale Na Tui Cakau stands ready to assist in this process” (Lalabalavu 2011).

To the south of Ratu Naiqama’s Taveuni Island, many in the scattered Lau Group had seen in Bainimarama’s coup a chance to recapture a national status that had been lost following the death of former president, the Tui Lau, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, in 2004. Mara’s youngest son, Lieutenant Colonel Ratu Tevita Uluilakeba, the commander of the Third Infantry Regiment, had seized control of the Lau Provincial Council in a mini-coup in 2008. One of Mara’s daughters is married to Fiji’s President, Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, and another to Defence Minister Ratu Epeli Ganilau, the key rival to Ratu Naiqama’s installation as Tui Cakau in 2001. Bainimarama opened the Lau Provincial Council meeting at the Arts Village in Deuba in August, where Turaga Tui Ono Waisea Davuiqalita from Ono-i-Lau Island suggested, “Let’s forget about elections and let’s focus on more and more development” (FBC, 18 Aug 2010). Claims of popular pressure against elections were to become a

key plank of the government’s rejection of overseas pressure to bring forward the timing of elections. This was too convenient to be credible: there was something deeply contradictory about claiming popular support while simultaneously upholding as reasonable the government’s fear of elections. As Bainimarama responded under pressure on this point during his August ABC interview, “I don’t trust the people” (Bainimarama 2010a).

Some support for the regime’s initiatives in Cakaudrove, Rewa, Naitasiri, and Ba, as well as other parts of Fiji, was encouraged by consultations over proposals for conservative village bylaws aimed at reinforcing traditional disciplinary measures, but a sense of disorientation in the Fijian community had become palpable. Many found solace in religion or in the hope that ill health or supernatural forces would eventually sweep away Bainimarama and his fellow usurpers. In March, Pastor Laione Lutunacevamaca of the Kuriakos Christian Centre at Nadi Airport circulated a message titled “The Coming Disaster,” prophesying that on 23 June at 2 PM, “earthquakes and waves will hit the entire land from all directions,” generating a “catastrophe that Fiji has never experienced before.” Fiji Rugby Union Board chairman, Viliame Gavoka, a former chief executive officer of the Fiji Visitors Bureau, circulated the prophecy to tourism operators, warning of impending catastrophe. Bainimarama took this seriously enough to respond by accusing “high-profile figures from the SDL office” of trying to “create some instability in our tourism industry” (FBC, 18 June 2010). Overt expressions of rage against the regime were

by now mainly confined to clandestine gatherings or Internet blog sites such as Fiji Democracy Now, Coup Four Point Five, or Matavuvale—but even the web traffic had diminished by late 2010. Anger still flickered in Fijian overseas émigré communities. The Australian-based Fiji Democracy and Freedom Movement (FDFM) organized an almost exclusively ethnic Fijian-attended demonstration in Sydney timed to coincide with the fourth anniversary of the coup in December, but very few attended. A protesting Fijian asylum seeker, Jacob Rauluni, flung himself to his death from the roof of the Villawood Detention Centre in Sydney in September. Usaia Waqatairewa of the FDFM reported that Rauluni had phoned him earlier, saying, “I’d rather die than go back to Fiji” (ABC, 21 Sept 2010).

Economically, 2010 proved another bad year for Fiji, following the 2.5 percent decline in gross domestic product (GDP) in 2009. Initially, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Reserve Bank of Fiji shared an optimistic projection, with 2 percent GDP growth anticipated over the year, while the Asian Development Bank (ADB) expected a contraction of 0.5 percent and only modest growth at 0.5 percent in 2011 (ADB 2010a). The IMF thought that the tourism industry and reconstruction spending following Cyclone Mick in December 2009 and Cyclone Tomas in March 2010 were likely to spur recovery (IMF 2010a), but cyclone-induced spending has never been a strong driver of GDP growth in Fiji. Visitor arrivals reached 619,780 in 2010, a 14.3 percent increase over the 2009 level (FijiLive, 27 Jan 2011), but 2009 had

been a bad year globally, as well as across the Pacific Islands, and post-coup discounting of package holidays still subdued tourism earnings, despite the increase in raw numbers. Resort investment had slumped, part of a broader downturn in capital spending. In May, the Fiji National Provident Fund wrote off a staggering F\$327 million in bad debts associated with the Natadola and Momi Bay tourism developments (*Fiji Times*, 6 May 2010). (F\$1 was approximately US\$.50.) In other sectors, performance was mixed: Fiji’s fish-processing industry benefited from the closure of the Chicken of the Sea cannery in American Sāmoa; bottled mineral water exports recovered from the slump in the US market in 2009; gold production also improved after a poor year in 2009; but garments remained in the doldrums after shedding a fifth of the industry’s labor force in 2008–2009.

