

The General Delegation of  
Palestine to Australia,  
New Zealand and the  
Pacific



Intern Policy Research  
Report

**The Pacific Islands and the Arab World:  
Exploring Diplomatic Relations between Island  
States and Arab States**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report analyses the potential for Palestine to establish diplomatic and trade relationships with 5 Pacific island states: Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Samoa and Solomon Islands.

Chapter 1 presents background information, historical events and important data that are relevant to the five Pacific island states studied in this report. This chapter serves two roles. The first is to provide the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific with the basic information to help facilitate engagement with these countries and to establish diplomatic relationships. Secondly, it provides the data and information and lays foundations that form the core of the analysis of later chapters of this report.

Chapter 1 highlights several important consistencies across the five Pacific island nations that relate to Palestine's goal to build effective relationships with them. Specifically, the reliance on agriculture and foreign aid, the weak healthcare systems and the relatively high levels of education and literacy, offer potential to Palestine. These consistencies, along with the importance of regional multilateral institutions and key regional stakeholders that are identified in Chapter 1, form the central pillars of the analysis and eventual recommendations of this report.

Chapter 2 examines the marked increase in Arab involvement in the Pacific region, particularly following the 2010 Arab-Pacific Summit. It discusses the significant

movement by the Arab League, led by the UAE, to develop relations with the Pacific islands. Chapter 2 concludes that this is an important signal for Palestine. The behaviour of the Arab League indicates the immense potential available to Arab states amongst the Pacific islands. Palestine should aim to follow the UAE and Arab League into the Pacific to capitalise on the benefits available, especially in a time of growing Arab involvement and the corresponding blossoming of reputation of Arab states. Palestine has the opportunity now to ride the wave of increased Arab involvement to a welcoming Pacific region to reap the many benefits that await there.

Chapter 3 analyses US and Israeli influence in the Pacific region. It looks at UN voting patterns, 'free association' states, and geographical spheres of influence to demonstrate the immense influence of the US and Israel in the Pacific. Chapter 3 posits that the Pacific island states studied in this report represent the ideal countries for Palestine to engage with, as they are not yet heavily influenced by Israel or the US. However, this chapter also makes the point that US and Israeli presence in the region is growing, and that, along with the increasing Arab involvement in the region, now is the opportune moment for Palestine to act and establish itself among these Pacific nations.

Chapter 4 presents the areas of most potential for Palestinian engagement in the Pacific region. This report identifies immense opportunities for collaboration between Palestine and the Pacific islands in medical training and in-country medical care from Palestinian doctors in the Pacific islands and Palestine's agricultural expertise, particularly in preventing agricultural pests and enhancing local farming techniques.

These areas of engagement are particularly pertinent because, similar to the Pacific islands, Palestine relies, to an extent, on foreign aid and does not have a powerful economy to drive growth. This means that Palestine has important experience in developing these sectors from a context very similar to that faced by the Pacific islands, making Palestinian expertise very valuable. Finally, this study presents education exchange programs, increased mutual tourism, particularly given the vastly different landscapes of the Pacific to Palestine and the religious relics located in Palestine, and private sector investment as the key pillars to Palestinian-Pacific development and engagement in the near future.

Finally, Chapter 5 gives a summary of the report and provides policy recommendations to Palestine, based on the findings of this report, to maximise its relationships with the Pacific islands and to ensure that both Palestine and the Pacific islands get as much as possible from these relationships.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CROP	Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific
FFA	The Forum Fisheries Agency
FLNKS	Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
MSG	Melanesian Spearhead Group
PIDP	The Pacific Islands Development Program
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PNG LNG	Papua New Guinea Liquefied Natural Gas
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands
SPC	The Secretariat of the Pacific Community
SPREP	The South Pacific Regional Environment Program
SPTO	The South Pacific Travel Organisation
UAE	The United Arab Emirates
USP	The University of the South Pacific

## INTRODUCTION

The Arab world and the Pacific are the two most disparate regions in the world. The beaches, tropics and rainforests of the Pacific islands and the deserts, oil fields and megacities of the Arab world. While these are only stereotypes, they create images of vastly different economies, politics, demographics and cultures.

Despite a long period without close communication between these regions, there has recently been a significant growth in dialogue. Parties in both regions hope to see a growth in inter-regional cooperation and collaboration across many fields. Palestine also hopes to contribute and develop its own relationships in the Pacific. This report will focus on Palestine's potential partnerships with the Pacific island nations of Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga (hereafter referred to as the Pacific islands).

This report aims to provide a detailed analysis of the current international climate between the Arab world and the Pacific islands. It will present an in-depth interpretation of how Palestine can best navigate this context to establish long-lasting and fruitful relationships with the Pacific island states. This report is divided into 5 chapters. The first chapter provides the context for the report. It includes brief summaries of each of the five Pacific islands studied as well as information on major stakeholders and key regional multilateral institutions. The second chapter outlines the recent involvement and presence of Arab states in the Pacific region. The third chapter discusses US and Israeli presence in the Pacific. The fourth chapter provides

the pivotal analysis of this report. It synthesises the context of current Arab and US/Israeli involvement in the region and the information provided about each of the Pacific island states in Chapter 1 to establish in which arenas Palestine can best establish meaningful dialogues with the Pacific islands. Furthermore, it will posit potential programs that could become the pillars of lasting and profitable relationships in the Pacific. In the future, these relationships could help Palestine build a base of support in the Pacific for the Palestinian cause. This report is then distilled into its final chapter, 'Summary and Recommendations', where the key information and action points of this study are outlined.

## CHAPTER 1

### *Background information and context*

This chapter provides background information to each of the five Pacific island states that form the focus of this report. It presents the data, events and information that form the core of the analysis in later chapters of the report. It also aims to provide a useful and succinct summary of each of these countries for the use of the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific in establishing relationships with each of these Pacific islands.

#### The Republic of Fiji



Figure 1.1 Map of Fiji

<b>Fiji At A Glance</b>	
Capital	Suva
Political Leader	President: Epoli Nailatikau Prime Minister: Frank Bainimarama
Government	Parliamentary Republic
Population	903, 207
Demographic	iTaukei and Indian Fijian
GDP	US\$ 4.028 bn
Main industries	Agriculture, forestry and tourism
Healthcare	0.43 doctors/1000 citizens 2.1 beds/1000 citizens
Education	93.7% literacy 16 years average education

<sup>1</sup>S. Prasad, J. Dakuvula and D. Snell, *Economic Development, Democracy and Ethnic Conflict in the Fiji Islands*, (London: Minority Rights Group International, 2001), 2.

The Republic of Fiji (Fiji) is an archipelago of 332 islands located in the South Pacific Ocean, off the North East coast of Australia. Its estimated population of 903, 207 inhabits approximately 110 of its islands.<sup>2</sup> Fiji's two largest, most populous and developed islands are Viti Levu (where the capital, Suva, is located) and Vanva Levu.<sup>3</sup> The Fijian economy is one of the most developed of the Pacific islands owing largely to substantial forestry, agriculture and tourism sectors.<sup>4</sup> The GDP of Fiji in 2013 was US\$ 4.028 billion, ranking it 157 of 192 countries.<sup>5</sup> English and Fijian are both spoken as official languages and the majority of Fijians are Christians but a large minority are Hindus. Healthcare in Fiji is restricted with only 0.43 doctors per 1000 citizens and only 2.1 hospital beds per 1000 citizens, although this is the highest among the countries of this study. Education in Fiji is of a higher standard with literacy rates at 93.7% for the whole population (although males slightly outperform females) and an expected average education life of 16 years, is the highest for the nations of this study.<sup>6</sup>

Currently, Fiji is a parliamentary republic however, until very recently was a military regime. Fiji's political history is marred by ethnic divisions and the country is now seeking to forge a new political path based on power-sharing between the two major ethnic communities that predominately make up the Fijian population: the iTaukei's

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<sup>2</sup> CIA World Factbook, 'Fiji', (Accessed 29<sup>th</sup> July 2014).

<sup>3</sup> M. Howard, *Fiji: Race and Politics in an Island State*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1991), 3.

<sup>4</sup> CIA World Factbook, 'Fiji', (Accessed 29<sup>th</sup> July 2014).

<sup>5</sup> World Bank Data. 'GDP (US Dollars)'. (Accessed 15<sup>th</sup> August 2014).

<sup>6</sup> CIA World Factbook, 'Fiji', (Accessed 29<sup>th</sup> July 2014).

(previously known as Indigenous Fijian) and the Fijian Indians.<sup>7</sup> Collectively, these two groups make up 94.3% of the population, 56.8% iTaukei and 37.5% Indian Fijian.<sup>8</sup>

Fiji moved to a constitutional democratic system of government based on the Westminster model, similar to that of Australia, following their independence.<sup>9</sup> However, despite this outwardly democratic political system, Fiji has had only three governments successfully formed by democratic process since 1987 (in 1992, 1994 and 2001).<sup>10</sup> The fourth was established earlier this year has so far been successful, but it is still very early for this administration. On the three other occasions, elections have been swiftly followed by military coups that are indicative the underlying ethnic divisions between the iTaukei's and the Fijian Indians that have long plagued Fiji's turbulent political history.

For example, in 1987, the military did not accept the outcome of the election, and led an ethno-nationalist coup.<sup>11</sup> While there were many factors at play in these coups, such as the military protecting its institutional interests and the role of domestic and foreign parties, the role of ethnic divisions provides the foundation for each of them. This demonstrates the broader issue that fundamentally undermines the Fijian political

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<sup>7</sup>S. Sing and S. Prakash, 'Politics, Democracy and the Media: Case Studies in Fiji, Tonga and the Solomon Islands', *Pacific Journalism Review*, 12:2 (2006), 68.

<sup>8</sup> CIA World Factbook, 'Fiji', (Accessed 29<sup>th</sup> July 2014).

<sup>9</sup> Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 'Republic of Fiji Country Brief', < [https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/fiji/fiji\\_brief.html](https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/fiji/fiji_brief.html)>, (Accessed 29<sup>th</sup> July 2014).

<sup>10</sup> J. Fraenkel and S. Firth, 'Fiji's Perpetual Legitimacy Crisis', in J. Fraenkel and S. Firth (eds.), *From Election to Coup in Fiji: The 2006 Campaign and its Aftermath*, (Canberra: ANU E-Press, 2007), xx.

<sup>11</sup> J. Fraenkel and S. Frith, 'The Enigmas of Fiji's Good Governance Coups', in J. Fraenkel, S. Frith and B. Lal (eds.), *The 2006 Military Takeover in Fiji: A Coup to end all Coups?*, (Canberra: ANU E-Press, 2009), 3.

system.<sup>12</sup> The origins of this ethnic divide date from the colonial period (1874-1970). The British brought the Indians to Fiji to work as field hands on sugar cane plantations. Over 40,000 workers were brought over between 1879 and 1916 from all over colonial India, including modern Pakistan and Bangladesh.<sup>13</sup> However, the ethnic tensions have continued long after Fijian independence in 1970.

The political structure of Fiji is also unstable. Fiji has had four different constitutions since independence: 1970, 1990, 1997 and recently in September 2013.<sup>14</sup> However, the recent democratic elections will hopefully bring a period of political stability but for a country of Fiji's tormented past, it is not a certainty.

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<sup>12</sup> A. Scobell, 'Politics, Professionalism, and Peacekeeping: An Analysis of the 1987 Military Coup in Fiji', *Comparative Politics*, 26:2, (1994), 187.

<sup>13</sup> Prasad, Dakuvula and Snell, *Economic Development, Democracy and Ethnic Conflict in the Fiji Islands*, 3. and Scobell, 'Politics, Professionalism, and Peacekeeping', 187-188.

<sup>14</sup> S. Sherlock, 'Constitutional and Political Change in Fiji', *Australian Parliament Research Publications*, Research Paper 7 1997-1998, (1997). and The Government of the Republic of Fiji, *Constitution of the Republic of Fiji*, 6<sup>th</sup> September 2013.



## The Kingdom of Tonga



<sup>15</sup> Figure 1.2 Map of Tonga

Tonga At A Glance	
Capital	Nuku'alofa
Political Leader	King Tupou VI
Government	Constitutional Monarchy
Population	106, 400
Demographic	Tongan
GDP	US\$ 466.3 million
Main industries	Agriculture, tourism
Healthcare	0.56 doctors/1000 citizens 2.6 beds/1000 citizens
Education	99% literacy 14 years average education

The Kingdom of Tonga (Tonga) is the only monarchy in the Pacific region and one of the few to never completely lose its autonomy to colonial rule. Tonga is an archipelago of 169 islands, 36 of which are inhabited by its population of 106 440 people. Tonga is made up of an overwhelming majority of ethnic Tongans who speak mostly Tongan, the official language, and a small minority also speak English. Tonga is also a highly Christian country, with the various Christian denominations accounting for 97.3% of the population.<sup>16</sup> Tonga has a small economy based on a narrow range agricultural exports and tourism. Tonga is heavily reliant upon food imports predominately from

<sup>15</sup> Map of Tonga < <http://www.reisomdewereld.com/maps/tonga.gif> > (Accessed 29<sup>th</sup> July 2014).

<sup>16</sup> CIA World Factbook. 'Tonga'. (Accessed 15<sup>th</sup> August 2014).

New Zealand and foreign aid.<sup>17</sup> Tonga had a GDP of US\$ 466.3 million in 2013, ranking it 186 of 192 countries.<sup>18</sup> Tonga's healthcare system is, similar to the other countries of this report, of limited capabilities with only 0.56 doctors per 1000 citizens and 2.6 beds per 1000 citizens. Its education levels are more impressive, the highest of the countries in this study, with literacy levels at 99% and an average school life of 14 years, with females generally studying for longer than males.<sup>19</sup>

The Tongan Islands were unified under King George Tupou I in 1845 and formed a constitutional monarchy in 1875.<sup>20</sup> Tonga has a long history of interaction with the colonial powers of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries particularly through missionary contact and later, towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century through treaties with France, Germany and Britain that all acknowledged Tonga's independence and the King's sovereignty.<sup>21</sup> In 1900, Tonga became a protectorate of Great Britain under a Treaty of Friendship and remained under this treaty until the return to full independence in 1970. Despite this relationship with Britain and its contact with missionaries, Tonga has never lost its indigenous government.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> World Bank Data, 'GDP (US Dollars)', (Accessed 15<sup>th</sup> August 2014).

<sup>19</sup> CIA World Factbook. 'Tonga'. (Accessed 15<sup>th</sup> August 2014).

<sup>20</sup> I. Campbell, 'The Alleged Imperialism of George Tupou I', *The Journal of Pacific History*, 25:2, (1990), 159.

<sup>21</sup> H. Morton, 'Remembering Freedom and Freedom to Remember: Tongan Memories of Independence', in J. Mageo (ed.), *Cultural Memory: Reconfiguring History and Identity in the Post-Colonial Pacific*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 39.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 40. and I. Campbell, 'A Historical Perspective on Aid and Dependency: The Example of Tonga', *Pacific Studies*, 15:3, (1992), 62.

More recently, there have been more pro-democracy movements and rallies in Tonga as well as movements for increased freedom of press. Many of the Pacific island nations that went through processes of independence from colonial rule used this process to engrain democratic ideals into their modern constitutions. Tonga, having never had an overhaul of their constitution, still has many of the same principles from its initial constitution under King George Tupou I which enforces monarchy rather than democracy.<sup>23</sup> However, there has been growing support for democracy in Tonga recently. In the 2002 elections, the *Tonga Human Rights and Democracy Movement* won 7 out of 9 seats in the parliament allocated to commoner's People's Representatives.<sup>24</sup> The remainder of the legislative assembly is made up of nobles, cabinet ministers and governors all appointed by the King.

In 2006 there were large riots in the Tongan capital of Nuku'alofa where young Tongans opposed the slow political reform and lack on democratic process in Tonga.<sup>25</sup> In 2010, in response to these riots and other events in Tonga, reforms increased the number of seats in the Parliament to 17 elected commoners as people's representatives, elected by universal suffrage, and 9 appointed nobles. This greatly increased the role of democracy in Tonga.<sup>26</sup> Elections are due in November 2014 which will be the second round of parliamentary elections since this democratic reform.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> S. Latukefa, 'The Pro-Democracy Movement in Tonga', *The Journal of Pacific History*, 28:3, (1993), 52.

<sup>24</sup> K. James, 'The recent elections in Tonga: Democratic supporters win but does democracy follow?', *The Journal of Pacific History*, 37:3, (2002), 313.

<sup>25</sup> H. Lee, 'Transforming Transnationalism: Second Generation Tongans Overseas', *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 16:2, (2007), 167.

<sup>26</sup> The Sydney Morning Herald. *Tonga Set for Landmark Vote*, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2010.

<sup>27</sup> P. Fonua, 'MP Proposes Bill to Dissolve Government', *Matangi*, (22<sup>nd</sup> October 2013).

## The Independent State of Papua New Guinea



<sup>28</sup> Figure 1.3 Map of Papua New Guinea

PNG At A Glance	
Capital	Port Moresby
Political Leader	Peter O'Neill
Government	Parliamentary Democracy
Population	6, 552, 730
Demographic	Melanesian, Papuan, Micronesian
GDP	US\$ 15.29 billion
Main industries	Agriculture, resources, PNG LNG
Healthcare	0.05 doctors/1000 citizens
Education	62.4% literacy

The Independent State of Papua New Guinea (Papua New Guinea, PNG) has been inhabited since prehistoric times. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, PNG was divided into two colonial states. Germany controlled the North, and Britain controlled the South. In 1905 control of British New Guinea, known as Papua, was transferred to the Commonwealth of Australia and during the First World War, Australia extended its control by occupying German New Guinea. Following the First World War, New Guinea was returned to the League of Nations who made it an Australian mandate and PNG continued to be controlled by Australia until its independence in 1975.<sup>29</sup> In modern times, PNG remains a member of the Commonwealth, however is an independent state. Its official head of

<sup>28</sup> Map of Papua New Guinea, <[www.magellangeo.com](http://www.magellangeo.com)>, (Accessed 21<sup>st</sup> August 2014).

<sup>29</sup> H. Rowell, 'Appendix 4: A History of PNG Records', *Papua New Guinea Records 1883-1942: Microfilm Collections*, (Canberra: National Archives of Australia)

state is the Governor General, who represents the Queen, however the Prime Minister is the head of the government.<sup>30</sup>

PNG has an export-based economy, made up largely of mineral resources (gold, copper, oil).<sup>31</sup> Papua New Guinea had a GDP of US\$ 15.29 billion, ranking it 116<sup>th</sup> of 192 countries and making it the largest economy in this study.<sup>32</sup> There has also been construction of a liquefied natural gas production facility (PNG LNG) which is expected to greatly increase PNG's exports and GDP.<sup>33</sup> The demographics in PNG are a largely Christian population made up of Papuan, Melanesian, Micronesian and other islander decent. Tok Pisin is the local official language and is spoken throughout PNG. English is also an official language although is spoken much less widely.<sup>34</sup> Healthcare in PNG is very poor with only 0.05 doctors for every 1000 citizens. Education is also lacking, as only 62.4% of the population are literate.<sup>35</sup>

PNG has an elected National Parliament which is a unicameral legislative body with 111 seats for elected politicians from 89 single member electorates and 22 regional electorates.<sup>36</sup> The parliament consists predominately of the main political parties: the People's National Congress Party (currently holds 27 seats), the Triumph Heritage

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<sup>30</sup> Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 'Papua New Guinea country brief', <[http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/png/png\\_brief.html](http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/png/png_brief.html)> (Accessed 27<sup>th</sup> May 2014).

<sup>31</sup> CIA World Factbook. 'Papua New Guinea'. (Accessed 24<sup>th</sup> August 2014).

<sup>32</sup> World Bank Data. 'GDP (US Dollars)'. (Accessed 15<sup>th</sup> August 2014).