The big black spot was the sugar industry, the mainstay of Fiji’s economy over the previous century and still a large employer. Steep declines in sugar output dated back to the mid-1990s but accelerated sharply after the 2006 coup. Over 2007–2009, sugar exports had fallen by 55.2 percent, and 2010 witnessed another 20.6 percent fall (FBC, 1 Feb 2011). By midyear, the position of the Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC) was “dire to say the least,” according to Reserve Bank Governor Sada Reddy (FijiLive, 11 June 2010). In September, a loss of F\$175.1 million for the year ending 31 May 2010 was announced, well exceeding the F\$36.8 million lost in 2009 (*Fiji Times*, 18 Sept 2010). Difficulties were largely due to the Euro-

pean Union (EU) phasing out of price subsidies to conform with new World Trade Organization rules and to the suspension, in response to the coup, of substantial EU aid for industry restructuring, but these were compounded by a failed mill restructuring program. A F\$86 million line of credit from the EXIM Bank of India had been used to upgrade equipment at the four mills, but as Commissioner Western Commander Joeli Cawaki, another military officer, acknowledged, “the new machinery cannot work with the old machinery, resulting in milling problems” (*Fiji Sun*, 11 March 2010). From June 2009 to April 2010, the Fiji Sugar Corporation had to borrow an additional F\$86.9 million, including F\$44 million from the Fiji National Provident Fund and, worryingly, F\$22.5 million from the Reserve Bank (FBC, 3 May 2010). Both FSC Chief Executive Officer Deo Saran and FSC Board Chairman Gautam Ramswarup resigned in September. Saran’s replacement, John Prasad, declared an intention to shut down Ba’s Rarawai Mill and close uneconomic sections of the rail network that connects Fiji’s four mills to the cane fields. Such bitter medicine was not to the liking of all. In December, the permanent secretary for the sugar industry, Lieutenant Colonel Manasa Vaniqi, announced that Prasad’s contract would not be renewed. Fiji’s economy was, as the Asian Development Bank foresaw, “trapped on a low growth path” (ADB 2010b). Toward the year’s end, both Fiji’s Reserve Bank and the IMF revised downward their initial optimistic projections, and estimated GDP growth at only 0.1 percent for 2010 (RBF 2010; IMF 2010b).

Despite the severity of the 2007–2010 downturn, there were few obvious signs of dramatic collapse in government finances or any failure to meet the civil service wage bill. Revenues were boosted by stringent new measures imposed by the Fiji Islands Revenue and Customs Authority (FIRCA), including door-to-door searches for tax evaders and new tax identification numbers required for citizens opening bank accounts, registering vehicles, or securing a driver’s license (FijiLive 27 July 2010, 3 Sept 2010). Foreign-owned businesses protested arbitrary new taxes by decree, or punitive FIRCA interpretations of old rules, such as those that had sunk the Momi Bay development in 2007. The new budget, announced in November 2010, imposed a tax of 15 cents per liter on companies exporting more than 3.5 million liters of bottled water per month. The only company that produced bottled water on that scale was Fiji Water Ltd—a boutique exporter that had enjoyed spectacular growth after showcasing its wares on prime TV shows like *Ally McBeal*, *West Wing*, and *Friends*. Fiji Water responded by shutting down its operations at Yaqara, on northern Viti Levu. Company President John Cochran, speaking from his Los Angeles headquarters, explained that “the country is increasingly unstable, and is becoming a very risky place to invest” (*The Age*, 30 Nov 2010). Bainimarama was infuriated by these allegations. He accused the company of “transfer pricing” and threatened to put the Yaqara operation up for international tender. The next day, after a meeting with Bainimarama and Attorney General Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, Fiji Water

executives backed down, agreeing to resume operations and to pay the new tax.