<sup>33</sup> Dow Jones Newswires, 'PNG LNG project ships first gas', *The Australian*, (27<sup>th</sup> May 2014).

<sup>34</sup> CIA World Factbook. 'Papua New Guinea'. (Accessed 24<sup>th</sup> August 2014).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> National Parliament of Papua New Guinea, 'About Our Parliament', <<http://www.parliament.gov.pg/about/parliament>>, (Accessed 25<sup>th</sup> August 2014).

Empowerment Party (currently holds 12 seats), PNG Party (currently holds 8 seats), the National Alliance Party (currently holds 7 seats), the United Resources Party (currently holds 7 seats), the People's Party (currently holds 6 seats) and the People's Progress Party (currently holds 6 seats). Beyond these parties, there are another 14 minor political parties and 16 independents.<sup>37</sup> The large number of political parties impedes the ability of any party to achieve a majority, exemplified here in the makeup of the current National Parliament. However, this trend extends further as no party has ever won enough seats to form its own government in the history of democracy in PNG. Furthermore, this creates a high turnover of sitting politicians. In the 2002 general elections, 80% of sitting politicians lost their seats and in the 2012 elections, 60% of sitting politicians lost their seats.<sup>38</sup> Every government has had to form coalitions, which results in the dilution of policy and there is little continuity of policies and personalities in the PNG National Parliament. There is also a history of problems with corruption in PNG politics, which compounds the systemic problems to create an impotent political system.<sup>39</sup>

In 2011, a constitutional crisis erupted between Michael Somare and Peter O'Neill. Somare was the elected Prime Minister of PNG, however was hospitalised in Singapore and by mid 2011 had spent many months there.<sup>40</sup> During this time, the members of the

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<sup>37</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Papua New Guinea National Parliament: General Information about the Parliamentary Chamber*, (2013).

<sup>38</sup> Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 'Papua New Guinea country brief', <[http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/png/png\\_brief.html](http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/png/png_brief.html)> (Accessed 27<sup>th</sup> May 2014).

<sup>39</sup> J. Hayward-Jones, 'PNG: O'Neill survives, rule-of-law suffers', *The Lowy Interpreter*, 19<sup>th</sup> June 2014.

<sup>40</sup> E. Blackwell, 'Somare takes indefinite medical leave', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, April 19<sup>th</sup> 2011.

National Parliament began to lose confidence in Somare put their confidence instead in O'Neill and Governor-General, Michael Ogio, appointed Peter O'Neil Prime Minister of PNG on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2011.<sup>41</sup> However, on his return to PNG, Somare contested that his dismissal was unconstitutional and on the 14<sup>th</sup> December 2011, Ogio, on court order, recognised Somare as Prime Minister. In response to this, the majority of the Parliament acted to suspend Ogio and the speaker of the Parliament, Jeffery Nape, became acting Governor-General.<sup>42</sup> However, on the 19<sup>th</sup> December 2011, the National Parliament again recognised O'Neill as Prime Minister and Ogio as Governor General, both of whom still hold these positions.<sup>43</sup>

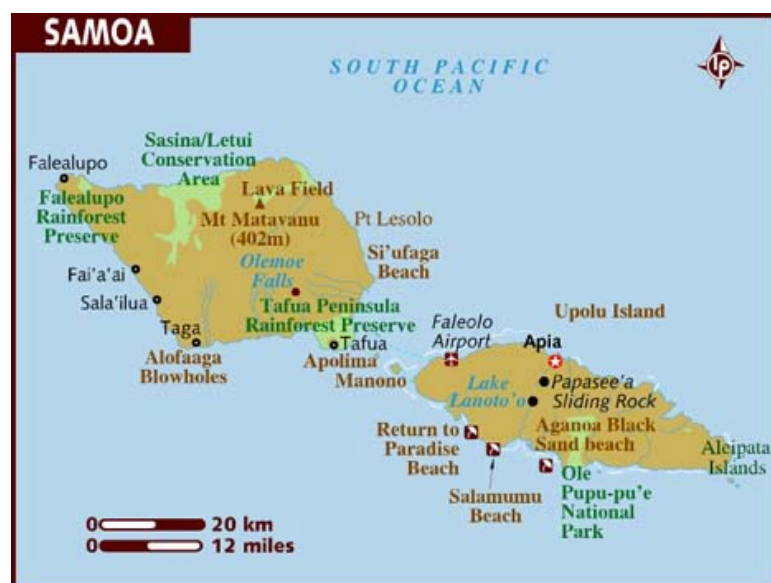
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<sup>41</sup> ABC News Network, 'Peter O'Neill becomes PNG Prime Minister', *Lateline*, 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2011.

<sup>42</sup> The Australian, 'Governor-General Michael Ogio suspended for backing Michael Somare', 15<sup>th</sup> December 2011.

<sup>43</sup> The Sydney Morning Herald, 'O'Neill sworn in as PNG PM – again', 31<sup>st</sup> May 2012. and CIA World Factbook. 'Papua New Guinea'. (Accessed 24<sup>th</sup> August 2014).

## The Independent State of Samoa



<sup>44</sup> Figure 1.4 Map of Samoa

Samoa At A Glance	
Capital	Apia
Political Leader	Tuilaepa Malielagaoi
Government	Parliamentary democracy
Population	196, 628
Demographic	Samoan
GDP	US\$ 694 million
Main industries	Agriculture, fishing
Healthcare	0.48 doctors/1000 citizens 1.0 beds/1000 citizens
Education	98.8% literacy 12 years average education

The independent state of Samoa (Samoa) is a group of islands that encompasses the western part of the Samoan Islands. The two main islands are Upolu, which holds the capital, Apia and Faleolo International Airport, and Savai'i. Samoa is made up almost entirely (92.6%) by ethnic Samoans and the remainder is largely made up of 'Euronesians', people of mixed European and Polynesian descent. Samoa is also an overwhelmingly Christian country with 99.1% of Samoans identifying with a Christian denomination.<sup>45</sup> Samoa has a parliamentary democracy with a Westminster Cabinet

<sup>44</sup> Map of Samoa, <[http://www.lonelyplanet.com/maps/pacific/samoa/map\\_of\\_samoa.jpg](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/maps/pacific/samoa/map_of_samoa.jpg)>, (Accessed 30<sup>th</sup> August 2014).

<sup>45</sup> CIA World Factbook, 'Samoa', (Accessed 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2014).



government based on English Common Law.<sup>46</sup> It is a unicameral legislative assembly with 49 members elected by universal suffrage of all citizens over 21 years of age. Anybody is able to run for office however, traditionally 47 of the 49 representatives are selected from the pool of approximately 25, 000 local chiefs (*matai*), of which approximately 95% are men.<sup>47</sup>

Similar to the other Pacific island nations of this report, Samoa is primarily reliant on foreign aid, fishing and agriculture as the underpinnings of its economy.<sup>48</sup> Its GDP was US\$ 694 million in 2013, ranking it 183 of 192 countries.<sup>49</sup> In agriculture, which employs approximately 65% of all Samoans, Samoa focuses on exports of fish, coconuts (and related products) and bananas. In healthcare, Samoa has limited resources with only 0.48 doctors per 1000 citizens and only 1 hospital bed per 1000 citizens. Furthermore, 54.1% of adult Samoans are obese. Education, however, is a more positive sector in Samoa with literacy rates at 98.8% and both males and females spend on average 12 years in education.<sup>50</sup>

Samoa has a long colonial history. Following the Tripartite Convention of 1899, which divided American Samoa from what was then German Samoa, modern day Samoa, Samoa saw German colonialism and then, following World War One, became a New

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<sup>46</sup> New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 'Samoa', <<http://www.mfat.govt.nz/Countries/Pacific/Samoa.php>> (Accessed 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2014).

<sup>47</sup> United States of America, State Department, 'Samoa', *Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour*, (2006).

<sup>48</sup> CIA World Factbook, 'Samoa', (Accessed 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2014).

<sup>49</sup> World Bank Data. 'GDP (US Dollars)'. (Accessed 15<sup>th</sup> August 2014).

<sup>50</sup> CIA World Factbook, 'Samoa', (Accessed 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2014).

Zealand mandate under the League of Nations.<sup>51</sup> New Zealand ruled Samoa from the conclusion of war until 1962. Samoans resented New Zealand control particularly following an epidemic of influenza. New Zealand authorities allowed a ship travelling from Auckland to enter Samoa in breach of quarantine laws and a 1919 Royal Commission of Inquiry found that this ship brought influenza that started an epidemic that killed approximately one fifth of the Samoan population.<sup>52</sup> Following the epidemic, Samoan anti-colonial feelings began to grow from the 1920s and there were repeated efforts by the Samoan independence movement for independence.<sup>53</sup> In January 1962, Western Samoa gained independence from New Zealand in a 'Friendship Treaty with New Zealand'. In 1997, the government amended the constitution to change the name from Western Samoa to Samoa.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> G. Ryden, *The Foreign Policy of the United States in relation to Samoa*, (New York: Octagon Books, 1975), 571-574.

<sup>52</sup> S. Tomkins, 'The Influenza Epidemic of 1928-19 in Western Samoa', *The Journal of Pacific History*, 27:2, (1992), 181-182.

<sup>53</sup> H. Hiery, 'West Samoans between Germany and New Zealand, 1914-1921', *War and Society*, 10:1, (1992), 53.

<sup>54</sup> R. Herr, 'A Minor Ornament: The Diplomatic Decisions of Western Samoa at Independence', *Australian Outlook*, 29:3, (1975), 300.

## The Solomon Islands



Figure 1.5 Map of Solomon Islands

<b>The Solomon Islands At A Glance</b>	
Capital	Honiara
Political Leader	
Government	Constitutional monarchy
Population	609, 883
Demographic	Melanesian
GDP	US\$ 1.096 billion
Main industries	Agriculture
Healthcare	0.22 doctors/1000 citizens 1.4 beds/1000 citizens
Education	84.1% literacy 9 years average education

Solomon Islands is a sovereign nation located within the Solomon Islands Archipelago in the Pacific Ocean. Solomon Islands is an independent country with an elected parliament. However, it has a colonial history. Its population of approximately 609, 883 people are almost all of Melanesian decent and speak Melanesian pidgin but a small minority of the country also speak English.<sup>56</sup> The political system of Solomon Islands is based around a unicameral legislative chamber of 50 representatives elected to 4-year terms by universal suffrage for all citizens over 21 years of age.<sup>57</sup> Solomon Islands have

<sup>55</sup> Map of The Solomon Islands, <<http://images.nationalgeographic.com/wpf/media-live/graphic/map-solomon-islands-360x270-cb1316027445.gif>> (Accessed 1<sup>st</sup> September 2014).