This victory was music to the ears of Bainimarama's left-wing supporters, but other developments left them dismayed. Catholic priest Father Kevin Barr, who had become chair of the Wages Council in 2008, applauded in Bainimarama's coup a means of tackling poverty and resolving the pressing urban squatter settlement issue (Barr, cited in McGeough 2009). Yet concessions to the left were few and thin. For the second year in a row, new Wages Council orders to raise incomes across nine covered industries were suspended after pressure from employers. Although due to come into force on 1 July 2010, these were only gazetted in October, delayed a further month in response to further pressures, and then put off until at least May 2011 (Barr 2010a; Barr, pers comm, 9 Jan 2011). When the 2011 budget was handed down in November 2010, it contained an increase in VAT from 12.5 percent to 15 percent, prompting Father Barr to condemn this as a "regressive tax" and to blame the "influence of the IMF and the Asian Development Bank" (Barr 2010b). That same 20 percent VAT increase had been proposed in the November 2006 budget by the deposed Qarase government, and its rejection had been a key plank of Bainimarama's coup-legitimizing reformist claims. Figures derived from the 2008–2009 Household Income and Expenditure Survey suggested that poverty had increased to 45 percent, as compared to the 2007 figure of 32 percent (*Fiji Times*, 21 April 2010).

Bainimarama and Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum preferred the advice of

the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, not least because—unlike the messages from Canberra or Wellington—it focused on economic rather than political matters. The supranational lending agencies commended government commitment to civil service reform, to a shift toward a more flexible exchange rate, and to changes in the land-leasing system, although they indicated concern about high levels of government indebtedness and the financing of this by the Fiji National Provident Fund (IMF 2010a). Within Fiji, such statements were recycled as indicative of warm international support: "Officials from the World Bank who visited the country last November," Bainimarama reported to villagers on Kadavu in January, "supported government plans and told him it was best for Fiji" (FBC, 26 Jan 2010). An IMF team, including Managing Director Dominique Strauss-Khan and World Bank Vice President James Adams, visited Fiji in April to discuss a government proposal for a F\$500 million standby loan arrangement (*Fiji Sun*, 25 April 2010). In August, Bainimarama claimed to be close to signing a deal (Bainimarama 2010a). The reason for new borrowing was to refinance a F\$300 million loan due in September 2011. In June, Reserve Bank Governor Sada Reddy acknowledged that government was going to have difficulty repaying that bond (*FijiLive*, 11 June 2010). Nevertheless, talks with the IMF were abandoned in early November, reflecting growing optimism in some circles of government about economic recovery. The November budget set out plans to instead refinance that bond on the private money markets (Sayed-Khai-

yum 2010). In the new year, Standard & Poor's upgraded its Fiji rating from "stable" to "positive," based on an assessment of credit worthiness and prospects for the tourism industry, but also on the "assumption that the government will successfully refinance its 2011 external bond" (*Fiji Times*, 22 Feb 2011; annex to ADB 2010b). In the New Year, the ANZ Bank successfully floated a US\$250 million five-year Fiji government bond, although at a 9 percent interest rate. Standard & Poor's assigned that bond a B-rating in view of the "country's persistent fiscal and current account deficits, as well as deficiencies in available data" (Standard & Poor's 2011). The new borrowing added to government debt levels, which even beforehand, had reached 57.7 percent of gross domestic product in 2010, or, by ADB estimates, 91.2 percent including government guaranteed debt (2010b).

After the expulsion of Australian High Commissioner James Batley and acting New Zealand High Commissioner Todd Cleaver in November 2009, relations with Canberra and Wellington were at rock bottom. In January 2010, New Zealand Foreign Affairs Minister Murray McCully initiated an effort to mend ties with Fiji, albeit narrowly oriented toward rebuilding consular capacity. His Fiji counterpart, Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, agreed to the appointment of new staff members at each respective high commission. Fiji's interim government provocatively nominated military spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Neumi Leweni to fill the new Wellington post. Land Force Commander Brigadier-General Pita Driti explained, "We are just testing New Zealand to see how

far they can accommodate what we want" (*The Australian*, 3 Feb 2010). Wellington's refusal was inevitable, but this was tactfully done out of the media glare. The Fiji authorities sent instead Mere Tora to serve as first secretary in Wellington. Phillip Taula, a New Zealander of Samoan descent, arrived in Suva as New Zealand's first secretary and also, inevitably, acting head of mission.