<sup>56</sup> CIA World Factbook, 'The Solomon Islands, (Accessed 26<sup>th</sup> August 2014).

<sup>57</sup> The National Parliament of the Solomon Islands, 'Factsheet: What is Parliament?', *Research and Information Centre Documents*.

very limited medical facilities with only 0.22 doctors per 1000 citizens and 1.4 hospital beds per 1000 citizens. Their education levels are also lower than many other countries in the region with literacy rates of 84.1% and an average of 9 years spent by males and females in education.<sup>58</sup>

The economy of Solomon Islands is dependent on agriculture, particularly of cocoa and coconuts. However, domestic ethnic violence, a limited government treasury and closure of key businesses saw economic recent collapse. This has been stabilised and rebuilding is still underway.<sup>59</sup> Despite all this, the 2013 GDP of the Solomon Islands was US\$1.096 billion, ranking it 176 of 192 countries and making it the second largest economy of the islands in this report.<sup>60</sup>

Solomon Islands became a British protectorate in 1893, however did not have a constitution until 1960.<sup>61</sup> Solomon Islands gained self-government in 1976 and independence was granted on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1978, although Solomon Islands remains part of the Commonwealth.<sup>62</sup> Since independence, there have been significant ethnic tensions in Solomon Islands. In 1998, a campaign of violence and intimidation began as militants from the island of Guadalcanal (the largest island in Solomon Islands and home to the capital, Honiara) targeted Malaitan settlers. The violence lasted until 2001 and required peacekeepers from both Australia and New Zealand to help quell the

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<sup>58</sup> CIA World Factbook, 'The Solomon Islands, (Accessed 26<sup>th</sup> August 2014).

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> World Bank Data. 'GDP (US Dollars)'. (Accessed 15<sup>th</sup> August 2014).

<sup>61</sup> K. Roberts-Wray, *Commonwealth and Colonial Law*, (London: Stevens, 1966), 897.

<sup>62</sup> T. Kabutaulaka, 'Australian Foreign Policy and the RAMSI Intervention in Solomon Islands', *The Contemporary Pacific*, 17:2, (2005), 298.

violence.<sup>63</sup> In addition to the ethnic violence, corruption was rife in Solomon Islands and during this period, Solomon Islands was perceived as rapidly approaching ‘failed state’ status as the systemic problems caused economic, political and social breakdown.<sup>64</sup> In 2003, Australia, following a request from the Governor-General of Solomon Islands and with the support of New Zealand and the endorsement of the Pacific Forum, began the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI). RAMSI included experts from a range of levels and departments of government, military and policy. It aimed to restore law and order and rebuild Solomon Islands economy and national institutions. Given the success over the first 10 years of RAMSI, in mid-2013, it was transformed to a solely policing mission, working in partnership with the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) to develop the RSIPF into a modern and effective police force with the confidence and support of the community and the government.<sup>65</sup>

### **Regional Multilateral Organisations**

The Pacific region spans a wide territory and encompasses many different nationalities and cultures. There is a plethora of regional multilateral institutions, however three key multilateral organisations for engaging with the Pacific islands of concern to this report are briefly outlined below.

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<sup>63</sup> J. Bennett, ‘Roots of Conflict in Solomon Islands, though much is taken, much abides: Legacies of Tradition and Colonialism’, *ANU Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Discussion Paper*, (2002), 10-11.

<sup>64</sup> D. McDougall, ‘Intervention in Solomon Islands’, *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, 93:374, (2004), 213.

<sup>65</sup> Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands, ‘About RAMSI’, <<http://www.ramsi.org/about-ramsi/>>, (Accessed 27<sup>th</sup> August 2014).

## The Pacific Islands Forum

The Pacific Islands Forum was founded in 1971 is a multilateral regional organisation and comprises of 16 nations including Australia, New Zealand and island nations of the Pacific Ocean, including Tonga, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and The Solomon Islands.<sup>66</sup> Fiji was suspended from the Pacific Islands Forum as it refused to hold general elections in 2009, indicating a lack of democratic process. It is still to be readmitted to the Forum, indicating they were still until very recently in a military regime.<sup>67</sup> However, elections were successfully held this year and this saw Fiji being reinstated in the Commonwealth and so there is a strong possibility that Fiji may re-enter the Pacific Islands Forum in the coming months.<sup>68</sup> The Secretariat of the Pacific Islands Forum and the Foreign Ministers of both Australia and New Zealand supported Fiji's movements towards democracy earlier this year and suggested the possibility of Fiji's return to the multilateral organisation.<sup>69</sup>

The Pacific Islands Forum brings member states together to discuss common topics such as trade, education and tourism, all of which are important potential areas of

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<sup>66</sup> Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 'About Us', <<http://www.forumsec.org/pages.cfm/about-us/>>, (Accessed 29<sup>th</sup> July 2014).

<sup>67</sup> H. Bule, 'Foreign ministers could decide on Fiji's membership, says Pacific Islands Forum Secretary General' *ABC Australia News Network*, 28<sup>th</sup> July 2014.

<<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-07-27/pif-ministers-could-decide-on-fiji-secgen/5627678>> (Accessed 29<sup>th</sup> July 2014).

<sup>68</sup> ABC Australia News Network, *Fiji reinstated to the Commonwealth following 'credible elections'*, 27<sup>th</sup> September 2014.

<sup>69</sup> D. Schwartz, 'Pacific Islands Forum praises Fiji's progress towards democracy', *ANC Australia News Network*, 16<sup>th</sup> February 2014, <<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-02-16/an-pacific-islands-forum-praises-fiji-progress/5262656>>, (Accessed 28<sup>th</sup> July 2014).

contact with Palestine (see Chapter 4). The Pacific Islands Forum also works with other organisations like the United Nations and the European Union to further the interests of the people of the Pacific islands.<sup>70</sup>

### The Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific

The Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP) is a multilateral council that oversees multilateralism in the Pacific and ensures that there is no overlap or gaps between the multilateral organisations in the Pacific. It makes sure that all decisions are communicated across all organisations to ensure consistency. It comprises of:

- The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)
- The [Forum Fisheries Agency \(FFA\)](#)
- The [South Pacific Regional Environment Program \(SPREP\)](#)
- The [Pacific Islands Development Program \(PIDP\)](#)
- The [South Pacific Travel Organisation \(SPTO\)](#)
- The [University of the South Pacific \(USP\)](#)
- The [Pacific Aviation Safety Organisation](#)
- The [Pacific Power Association](#).

The Pacific Islands Forum acts as the secretariat and seat for the CROP.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 'About Us', <http://www.forumsec.org/pages.cfm/about-us/> (Accessed 29<sup>th</sup> July 2014).

<sup>71</sup> Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 'Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific', [http://dfat.gov.au/geo/pacific/regional\\_orgs/crop.html](http://dfat.gov.au/geo/pacific/regional_orgs/crop.html), (Accessed 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2014).

## The Melanesian Spearhead Group

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) is a multilateral organisation that is of particular relevance to some of the Pacific island states that form the focus of this report. The member states of the MSG are Fiji, Papua New Guinea, The Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and the *Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste* (FLNKS), a pro-independence movement from New Caledonia. The MSG has developed into a regional trading bloc among the member states, which could be particularly useful for Palestine (see Chapter 4).<sup>72</sup> The MSG also aims to develop the economies of member states through programs such as the ‘Skills Movement Scheme’ to allow the migration of skilled labourers between the member countries and also provides political support to member states, particularly to the FLNKS.<sup>73</sup>

## Major Regional Stakeholders

Australia and New Zealand have both had colonies among the five nations discussed in this report. They also both underpin the economies of these island nations through their economic aid and trade. Australia plays a preeminent role in many Pacific islands and, regardless of the criticisms of their policies, have significant political clout in the region. Furthermore, Both Australia and New Zealand also sit on many regional multilateral organisations. This gives Australia and New Zealand significant political

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<sup>72</sup> Melanesian Spearhead Group, ‘Brief about MSG’, <<http://www.msgsec.info/index.php/members/brief-about-msg>>, (Accessed 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2014).

<sup>73</sup> T. Cain, ‘The Melanesian Spearhead Group: What is it, and what does it do?’, *The Lowy Interpreter*, 14<sup>th</sup> March 2014, (Accessed 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2014).



influence in the region, particularly with projects such as RAMSI.<sup>74</sup> Australia's role in the Pacific was heightened following 2001 when the Australian government actively pushed for greater influence in the region to prevent destabilisation and this continued throughout the Rudd/Gillard administration.<sup>75</sup> The importance of Australia to the region is most clearly demonstrated by Samoa's recent move across time zones in 2004. The International Date Line was shifted to bring Samoa closer to Sydney time (moving it from 21 hours behind Sydney to 3 hours ahead), at the expense of its proximity to US time.<sup>76</sup> This demonstrates the importance of Australia to Pacific islands is even greater than that of global hegemony. This has important implications for Palestine's interaction in the region as ensuring Australian support for Palestine's projects could be useful towards their success (see Chapter 5).

China is also a growing influence in the Pacific. China's involvement, unlike Australia's is less political and direct, and more commercial. China has begun extending substantial loans to Pacific islands. For example, in 2013, PNG received a \$3 billion credit from China for infrastructure development, on the condition that Chinese companies received 70% of the contracts relating to the infrastructure development.<sup>77</sup> In November 2013, China announced an assistance package for the Pacific worth more than US\$ 2 billion and including proposals for greater cooperation in agriculture, forestry, education and energy. While it is currently unlikely that many

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<sup>74</sup> J. Schutlz, 'Overseeing and Overlooking: Australian engagement with the Pacific Islands 1988-2007', *PhD Thesis submitted to the University of Melbourne*, October 2012, 1-4.