The thaw was not to last long. In June, Kubuabola traveled to New Zealand to meet with the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) Ministerial Contact Group. In the press conference after the meeting, Australian Foreign Minister Stephen Smith said that "things have got worse in Fiji" (PIF 2010b). An enraged Bainimarama responded, "How can the situation in Fiji be worsening when the people in the rural areas actually want a delay in elections?" (*FijiLive*, 4 June 2010). Bainimarama accused Australia and New Zealand of seeking to "dominate the Pacific region" and said that "they only invited Ratu Inoke to condemn and belittle him as a way of persuading other Pacific island countries not to come to Fiji for the Melanesian Spearhead Group Plus meeting" (*Fiji Sun*, 3 June 2010). Kubuabola's invitation to the Ministerial Contact Group to visit Fiji was promptly canceled (*FijiLive*, 4 June 2010).

That Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) meeting was scheduled to be held 22–23 July 2010, when Fiji was to take over as MSG chair. Invitations for the meeting, designated as an MSG-plus event, were, in an unusual step, also sent out to non-Melanesian nations. This was diplomatic retaliation for Fiji's suspension from the

Pacific Island Forum (which, unlike the Melanesian Spearhead Group, includes Australia and New Zealand) and was aimed at undermining the Forum's claim to be the Pacific's premier regional organization. Ten days before the scheduled event, the outgoing MSG chair, Vanuatu Prime Minister Edward Natapei, canceled the meeting and refused to hand over the chairmanship to Fiji, citing the MSG's commitment to "basic fundamental principles and values of democracy and good governance" (ABC Pacific Beat, 13 July 2010). Bainimarama alleged behind-the-scenes Australian interference and, for this, expelled acting Australia High Commissioner Sarah Roberts. Australian Foreign Minister Stephen Smith acknowledged having "made representations" to Pacific leaders that the MSG-plus meeting was "inappropriate," but he did not retaliate (Smith 2010). The Fiji High Commission in Canberra was already bereft of its top diplomat; little at this stage was likely to be gained by upping the ante against Bainimarama's government.

Instead of the MSG summit, Fiji hosted a hastily assembled "Engaging Fiji" meeting (subsequently renamed "Engaging with the Pacific") at the new Intercontinental Hotel in Natadola, attended by PNG Prime Minister Sir Michael Somare, Kiribati President Anote Tong, and Solomon Islands Prime Minister Derek Sikua, among others (Fiji Government 2010). Bainimarama told the assembled Island leaders that it was time to "break the shackles of the past" and diminish reliance on "traditional spheres of influence," which were "dictated by our colonial past" and

"by certain metropolitan powers" (Bainimarama 2010b). The final communiqué "agreed that Fiji's Strategic Framework for Change is a credible home-grown process for positioning Fiji as a modern nation and to hold true democratic elections" (FijiLive, 24 June 2010). This was a reference to a July 2009 policy statement justifying putting off elections until 2014 (see Fraenkel 2009). As members of the Pacific Islands Forum, Somare, Sikua, and Tong had taken a very different position. Pacific leaders had "unanimously agreed" to the suspension of Fiji from the Forum in May 2009 because of failure to hold elections in an "acceptable time-frame" (PIF 2009). A double standard was obviously being employed as an attempt to reconcile irreconcilable pressures, but by now Fiji's schisms were being played out across the region: the Samoan prime minister, who was strongly opposed to Bainimarama, was at loggerheads with American Sāmoa's more supportive Congressman Eni Faleomavaega; in Vanuatu, Prime Minister Natapei's tough stance on Fiji was strongly contested by the opposition. In December, Natapei was ousted in a no-confidence vote. His successor, Sato Kilman, handed over the MSG chairmanship to Fiji in a ceremony held in the Solomon Islands capital, Honiara.

Two weeks after the "Engaging Fiji" summit, Pacific Island leaders gathered in Port Vila for the 41st annual summit of the Pacific Islands Forum, but without Sikua, Somare, or new Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard in attendance. (Australia and Solomon Islands were in the midst of general elections.) "Continuing deep

concern” was expressed about the situation in Fiji, but no change was made to the PIF suspension. The Forum Ministerial Contact Group was, however, asked “to consider possible modalities for engaging Fiji in PACER Plus negotiations” (PIF 2010a, 8), a reference to stalled trade talks on the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations, which had figured so centrally at the PIF summit a year earlier in Cairns. That concession aroused little interest in Fiji, where Bainimarama said he wanted to “forget about the Forum, forget about Australia and New Zealand,” and focus instead on links with China (ABC Pacific Beat, 18 Aug 2010).