<sup>75</sup> P. Brown, 'Australian influence in the South Pacific', *Australian Defence Force Publications*, (2012), 1-4.

<sup>76</sup> S. Hill, 'Samoa Jumping the International Date Line', *ABC Australia News Network*, 30<sup>th</sup> December 2011.

<sup>77</sup> R. Callick, 'China influence on the rise in Pacific', *The Australian*, 24<sup>th</sup> May 2013.

Pacific islands will engage with this proposal, as they do not wish to raise their debt even further, such announcements by China are likely to increase its diplomatic power in the Pacific.<sup>78</sup>

The involvement of the US, Israel and the Arab League in the Pacific is discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 of this report.

This chapter has highlighted several important consistencies across the five Pacific island nations that relate to Palestine's goal to build effective relationships with them. Specifically, the reliance on agriculture and foreign aid, the weak healthcare systems and the relatively high levels of education and literacy offer potential to Palestine (see Chapter 4).

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<sup>78</sup> J. Hayward-Jones, 'China ups the aid stakes in the Pacific islands', *The Lowy Interpreter*, 18<sup>th</sup> November 2013.

## CHAPTER 2

### *Arab Presence in the Pacific*

In recent years, the Arab League has dramatically increased its levels of engagement in the Pacific region. This is particularly demonstrated in the 2010 Arab-Pacific Summit held in Abu Dhabi (the 2010 Summit) which was attended by all 14 members of the Pacific Forum, 21 Foreign Ministers from Arab countries and representatives from Australia and New Zealand.<sup>79</sup> Historically, however, the Arab world and the Pacific have had little involvement, particularly when compared to the involvement of recent years or to that of Israel and the US. Although relations were never strongly negative between the regions and some countries (such as Morocco<sup>80</sup>) have had long established relations, prior to 2010 there was little inter-regional dialogue. For example, the UAE and Fiji, both countries of critical importance to the success of this relationship owing to their relative size and economic importance in their respective regions, only established diplomatic relations in the weeks leading up to the 2010 Summit on the 17<sup>th</sup> March 2010.<sup>81</sup>

The 2010 Summit aimed to invigorate the cooperation between the countries of the two regions through various social, political, cultural and economic fields and review

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<sup>79</sup> R. Callick, 'Arab League Seeks Influence with Pacific Push', *The Australian*, 11 August 2010. and S. Salamah, 'Arab-Pacific Call to Tackle Climate Change', *Gulf News*, 24 June 2010.

<sup>80</sup> Interview at the Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco.

<sup>81</sup> Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations, *UAE and Fiji Establish Diplomatic Relations*, 17<sup>th</sup> March 2010.

prospects of future development of cooperation between the regions.<sup>82</sup> The summit focussed on issues such as climate change, economic cooperation and a 'nuclear weapons free zone' in the Middle East. UAE Foreign Minister Shaikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan said that he believes "close ties between the Arab world and Pacific Islands can effectively deal with challenges like the spread of nuclear weapons and global climate change".<sup>83</sup>

With particular relevance to the Israel-Palestine conflict, the communiqué from the Summit demonstrated that this issue was of central concern. This shows both strong prospects and the importance of gaining the support of the Pacific Island states for the Palestinian cause and Arab peace process:

The Pacific Small Islands Developing States noted the concern of Arab states regarding the conflict in the Middle East, in particular in Palestine. The two parties agreed on the need to settle all outstanding disputes and issues based on relevant Security Council resolutions and the principles of the Road Map. The Pacific Small Island Developing States undertook to give appropriate consideration to the Arab Peace Initiative, recognizing that the views of the Arab States were crucial to a just, comprehensive and permanent peace in the Middle East.<sup>84</sup>

A second summit is planned to take place within the coming months and it is hoped that this will further integrate the two regions. Since the 2010 summit, both the Pacific Islands and the Arab states have perceived a definite increase in Arab involvement in

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<sup>82</sup> United Arab Emirates Ministry of Information and Culture, 'Communique: Arab League-Pacific States Meeting', (Abu Dhabi: 24 June 2010), <<http://pidp.org/archive/2010/July/07-12-rel2.htm>> (Accessed 26 August 2014).

<sup>83</sup> A. Ahmad, 'Arab League, Pacific Island States Make New Start', *Khaleej Times*, 25 June 2010.

<sup>84</sup> United Arab Emirates Ministry of Information and Culture, 'Communique: Arab League-Pacific States Meeting', (Abu Dhabi: 24 June 2010), <<http://pidp.org/archive/2010/July/07-12-rel2.htm>> (Accessed 26 August 2014).

the Pacific region.<sup>85</sup> This increase in Arab involvement is exemplified in the large UAE delegation as well as representatives of other Arab nations at the 2014 Small Island Development Summit (SIDS)<sup>86</sup> in Samoa.<sup>87</sup> Majid Al Suwaidi, the climate change and sustainability manager at the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the lead negotiator for climate change at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) gave a presentation at the SIDS.

The UAE does not want to sit on the sidelines... The UAE is therefore dedicated to providing concessional finance for renewable energy projects in SIDS. We have allocated nearly \$100 million for island countries, with projects in the Seychelles, 10 Pacific countries, and the Maldives, and we are actively looking for new projects. I am especially pleased to announce that just 5 days ago, the UAE and Samoa launched its first wind farm with the Prime Minister... The project originates under the UAE-Pacific Partnership, a \$50 million grant facility specifically for Pacific SIDS to expand experience with renewable energy – and address the sustainability objective of this Summit.<sup>88</sup>

This speech highlights the growing Arab interest in the region and commitment both financially and in sharing technologies and energy. For the island nations of the Pacific, climate change is a crucial challenge for the coming decades as rising sea levels and intensified storms could gravely threaten their homelands. Thus, support from the

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<sup>85</sup> Interview at the Samoan High Commission. and Interview at the Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco

<sup>86</sup> The SIDS conference includes: Australia, Bahamas, Barbados, Cook Islands, Ireland, Israel, Jamaica, Japan, Kiribati, Maldives, Mauritius, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Samoa, Singapore, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Tuvalu, United States of America.

<sup>87</sup> Interview at the Samoan High Commission

<sup>88</sup> M. Al Suwaidi, 'UAE Speech by Majid Al Suwaidi at 3<sup>rd</sup> International SIDS Conference, 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2014, Samoa.'

<[http://www.un.int/uae/statements\\_speeches/uae-speech-third-intl-conference-sids](http://www.un.int/uae/statements_speeches/uae-speech-third-intl-conference-sids)> (Accessed 1<sup>st</sup> October 2014).

Arab world, who have unparalleled expertise in energy, could make this an area of substantial collaboration for the two regions.<sup>89</sup>

Outside the SIDS conference and government, many of the citizens of the Pacific Islands hold a positive view of the Arab world. Arab countries are viewed as rich oil countries, as the wealthy oil countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)<sup>90</sup> have been most active in the region recently.<sup>91</sup>

Unfortunately, the issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not frequently discussed during meetings between the two regions. Israel enjoys an important and fruitful relationship with many Pacific Islands and is well known and well regarded amongst the Pacific Islands. Conversely, Palestine and the Palestinian cause is less well known amongst the Islanders, due largely to the significant geographical distance of the islands from the conflict, which makes it hard to make the conflict relevant to the people there.<sup>92</sup>

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is one of the most involved Arab state among the Pacific islands. The UAE hosted many Pacific island nations in 2010 at the launch of the US \$50 million Partnership in the Pacific project, lead by the UAE.<sup>93</sup> In

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<sup>89</sup> Interview at the Samoan High Commission

<sup>90</sup> The GCC includes: Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, UAE, Oman and Saudi Arabia.

<sup>91</sup> Interview at the Samoan High Commission

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> *Emirates News Agency*, 'UAE launches Pacific Islands Partnership Program', 19<sup>th</sup> February 2010, <<http://www.wam.ae/en/news/emirates-international/1395228574860.html>> , (Accessed 8<sup>th</sup> October 2014).

addition to the Pacific Partnership Program, the UAE also hosted the the 2010 Summit, just a few months after the launch of the partnership program. This was a summit attended by members of the Arab League as well as Pacific island states.<sup>94</sup> In the final communiqué from the Summit, there was an agreement to open an office representing the Arab League to the Pacific Small Islands Developing States in the region.<sup>95</sup> This demonstrates the long-term vision of this multilateral engagement and this emphasises the forward view of the Arab world and Pacific states and clear importance to both parties that this relationship can offer. In order for the Arab League and the UAE to be committing a substantial amount of money and time to their partnership with the Pacific, they have clearly identified the importance of this region and the potential of the partnership. This is an important signal for Palestine. The behaviour of the Arab League, led by the UAE, indicates the immense potential available to Arab states amongst the Pacific islands. Palestine should aim to follow the UAE and Arab League into the Pacific to capitalise on the benefits available, especially in a time of growing Arab involvement and the corresponding blossoming of reputation of Arab states and regional contacts available to them.

In August 2014, the UAE opened a wind farm in Samoa, part of the US\$50 million

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<sup>94</sup> *Emirates News Agency*, 'UAE to host Pacific Island-Arab League Summit', 20<sup>th</sup> June 2010, <<http://www.wam.ae/en/news/emirates-international/1395228686907.html>> , (Accessed 8<sup>th</sup> Octoer 2014).

<sup>95</sup> United Arab Emirates Ministry of Information and Culture, 'Communique: Arab League-Pacific States Meeting', (Abu Dhabi: 24 June 2010), <<http://pidp.org/archive/2010/July/07-12-rel2.htm>> (Accessed 26 August 2014).

Pacific Partnership Fund under the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development.<sup>96</sup> Dr. Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, UAE Minister of State and the Chairman of Masdar (a UAE energy company) said when the new wind farm was opened:

This UAE supported project, and others like it underway across the Pacific, unlock significant economic and social benefits across the region. By providing local sources of renewable energy and reducing reliance on imported fuels, the UAE is helping countries like Samoa realize its development ambitions, while also delivering valuable clean energy infrastructure.<sup>97</sup>

This is important because it signifies both the potential for development and growth of Arab-Pacific as well as the Arab world cooperating with the Pacific on a matter of great importance to them.