The call to “look north,” also a feature of Rabuka’s post-1987 coup governments, was a useful drum to beat. Yet the scale of China’s post-coup investment was often exaggerated. Key schemes, such as the Navuso Bridge-building project and an ongoing e-government information technology scheme, had been initiated already in the 1990s (*Fiji Daily Post*, 20 May 2009; Fiji Government 2004). The post-2006 coup projects were sizable compared to those underway in neighboring Tonga, Sāmoa, or Vanuatu, but not massive. Smaller projects included a F\$9 million contract for the China Railway First Company to dredge the Rewa River (*Fiji Times*, 16 June 2010); F\$6.36 million Navua Hospital project co-funded by China and the Fiji government (*Fiji Times*, 5 Jan 2011); and the Chinese-built F\$3.8 million Naqali Bridge, which improved a key access road to highland Naitasiri. The larger projects were the Nadarivatu dam and peri-urban housing schemes.

Backed by a US\$70 million loan from the state-owned China Development Bank, the Sinohydro Corporation began building a hydroelectric dam at Nadarivatu after the 2006 coup, although it encountered protests from local landowners and trades unions (Dornan 2010). A Chinese EXIM Bank-funded F\$70 million soft loan was agreed to in mid-2010 for the construction of low- and medium-cost housing at Tacirua, Raiwaqa, and Raiwai on Suva’s outskirts by the China Railway First Company (*Fiji Times*, 19 June 2010, 14 Sept 2010). All these schemes were pump-primed by soft loans but entailed contracts exclusively for Chinese firms and heavy usage of Chinese labor and raw materials.

Trade with China grew slightly over 2007–2009, with imports inevitably driven upward by conditions attached to infrastructure projects, but it nevertheless accounted in 2009 for only 1.1 percent of Fiji’s exports and 5.5 percent of imports. By contrast, Australia and New Zealand, taken together, purchased 22.5 percent of Fiji’s exports and accounted for 37.9 percent of Fiji’s imports in that same year (Fiji Bureau of Statistics 2010). There was also much hype about potential Asian investment. Schemes involving Chinese engagement in mining manganese in Navosa and bauxite in Bua gained extensive local press coverage, and a huge F\$1 billion Malaysian-backed Waila City project was floated in early 2011 but without securing firm commitments. Earlier plans showcased by the Fiji ambassador to China, well-known Fiji businessman Jim Ah Koy, to gain Chinese support to convert Rewa Delta cassava into

ethanol came to nothing. Australians and New Zealanders continued to figure prominently among the locally resident expatriate business community and to dominate the Suva Chamber of Commerce. Organizations such as the Australia-Fiji Business Council pragmatically sought to remain onside with the regime by urging a relaxation of Canberra's travel bans. Prominent individuals from that organization assumed government appointments. Former council President Bob Lyon, for example, took up a post on the board of FINTEL in early 2010 (*Fiji Times*, 1 Jan 2010) and became chair of the Fiji Development Bank in October (*Indian Weekender*, 14 Oct 2010).

Bainimarama's professed indifference to Australia and New Zealand was feigned: the repeated expulsion of heads of mission from Canberra and Wellington was in fact symptomatic of an intense Fiji government focus on the links with those countries—one encouraged by the fact that many permanent secretaries, army officers, and government ministers (including Bainimarama) have families in Australia and New Zealand or have aspirations to get their children educated outside Fiji. Focusing on the perceived injustices of travel bans, particularly where imposed on the family members of soldiers, officers, or ministers, was also a useful way of rallying both supporters and critics of the government against overseas "bullying." Within the cabinet too, a steely response to foreign pressures served as a unifying tool. The 2006 coup itself was now being justified as a battle against foreign encroachment. Defence Minister Ratu Epeli Ganilau told a regional police commissioners'

conference in July that "a degree of external influence has infiltrated our systems, legal instruments and other aspects of governmental infrastructure, weakening our state orders. The rationale of the military takeover was to rectify these problems" (Pacnews, 20 July 2010). This was a strangely xenophobic reaction for a politician who had before the 2006 coup been strongly identified with Western values of "good governance." It also stretched credulity to believe that Fiji's new rulers were truly disavowing foreign influences. In November, President Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, Ganilau's brother-in-law, was photographed in a Suva betting shop taking a punt on Australia's Melbourne Cup (FijiLive, 2 Nov 2010).