The UAE has also begun engaging with the Pacific on education. This is another area of significant potential for cooperation between the Arab world and the Pacific.<sup>98</sup> The importance of education for the Pacific region, as seen in the discussion in Chapter 1, is paramount and the ability of the Arab League to assist in the development of education, along with energy and climate change, could be a catalyst of great change

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<sup>96</sup> *Emirates News Agency*, 'Masdar delivers Samoa's first wind farm', 30<sup>th</sup> August 2014, <<http://www.wam.ae/en/news/economics/1395269056874.html>>. (Accessed 8<sup>th</sup> October 2014).

<sup>97</sup> *Saudi Gazette*, 'Masdar delivers Samoa's first wind farm', <<http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentid=20140902216680>>, (Accessed 8<sup>th</sup> October 2014).

<sup>98</sup> *Emirates News Agency*, 'Nahyan receives CP of Tonga', 27<sup>th</sup> June 2010, <<http://www.wam.ae/en/news/emirates-international/1395228692491.html>> (Accessed 8<sup>th</sup> October 2014).



for the Pacific and of growth in Arab-Pacific relations. It is also an area of great potential for Palestinian interaction with the Pacific (see Chapter 4).

The UAE has the financial resources needed foster important relationships with Pacific islands. However many smaller Arab League states are also engaging increasingly with the Pacific region. Morocco has been engaged with the Pacific Islands for 20 years and is rapidly increasing its involvement following the 2010 Summit and looking towards the upcoming second summit.<sup>99</sup> Kuwait also has a particular interest in developing ties with the Pacific.<sup>100</sup> However, the substantial high-level involvement at the Pacific-Arab summit is strong evidence to the enthusiasm of the Arab world towards a relationship with the Pacific.

At the 2010 Summit, the leaders of both the Arab League and Pacific states agreed to six spheres of cooperation that would define the relationship between these two regions:

- Cooperation in the political sphere, increased political dialogues between the two regions and enhancing cooperation and coordination between the two regions in international forums.
- Cooperation in the economic sphere, increased dialogues between governments, businesspeople and trade interest groups, encouraging Arab investment in Pacific countries.

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<sup>99</sup> Interview at the Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco.

<sup>100</sup> Interview at the Embassy of the State of Kuwait.

- Cooperation in the energy field, strengthening cooperation and the exchange of experience and expertise on desertification and climate change
- Cooperation in the tourism field, encouraging tourism between the two regions by increasing awareness and marketing festivals and tourism exhibitions.
- Cooperation in the cultural and scientific field, organising scholarships and visits and cultural events.<sup>101</sup>

Each of these six fields will involve different levels of commitment from the various signatories to this agreement from the conclusion of the Summit. Palestine, lacking the financial resources of some of the other Arab states, will have to focus predominately on the final two points of cooperation, which, building on the data presented in Chapter 1, is discussed in depth in Chapter 4. This report, the Summit and the increased Arab involvement in the region provides an ideal context for Palestine to be looking towards the Pacific islands for building meaningful bilateral relationships in the near future. Palestine must follow the lead of the members of the Arab League and ride the wave of increased Arab involvement to a welcoming Pacific region to reap the many benefits that await them there.

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<sup>101</sup> The League of Arab States and the Group of Pacific Island States, 'Paper on Arab Cooperation Forum with the Group of Pacific Island States'.

## CHAPTER 3

### *US and Israeli presence in the Pacific*

In November 2012, the United Nations voted 138 'yes', 41 'abstain' and 9 'no' to General Assembly resolution 67/19 upgrading Palestine to non-member observer status in the United Nations. The nine countries that voted 'no' to this resolution were Israel, the United States, Canada, Panama, Nauru, Palau, the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia.<sup>102</sup> The rejection of this motion by four Pacific Island states is of particular importance, as it could have strong implications for the relations between Pacific Island states and the Arab nations.

A comparison of the voting of the United Nations General Assembly in 2009 and 2010 (see table 3.1) shows that Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, Nauru and Palau are the staunchest voting allies of the US. In 2009, they were just behind Israel, the top ranked country General Assembly for voting alongside the US. However, in 2010, Palau and Micronesia outplaced Israel as the two states that voted most with the US in the UN General Assembly. In 2009, Australia ranked just behind these island states, ranked the 7<sup>th</sup> country in the General Assembly for voting alongside the US and in 2010, ranked 8<sup>th</sup>. The data relating to this comparison is presented below in table 3.1.

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<sup>102</sup> United Nations, 'Vote on Resolution 67/19 on the status of Palestine in the UN', <<http://www.franceonu.org/IMG/pdf/VotePalestine.pdf> > (Accessed 22 July 2014).

	2009					2010				
	Votes with the US	Votes against the US	Abstentions	Percentage votes with the US*	Rank^	Votes with the US	Votes against the US	Abstentions	Percentage votes with the US*	Rank^
The Marshall Islands	51	2	5	96.2%	2	47	11	8	81.0%	5
Federated States of Micronesia	52	6	10	89.7%	5	47	3	6	94.0%	2
Nauru	24	1	0	96.0%	3	22	3	0	88.0%	4
Palau	49	3	6	94.2%	4	55	2	8	96.5%	1
Fiji	20	27	20	42.6%	57	23	39	7	37.1%	86
Papua New Guinea	23	38	8	37.7%	63	23	37	5	40.3%	67
Samoa	23	33	12	41.1%	58	25	34	9	42.4%	66
The Solomon Islands	23	46	0	33.3%	86	26	43	2	37.7%	83
Tonga	20	22	16	47.6%	56	26	26	14	50.0%	60

Table 3.1 General Assembly vote comparison with US votes<sup>103</sup>

\*In calculating this percentage, consensus votes in the General Assembly and votes where the US abstained were not included.

^ The rankings were calculated by the author.

<sup>103</sup> United States State Department. 'Comparison with US Vote'. *Voting Practices in the United Nations 2009*. (2009). 41-69. and United States State Department, 'Voting Coincidence with the United States. *Voting Practices in the United Nations 2010*. (2010). 41-69.

Furthermore, in resolutions specifically relating to Israel in the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2011 and 2012, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Palau and Nauru never voted against the United States. Equally, in these resolutions, Fiji, Tonga, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and the Solomon Islands never voted alongside the United States, but instead voted, along with the vast majority of the General Assembly, against Israel.<sup>104</sup> Equally, table 3.1 shows that the Pacific island states considered by this report are not yet heavily influenced by the US, as some of their neighbours are. This makes them prime candidates for Palestine to build relationships and establish itself in the region.

This data shows an important divide between the North Pacific and South Pacific. As the map in figure 3.1 depicts, these island states come from a very large geographic area and are separated by substantial distances. The more northern Pacific Islands (Nauru, Palau, the Marshall Islands and Micronesia) are proximate to US controlled islands in the region such as: Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Wake Island, and Hawaii, a US state. However, the 5 Pacific island states of interest to this report are further south in the Pacific from the areas of strong US influence. The relationship between the Pacific islands relevant to this report and US and Israel as seen in table 3.1 and figure 3.1 and the above analysis shows that these countries are ideal countries for Palestine to launch their involvement in the Pacific.

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<sup>104</sup> United States of America, State Department, 'Voting Coincidence with the United States. *Voting Practices in the United Nations 2010*. (2010). 41-69. and United States of America, State Department, 'General Assembly: Israel-Related Resolutions Opposed by the United States'. *Voting Practices in the United Nations 2012*. (2013). Section IV.

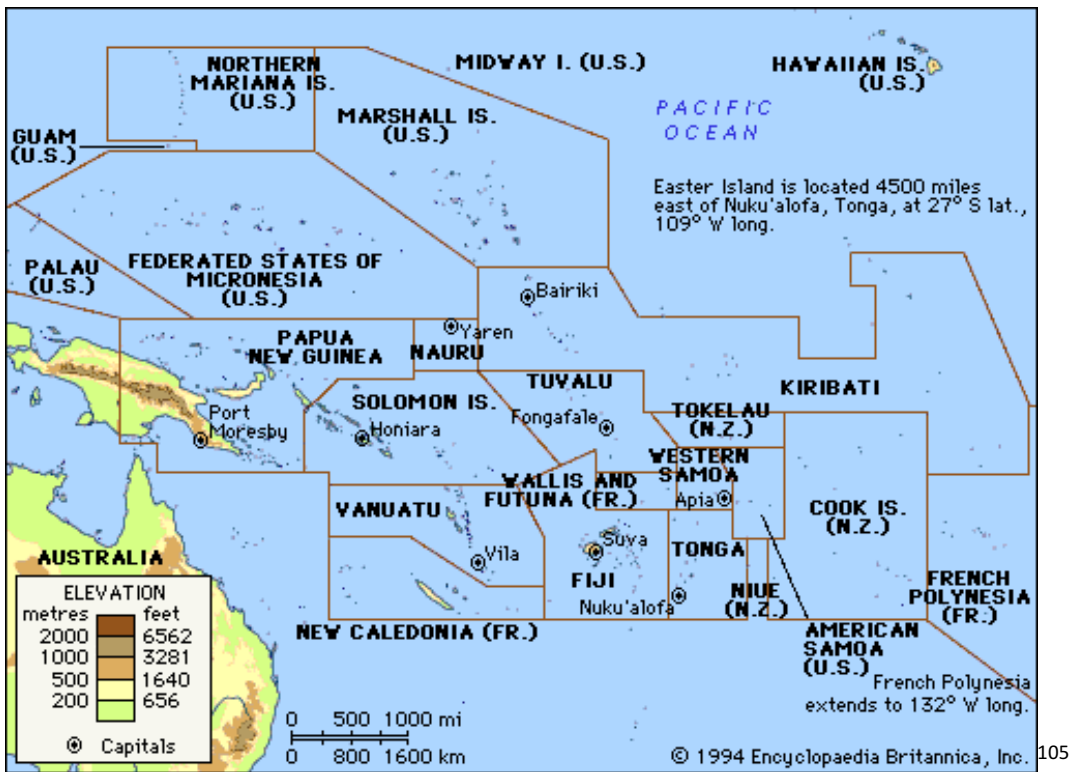


Figure 3.1 Map of US territories in the Pacific

In addition to the geographical proximity to US influence, Palau, the Marshall Islands and Federated States of Micronesia are in ‘free association’ with the US. Each of these three countries have signed a ‘Compact of Free Association’ with the US, entitling them most importantly to substantial aid grants from the US and defence agreements.<sup>106</sup> For example, the Federated States of Micronesia received US\$1.5 billion in aid under this agreement from 1986-2003 and the Compact has been renewed from 2004-2024 and Micronesia has been

<sup>105</sup> Map of US territories in the Pacific, <[http://www.nyulawglobal.org/globalex/South\\_Pacific\\_Law\\_files/image001.gif](http://www.nyulawglobal.org/globalex/South_Pacific_Law_files/image001.gif)>, (Accessed 22 July 2014).

<sup>106</sup> Government of the Republic of Palau, *Compact of Free Association*,

promised a further US\$2.1 billion in aid over that period.<sup>107</sup> Importantly, the nations in ‘free association’ follow US votes in the United Nations more than any nation except Israel.<sup>108</sup> Thus this agreement has clear impacts on political agenda and foreign policy.

The influence of the United States on these island states as Israel’s staunchest global ally and supporter both in the United Nations is important. The US is Israel’s closest ally, exemplified most clearly by the 44 Security Council vetos that the US has cast on Israel’s behalf, more than all of the other US vetos since the inception of the United Nations in 1945.<sup>109</sup> This clear support for Israel and the US’ influence in the region has had marked effects on these nations in ‘free association’, seen in table 3.1. This is particularly important as President Obama’s proposed ‘Pivot to Asia’ could see greater US presence in the region, especially as China has a growing influence among the Pacific islands (see Chapter 1), which the US is likely to aim to compete with.<sup>110</sup> Essentially, greater US attention to the Pacific can be expected and this could bring with it greater presence of pro-Israeli pressures, as seen in the cases of Palau, Micronesia and Nauru who, without US influence, are unlikely to have any significant interest in Israel, yet are now among its staunchest allies. However, while the Fiji, Tonga, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Solomon Islands are not strongly influenced by the US or Israel, is the opportune time for Palestine to being exchanges and relations with these states. Not only are

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<sup>107</sup> S. Cassels, ‘Overweight in the Pacific: Links between Foreign Dependence, Global Food Trade and Obesity in the Federated States of Micronesia’, *Globalization and Health*, 2:10, (2006), 4.

<sup>108</sup> United States of America, State Department, ‘Voting Coincidence with the United States’, *Voting Practices in the United Nations 2010*, (2010).

<sup>109</sup> G. Bisharat, ‘Violence’s Law: Israel’s Campaign to Transform International Legal Norms’, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 43:3 (2013), 80.

<sup>110</sup> M. Manyin et al., ‘Pivot to the Pacific? The Obama Administration’s Rebalancing toward Asia’, *Congressional Research Service*, (2012), 1-2.

these states ideal for Palestine to establish relations with but now is the perfect time as the Arab involvement in the region grows (see Chapter 2) and also before increased US or Israeli influence in the region begins to affect these countries.

However, the Israeli presence in the Pacific also extends beyond US influence. Israel is well known amongst many Pacific Island states and enjoys a good relationship because of its significant involvement (which currently outweighs that of the Arab League) in development in the region. Israeli involvement is particularly present in areas like agriculture, education, medicine and health services and the exchange of technical expertise.<sup>111</sup> This significant positive profile that Israel enjoys is not mirrored by Palestine at this stage, with many civilians on the Pacific islands typically not being aware of Palestine or of the Israel-Palestinian conflict.<sup>112</sup> Israel sends significant aid to the Pacific in financial aid but also in expertise. This presence of Israelis on the ground in the Pacific is critical because it gives locals contact with Israel and helps to raise the profile of Israel amongst the people and, therefore, the government.<sup>113</sup>

The presence and influence of the US in the Pacific, and the potential for it to grow should be of concern to Palestine, particularly given the demonstrated ability of the US to build a supporter base for Israel in the region. Equally the impressive Israeli record of aid and development in the Pacific and its reputation amongst the islands, while not a direct threat to Palestine or the Palestinian cause, should be sufficient motivation to pursue greater

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<sup>111</sup> Interview at the Samoan High Commission

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> Interview at the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific.



presence and involvement in the region. The increase of wider Arab involvement in the Pacific provides an ideal context for Palestine to begin this movement into the Pacific region. Furthermore, as table 3.1 depicts, the five Pacific island states of interest to this report, do not yet have a strong support for the US or for Israel in the United Nations, thus there is still potential for Palestine to have an important impact not only for the benefit of the welfare of both nations, bilateral trade and common interests but also aid in the construction of a wider supporter base for the Palestinian cause. Thus, the current international and regional context is the opportune moment for Palestine to launch relations with these ideally selected Pacific island states.

## CHAPTER 4

### *Palestinian presence in the Pacific*

This report has detailed, thus far, the important exchanges that are happening between the Arab League and Pacific islands as well as between the US and Israel and Pacific islands. This report has made clear that Palestine must act to follow the lead of the Arab League into the Pacific and that both the Pacific islands examined in this report and the current regional and international context are perfect for the establishment of relations with Palestine. However, the role that Palestine can play in the region as well as what the increased involvement of Palestine and other Arab countries in the Pacific can bring to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict presents an interesting lens to analysis of this blossoming inter-region relationship.

Amr Moussa, the Secretary-General of the Arab League during the 2010 Arab-Pacific Summit said that:

Pacific Countries have a strong presence and strong reputation in the United Nations General Assembly, international forums and the Security Council and they support Arab issues raised on the international scene...I think that all the countries of the world, including countries of the Pacific, understand the reality and the nature of the Arab-Israeli conflict and that the majority of people and international communities are sympathetic to

this issue, they know the size of the injustice inflicted on the Palestinian people...<sup>114</sup>

There is significant potential for increased Palestinian involvement in the Pacific region to translate into better relationships with Pacific nations that could result in increased votes for Palestine in UN resolutions as well as regional and international support for the Palestinian cause. Thus there are important political possibilities beyond the commercial and cultural agendas of the Arab League and Palestine of greater involvement in the Pacific region.

Currently, the Pacific is a divided in how it interacts with Palestine. Palestine has full diplomatic relations with East Timor<sup>115</sup> and Vanuatu.<sup>116</sup> Papua New Guinea has recognised the State of Palestine however is still to establish full diplomatic relations.<sup>117</sup> Fiji, Tonga and the Solomon Islands are still to recognise or establish diplomatic relations with Palestine, however the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific has been communicating with the nations in efforts to see these diplomatic ties formed. Samoa

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<sup>114</sup> A. Moussa, 'Excerpt from statement at the conclusion of the Arab-Pacific Forum', Abu Dhabi, UAE, 25<sup>th</sup> June 2010. <http://www.emaratalyoum.com/politics/news/2010-06-25-1.259419> (Accessed 22nd August 2014). This article and quote were originally in Arabic.

<sup>115</sup> Government of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste and Government of the State of Palestine, 'Protocol on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the State of Palestine and the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste', (Dili: 1<sup>st</sup> March 2004).

<sup>116</sup> Government of the Republic of Vanuatu Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Letter to Mr. Ali Kazak, Representative of Palestinian Liberation Organisation to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific', (Port Vila: 21<sup>st</sup> August, 1989).

<sup>117</sup> Government of Papua New Guinea, 'PNG establishes formal diplomatic relations with Palestine', (Port Moresby, 4<sup>th</sup> October 1994).

has not yet been approached by the General Delegation of Palestine to establish diplomatic links.<sup>118</sup>

As previously discussed, Israel has successfully conducted military cooperation and many development projects, particularly in health, education and IT services.<sup>119</sup> Israeli doctors are in direct contact with the communities in these countries who previously had little or no modern healthcare. Furthermore, Israel has organised numerous trips to Israel for high-level politicians and decision makers in the Pacific islands, such as a 2010 trip for delegations from the Federated States of Micronesia and Nauru.<sup>120</sup> This positive view of Israel is not necessarily at the expense of Palestine's reputation throughout the Pacific, although in the case of Nauru and Micronesia, they are two of Israel's staunchest allies. Palestine must use the afore discussed growth in Arab involvement in the Pacific to develop a presence in the Pacific to develop a base of support for its cause in the region.

Despite not having the deep financial assets of the GCC, Palestine still has much that it can offer to the Pacific. Palestine's greatest strength is in its people. There are many highly trained and highly skilled people, particularly in medical and agricultural fields that could provide a technical expertise of great benefit to the Pacific islands.<sup>121</sup> The profiles outlined in Chapter 1 of this report indicate that all of the five Pacific islands studied are reliant on agriculture as an

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<sup>118</sup> Interview at the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> H. Schneider, 'Israel and Pacific republics, united by an island mentality', *The Washington Post*, 1<sup>st</sup> February 2010.

<sup>121</sup> Interview at the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific

export but also to feed their populations and also as developing countries, many lack advanced medical care and facilities, many having very low numbers of doctors and high risks of infectious diseases. This is especially apparent when the figures from Chapter 1 are compared to Australia which has 3.85 doctors per 1000 citizens, 77 times that of PNG, and 3.9 beds per 1000 citizens, almost 4 times that of Samoa.<sup>122</sup>

Medical research and expertise in Palestine is a rapidly growing area. There are increasing numbers of academic journal articles published in Palestine every year, particularly from Al-Quds University, An-Najan National University and Birzeit University. There were also significant increases in medical research in 2006 and again in 2009 and these promising trends in Palestine are continuing.<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, practising Palestinian doctors are well trained and competent.<sup>124</sup> There is significant potential for this growing medical expertise and training to be brought into these Pacific countries where, particularly in rural and more isolated areas, there is little medical care. Palestinian doctors, medical professionals and researchers could provide on the ground medical care as well as advice to government. This would have benefits at government levels but also would allow local citizens in the Pacific islands to have contact with Palestinians and learn more about their culture, which would likely incite greater cultural integration.