Bainimarama's overseas sympathizers also preferred to emphasize the conflict between Fiji and Australia/New Zealand rather than comment on the severe political tensions within the country. In January, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute published a report by Professor Richard Herr of the University of Tasmania titled "Time for a Fresh Approach: Australia and Fiji Relations Post-abrogation" (Herr 2010). This purported to provide sensible strategic advice to Canberra and to warn of the dangers of marginalization as Fiji looked to new links with China and India (see also Herr and Bergin 2010). Its primary message was to urge an accommodation with Bainimarama's government. Herr's broad-ranging attack on the "critics" of Bainimarama neglected to acknowledge that many who were deeply dismayed by Fiji's new direction had nevertheless assumed positions in government, hoping for better

times ahead. Herr had served as a consultant on Fiji's National Council for Building a Better Fiji (NCBBF) in 2008, and was an enthusiast for the post-coup reform proposals. He blamed Australia and New Zealand for the collapse of the NCBBF's People's Charter for Change, Peace and Progress as well as for the abrogation of the 1997 constitution, and he chastised those "critics" who "continue to deny the need for the charter or that its reforms can justify the government's prolongation in office" (Herr 2010, 3-4). Those claims were hardly credible. At the start of the charter process in early 2008, most respected public figures within Fiji had rejected Bainimarama's right to initiate a thorough restructuring of Fiji's political order. Others—including media council chairman Daryl Tarte, former opposition leader Mick Beddoes, and civil society activist Suliana Siwatibau—initially joined the NCBBF in the hope that it could be encouraged to take a constructive path, involving inclusive consultation with stakeholders, but they soon resigned in protest against the regime's orchestration and manipulation of the process. It was a ruling by the Court of Appeal that Bainimarama's government was illegal that precipitated the April 2009 abrogation of the constitution—even if Fiji's new chief justice, Anthony Gates, had cautiously left it to those appointed from the New South Wales bench to deliver that verdict (see Fraenkel 2009). It was far-fetched to imagine that foreign interference had motivated those principled refusals or resignations from the NCBBF or had driven Bainimarama to destroy the old legal order.

Herr's fellow Tasmanian was

2007-2009 Australian Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs Duncan Kerr, who publicly adhered to the Rudd government line but privately expressed views that were close to those of Richard Herr. In December, as part of the global WikiLeaks rollout of confidential US embassy cables, Kerr was reported, in August 2009, as having said that he favored some accommodation with the Bainimarama government on the grounds that Australia was "close to exhausting its diplomatic options on Fiji to little apparent effect" (*The Sunday Age*, 19 Dec 2010). Shortly afterward, Duncan Kerr resigned his portfolio, but in November 2010, now no longer a member of Parliament and speaking in a private capacity at the Lowy Institute for International Policy in Sydney, he publicly urged "strategic re-engagement" with Bainimarama's government (Kerr 2010). What was "strategic" about this was not made explicit, but implicitly it was to counter growing Chinese influence in Fiji. What exactly was meant by "re-engagement" was also left vague, although Kerr mentioned assistance with land reform, renewed participation in the PACER-Plus trade talks, and even defense cooperation.

In fact, there had been no Australian disengagement through trade sanctions or the severing of aid (Australian aid continued after the 2006 coup, barring aid to the security forces). Nor had diplomatic links been completely severed, despite severe estrangement. Efforts to kick-start local talks or to secure a commitment to a roadmap toward democracy had been continuous since the coup, including attempts by the

PIF–Fiji government joint working group, Commonwealth Envoy Sir Paul Reeves, and the UN Department of Political Affairs. The abrogation of the 1997 constitution and the refusal to accept any meaningful local dialogue or to bring forward the election timetable had limited scope for Commonwealth, PIF, or Australian engagement. Removing or softening the postcoup travel bans might help diminish frictions, but Kerr’s proposal was for Australia to accept and work toward the September 2014 election date commitment and thus, implicitly, to accept as inevitable four more years of military rule in the hope of some reciprocal concession. The justification was a fear of the alternative: “the longer and more deeply military governance becomes entrenched, the harder it will be for a single person to be able to control the outcomes,” Kerr anticipated, “so there may be some merit in seeing Bainimarama not only as the key to the problems, but also at least in the short-term as one of the few people who can ask the military and demand the military return to barracks” (Kerr 2010). This was close to Richard Herr’s assessment that the promise of elections in 2014 was dependent “on the commitment and personality of the Prime Minister to stay the course” (Herr 2010, 12). Both adhered to the “Bainimarama or the abyss” school of thought, one also popular among those elites within Fiji who feared a Fijian ethno-nationalist backlash.