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<sup>122</sup> CIA World Factbook, 'Australia', (Accessed 1<sup>st</sup> October 2014).

<sup>123</sup> W. Sweileh et al., 'Medical and biomedical research productivity from Palestine, 2002-2011', *BMC Research Notes*, 6:41, (2013).

<sup>124</sup> The Palestinian American Chamber of Commerce, 'Doing Business, Country Overview: Introduction', <[www.pal-am.com/node/220](http://www.pal-am.com/node/220)>. (Accessed 29<sup>th</sup> September 2014). and Palestinian Mission to the Netherlands, 'Fast Facts on Palestine: Medical Care', <[www.palestine-delegation.nl/tourism-culture](http://www.palestine-delegation.nl/tourism-culture)>. (Accessed 29<sup>th</sup> September 2014). and Interview at the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific.

Palestine also has a high level of agricultural expertise.<sup>125</sup> Palestine has disseminated important agricultural techniques to countries both in the Middle East and beyond.<sup>126</sup> For example, Palestine exported their expertise on techniques to control the Mediterranean fruit fly and the olive fruit fly, soilless culture techniques, livestock reproductive techniques, and postharvest and conservation techniques to other Mediterranean countries like Cyprus.<sup>127</sup> Palestine has also exchanged its agricultural expertise with Jordan and other nations in its region.<sup>128</sup> This expertise in agricultural pest control among other areas of expertise would be of immense benefit to the Pacific islands. The Pacific has significant problems with agricultural pests, such as the Pacific fruit fly and there is currently the 'Pacific Fruit Fly Project' being run by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, which could likely benefit from Palestinian expertise.<sup>129</sup> Furthermore, one of Samoa's most important exports is bananas (see Chapter 1), which would definitely benefit from Palestinian expertise on fruit flies and pests. Given the importance of this crop to Samoa, the impacts could be substantial. Also, as Palestine is a country that receives large amounts of foreign aid and does not have a strong existing economy, similar to the 5 Pacific islands in this report (see Chapter 1), it has experience in developing medical and agricultural sectors without the benefit of a large economy or wealthy government treasury. This makes Palestinian aid more applicable to the situation of

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Palestinian National Authority, *Agriculture Sector Strategy: A Shared Vision 2011-2013*, (Ramallah: July 2010).

<sup>127</sup> Government of the Republic of Cyprus Ministry of Agriculture, 'Media Release: The Minister of Agriculture had a meeting with the Palestinian Minister of Agriculture', (Nicosia: 31<sup>st</sup> October 2013).

<sup>128</sup> *The Jordan Times*, 'Jordan, Palestine agree to closer agricultural cooperation', 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2014.

<sup>129</sup> Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 'Pacific Fruit Fly Project', 8<sup>th</sup> January 2013, <[www.spc.int/lrd/pacific-fruit-fly](http://www.spc.int/lrd/pacific-fruit-fly)> (Accessed 29<sup>th</sup> September 2014).

each of the Pacific states in this report and thus makes the Palestinian expertise even more valuable.

Palestinian agricultural techniques could also be beneficial to many local farmers in the Pacific islands, particularly the postharvest techniques and livestock reproductive techniques which could be of great significance to the agriculture of the Pacific and increase agricultural exports from these countries. Palestinian expertise could also help increase the levels of food available in local villages and more broadly throughout the country, allowing them to decrease their reliance on imported food (see Chapter 1). Finally, more efficient farming at the local level from Palestinian assistance could see farmers with more disposable income and, especially in countries like Samoa where agriculture is the primary employer (see Chapter 1), this could have significant impacts on wider social and economic issues.

Furthermore, Palestine has potential for private sector investment, tourism and education. Palestine has dozens of universities and higher education facilities including An-Najah National University, Birzeit University, Al-Quds University, Bethlehem University and many more. Thus, there is significant potential for university exchanges to occur between these universities and the many universities across the Pacific islands. Given the high average levels of literacy and years spent in education in these islands (see Chapter 1), Pacific students would be well equipped to gain much from educational experiences in Palestine. They would also be able to return to their homeland with this education to further local development and increase the positive perception of Palestine and the Palestinian cause amongst local people and governments in the Pacific, showing tangible benefits to both parties.

Palestine and the Pacific islands enjoy very different landscapes which provides significant potential for tourism. Government sponsored tourism programs from Palestine to the Pacific could have success among more affluent groups of the Palestinian population. Equally, the predominately Christian populations of the Pacific islands (see Chapter 1) would have a particular interest in travelling to Palestine due to the large number of Christian relics and important religious sites.<sup>130</sup> In 2010, there were 2.2 million foreign tourists of the 4.6 million people that visited Palestine, which saw a marked increase from the 2.6 million in 2009 and these figures have continued to grow.<sup>131</sup> Furthermore, of the six most popular tourist sites in Palestine, four of them are of significance to Christians, indicating the tourism potential for the predominately Christian countries of the Pacific.<sup>132</sup> The importance of foreign tourists to the tourism industry in Palestine and the prevalence of religious sites should be an incentive to encourage greater tourism in Palestine from Pacific nations. Thus, tourism from the Pacific to Palestine could also be an area of potential growth. The Palestinian government could begin investing in advertising travelling to the Pacific to its citizens and encouraging Pacific nationals to advertise Palestine as a travel destination. Finally, there is potential for Palestinian businesses to begin investing in Pacific islands, to pave the way for sound trade relations between the two regions. This is an area that the Palestinian government has already indicated interest and government support for measures to encourage such investment could be a useful mechanism to bring Palestine closer to the Pacific islands.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> H. Schneider, 'Israel and Pacific republics, united by an island mentality', *The Washington Post*, 1<sup>st</sup> February 2010.

<sup>131</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *Inbound Tourists 2010*.

<sup>132</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *Percentage Distribution of Tourist Sites Visited by the Indented Governorate to be visited, 2009*.

<sup>133</sup> Interview at the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific.



A crucial aspect of developing good bilateral relationships between countries is personal relationships. Unfortunately, the current Palestinian representation in the region is only through the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific, based in Canberra, Australia. Although excellent, a single office is not sufficient for an entire region, especially one that contains the world's largest ocean. Increased Palestinian representation in the region through more offices and ambassadors would allow each ambassador to be responsible to a smaller area of the region, allowing them to be able to foster the necessary relationships and consistently promote Palestine's interests and partnership in their area more effectively than a single delegation.<sup>134</sup> Further, it is important to note that the development of relationships between countries takes many decades to evolve and also require personal relationships to be formed as well.<sup>135</sup> These relationships, fostered over collaboration in the areas discussed and potentially many others, could develop into important alliances and could provide Palestine with important support in the UN and also in the wider international community.

Therefore, there are many ways that Palestine can engage fruitfully with the Pacific and develop important relationships without the need of vast economic resources. By exchanging medical and agricultural expertise and facilitating student and tourist exchanges, Palestine could begin to develop a substantial presence in the Pacific. Tourism and agriculture are already significant industries in Palestine and the development of trade and technical

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Interview at the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific and Interview at the embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco.

exchanges could help these industries grow within Palestine and promote economic growth for Palestine as well as in the Pacific islands.

## CHAPTER 5

### *Conclusion and Recommendations*

This report has provided detailed analysis on the immense potential for Palestine to establish exchanges and relationships with islands of the Pacific.

The recommendations of this report follow from Chapter 4 and are:

- Palestine should invest prepare and offer to the Pacific islands discussed in this report its assistance in both medical research and facilities as well as sending Palestinian doctors to the Pacific islands to help in providing more modern medical care to these islands
- Palestine should use its vast agricultural knowledge and experience, particularly given its similar economic context to these Pacific islands to benefit and encourage agriculture in these countries. Such a program would have many benefits for the local economies as well as the potential for trade with Palestine and the positive effects on Palestine's reputation in the region.
- Palestine should encourage tourism of its own people to the Pacific islands, marketing the vastly different landscape, culture and people. Equally, Palestine should encourage the Pacific islands to increase marketing of Palestine as a travel destination, highlighting the many Christian relics that are located there.
- Palestine should encourage greater private sector investment in the Pacific islands as this will bring greater economic and diplomatic ties to the region, which can help in

other trade and diplomatic relations with the countries as well as in promoting Palestine and the Palestinian cause throughout the region.

- Palestine should increase its representation in the region. The planned office of the Arab League in the Pacific provides a useful start. The more time and effort in developing personal relationships in the region, brought about by increased representation will have marked positive impacts on Palestine's relations with the Pacific islands.
- Palestine should engage with Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific Forum, and the Melanesian Spearhead Group, to ensure that these key stakeholders and institutions to ensure optimal outcomes from these policies support their policies and relationships with the Pacific islands.
- Finally, Palestine needs to act quickly to ensure that it can capitalise on the current political situation of increased Arab involvement in the Pacific and before Chinese, US or Israeli presence begins to influence the Pacific states analysed in this report or crowds out the region from further influence from Palestine.

In conclusion, there is no doubt that there is immense potential for Palestine in the Pacific. The context of increased Arab League involvement in the region provides an ideal platform for Palestine to begin to look towards the Pacific islands as a regional partnership. Specifically, the islands that are examined in detail in this report provide ideal locations for Palestine to establish diplomatic and trade relationships. Furthermore, the current regional and international climate provides perfect conditions for Palestine to engage with these islands.

However, these conditions are not indefinite and Palestine will need to be proactive to capitalise on the opportunities that are before it.

Fiji, Tonga, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Solomon Islands have much to offer Palestine. They can be trade partners and diplomatic partners, they can offer important support in the region, around the world and in the UN and other international organisations for the Palestinian cause, particularly at this most crucial time for Palestine. The opportunities in these partnerships are there, are plenty, and will be of immeasurable benefit to the Pacific, Palestine and the world.

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