Was Bainimarama truly a solitary voice urging an eventual return to civilian rule amidst a military leadership committed to long-term dictatorship? Or was he, as Kerr’s fellow

Lowy panelist journalist Graham Dobell urged, a South Pacific equivalent of Indonesia’s Suharto, busily constructing a military-led New Order (Dobell 2010). Four years after the 2006 coup, it was still uncertain whether much authority was held by the cabinet or by Fiji’s Military Council. Bainimarama was clearly firmly in control of both, although Attorney General Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum—who was also minister for justice, anti-corruption, public enterprises, communications, civil aviation, tourism, industry and trade—was instrumental in every key cabinet policy decision. In media interviews, Bainimarama regularly downplayed his own personal role and played up that of the military. Instead of indicating a firm commitment to eventual civilian control, he stressed that “the military is the only entity that can bring about the reforms” (Bainimarama 2010a). He also anticipated some longer-term supervisory political role for the military and saw speedy restoration of civilian government after the 2000 coup as an error. By October 2010, three of the eleven ministers and four of the twenty-one permanent secretaries were army or naval men—though this understates the pervasive influence of military officers across government. All four of the divisional commissioners were military officers, and the district machinery had acquired an enhanced role. Parts of the state had been absorbed under direct military control, including the ports authority, the hydrographic survey unit, and Telecom’s 3DB radio wireless services, and the military was not averse to embarking on Indonesian “dual function”-style commercial ventures

(see Firth and Fraenkel 2009). Within the Republic of Fiji Military Forces, salaries had increased substantially, although the largest rises had been delivered by the Qarase government, and increases over 2007–2009 were driven by the provisions of a 2004 Job Evaluation Recommendation. Thus the main venue to reward loyalty was via accelerated promotions or plum jobs in the civil service.

Militarization of the state apparatus had not proved plain sailing. Many serving officers were removed from key positions over 2010, though others were added. In June, Chief Registrar Major Ana Rokomokoti was recalled to barracks. After a poor performance as permanent secretary in the Ministry of Information, loyal Bainimarama ally Lieutenant Colonel Neumi Leweni was moved to the Department of Lands, then sent off to serve as a consular official in China, after which he was briefly sent back to barracks before being appointed as Commissioner Eastern (FijiLive, 11 Nov 2010). After a troubled spell as police commissioner, former naval officer Esala Teleni was pressed to resign in August, but in November became Fiji's ambassador to China as a consolation prize. Difficulties were also apparent among those who remained back at barracks. In late October, the two most senior officers in the military, Land Force Commander Brigadier General Pita Driti and Lieutenant Colonel Roko Tevita Uluilakeba Mara, commander of the Third Infantry Regiment (3RFI), were sent on "extended leave" and then replaced in their substantive appointments by more junior officers. Feverish speculation broke out on weblogs

about an impending countercoup, but nothing happened, though Roko Ului's kinship links fueled speculation that his brother-in-law, President Nailatikau, might refuse to sign any discharge papers. Journalist Michael Field claimed that both had been sacked for extramarital affairs (Field 2010). Whatever the truth in these claims and counterclaims, there was little evidence to support Duncan Kerr's image of a cohesive hard-line officer corps being restrained by a pro-civilianization commander.

Nor was the Bainimarama-Suharto parallel convincing. Suharto's thirty-two years in office is unusual internationally for coup-generated governments, most of which last only a few years. That both men faced down schisms and then defeated rivals within the army could be said of most military coup makers. The Indonesian "dual function" of the army, as both a military and a socioeconomic force, is also a common ambition in the lexicon of coup makers, and anyway it preceded Suharto in Indonesia (Crouch 1978, 24–42). The intriguing aspect of Dobell's parallel was crystal-ball gazing: it was to imagine that Bainimarama would eventually, like Suharto, successfully entrench a military veto in some legal trapping, engineer a Golkar-style state-backed party and thus consolidate a reasonably stable basis for long-term military rule (Dobell 2010). (Golkar was the ruling party in Indonesia during Suharto's regime.) Yet this neglected the vast differences between the two settings. Suharto seized power at a time of severe economic and political dislocation—at the height of the Cold War—and used oil exports and

foreign investment to foster “regime-legitimizing economic growth” (Liddle 1999, 48; Crouch 1978, 349). Bainimarama’s coup generated an economic crisis, and he had neither oil nor sizable foreign investment to buy social peace.

By late 2010, four years after the coup, few would have ruled out the prospect of long-term military rule in Fiji, though impoverished Burma might offer a more plausible parallel than the oil-rich Indonesia of the 1970s. What conflicted with that prospect was the constantly shifting agenda, the ever-changing personnel, and the sense of drift and continuing disarray and crisis. In November, Defence Minister Ratu Epeli Ganilau—Bainimarama’s predecessor as RFMF commander—suddenly resigned while serving as acting prime minister. The catalyst, it was reported, was a refusal to sign a deportation order for Fiji Water executive David Roth, who Bainimarama said from China “had been acting in a manner prejudicial to good governance and public order by interfering in the domestic affairs and governance of Fiji” (*The Australian*, 22 Nov 2010). Apparently, Roth had been spotted lunching with ex-3RFI commander Roko Uluilakeba Mara, Ganilau’s brother-in-law, and military intelligence smelled in this a conspiracy. And why was Bainimarama in China? He had departed, at short notice, purportedly on a trade mission but without any official entourage. Photos of the commodore sent back from Beijing only reinforced the allegations, on the website Coup Four Point Five, that he was receiving medical treatment (Coup Four Point Five, 23

Nov 2010). Perhaps this was all just wishful website gossip, but there was potentially good reason for concealing ill health since so much now depended on the commodore himself. Perhaps the security threat was imagined, but Bainimarama had become adept at recognizing threats to his leadership and clearly perceived a plot to be nipped in the bud. Whatever the truth, it was obvious that long-term military rule—whether or not Suharto-style—was only one possible outcome. Another was that Bainimarama’s coup would, in the way of the vast majority of military coups, ultimately fail, though more likely as a result of internal schisms and loss of direction rather than popular uprising.

In Fiji, 2010 indeed proved a year of “deafening silence” (Fraenkel 2010), with many steps taken to thoroughly extinguish opposition voices, with no grandiose policy statements from the government, and with much self-silencing by regime opponents who understandably saw isolated resistance as futile. Bainimarama repeatedly urged reform in the abstract, but little was achieved. A few positive steps were made, such as a decree permitting dual nationality and the introduction of more equitable distribution of Native Land Trust Board rents, but the most urgently and zealously pursued reforms (like the media decree) had been all about the destruction of political opponents. Over the course of the year, resignations and sackings flowed thick and fast, involving an acting prime minister, the police commissioner, the 3RFI commander, the RFMF Land Force commander, and key directors on the boards of Fijian Holdings Ltd and

the Fiji Sugar Corporation. Then, in December, Reserve Bank Governor Sada Reddy resigned and migrated after allegations that he had switched private funds to New Zealand ahead of the 2009 devaluation. There were many retreats from the heady ideals of December 2006: the restoration of an unelected sugar council, the delaying of minimum wage increases, and the revival of the deposed government's VAT increase. Oddly, given the initial multiethnic goals of the coup, the voices of Fiji Indian leaders had been particularly silenced. The coup had become more obviously an ethnic Fijian affair. Young, skilled Fiji Indians continued to migrate, leaving an aging and dispirited Indian community behind. Many highly qualified Fijian professionals also left, but the overall demographic balance was changing—with Fijians reaching 58 percent by 2010 and Fiji Indians down to 36 percent. Efforts to engineer a military-controlled election at some point in the future thus look likely to rely on a primarily indigenous appeal. But elections seemed far away by the year's end. Fiji's elections office had been mothballed, and few in authority talked much anymore about voting-system reform.

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NEW CALEDONIA

This year will be remembered for what happened in Noumea and nearby towns in the populous, multiethnic Southern Province soon after Bastille Day (14 July), the French national holiday. First, next to the Mwâ Kâ statue on the Baie de la Moselle (which has become a site for annual celebrations of the “common destiny” of the country’s diverse cultural com-