

Embassy of the State of Palestine

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



INTERN POLICY REPORT

CIVIL SOCIETY IN FIJI

Matilda Simpson

2019

CIVIL SOCIETY IN FIJI

a) Defining Civil Society in Fiji

Fijian civil society is a vibrant and active part of state culture. Main components of civil society in Fiji presents itself in the form of Civil Society Organisations (CSO's) based around ethnic and human rights, women's rights, and non-government environmental advocacy groups (Nexus, 2019). For the Pacific Region as a whole, CSO's represent a critical aspects of advancing Millennial Development Goals covering a spectrum of issues, with over 85% of the CSO's in the region specifically focusing on promoting these targets (UNDP, 2015). Yet there are serious constraints on what CSO's in Fiji and the Pacific are able to achieve due to lack of support from government and legal frameworks (UNDP, 2015). Often understaffed and underfunded, CSO's come to rely on private donor support from separate state and non-state actors who have vested interests in the development of the region (UNDP, 2015). Currently there remains a lack of specific legislation which allows for CSO's/NGO's in Fiji provisions when carrying out their advocacy work in the area (Nexus, 2019). There remains a clear demand for the development of legislation which recognises the significance of civil society groups and enables them to access state-endorsed support mechanisms (Nexus, 2019).

b) Key Components of Civil Society

In Fiji specifically, CSO's maintain a predominately faith-based undercurrent, relying on volunteers to continue running (Khan et al. 2007). In 2007 over 80% of civilians made material or financial donations to CSO's, of which a significant proportion were faith based (Khan et al 2007). In the same year between 50-60% of citizens actively engaged with civic and social activities within their communities organised by CSO's (Khan et al. 2007). While faith-based CSO's are the most dominant in Fiji, trade unions, educational groups, and sport organisations are similarly very popular (Khan et al. 2007). Major areas of concern for these non-government organisations are typically focused on drug prevention, environmental conservation, human rights, anti-corruption and political integrity, and advocacy (Khan et al. 2007). In 2016, more than 99% of schools in Fiji were owned and managed by faith based organisations and independent CSO's, and in the area of health civil society groups have been key in providing health services to vulnerable groups (DFAT, 2016). Yet issues of poor infrastructure and resource capabilities limit the capacity of CSO's (particularly, non faith-

based groups). Civil Societies in Fiji are considered a key aspect of the enablement of long-term sustainable development in the state, particularly in the last decade (Khan et al. 2007).

The population of Fiji includes a Muslim minority, currently comprising of approximately 7% of the population (Wikipedia, 2019). Predominately Muslims are of Indian descent due to the influx of labourers brought over by British colonialists during the 19th century, majority of the population adheres to Sunni Islam (59.7%) (Wikipedia, 2019).

c) Australian Support

Australia has previously and continues to provide aid to CSO's in Fiji in order to help achieve development objectives Australia has for the Pacific, including in areas of health, education, and governance (DFAT, 2016). Australian investments in education and health in Fiji support the role of Civil Society and allows for opportunities to strengthen its influence and partnership with the Government of Fiji (DFAT, 2016). Between 2018 and 2022 Australia has pledged up to AUD\$10 million in aid to Fijian Civil Society Organisations, attributed to the importance CSO's have in ensuring the development and engagement of the local population without the same risk direct aid to the Fijian Government poses due to corruption (DFAT, 2019). The Australian administered Direct Aid Program is another process which allows for the support of CSO's through the provision of small grants, including those to the Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development program, enabling the economic, social, and political empowerment of women (DFAT, 2019). Alternatively, the Australian NGO Cooperation Program is another initiative aimed at encouraging Australian organisations to work within Fiji with domestic CSO's in order to help capitalise on Australia's engagement with Fijian civil society (DFAT, 2019).

d) Demographics

Location:	In the Pacific Ocean to the east of Vanuatu, west of Tonga and south of Tuvalu
Land area:	18,272 km ²
Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ):	1,260,000 km ² of ocean
Capital:	Suva
Population:	Total population: 883,125 ^{xxii}
Ethnic groups:	Fijian 57.3% (predominantly Melanesian with a Polynesian admixture), Indian 37.6%, Rotuman 1.2%, other 3.9% (European, other Pacific Islanders, Chinese) ^{xxiii}
Languages:	English (official), Fijian (official), Hindustani, Rotuman
Religions:	Protestant 55.4% (Methodist 34.6%, Assembly of God 5.7%, Seventh-Day Adventist 3.9%, Anglican 0.8%, other 10.4%), Hindu 27.9%, Roman Catholic 9.1%, Muslim 6.3%, Sikh 0.3%, other or unspecified 0.3%, none 0.7% ^{xxiv}
Human Development Index (HDI):	Rank: 100 Value: 0.688 ^{xxv}
Adult literacy rate (% aged 15 and over):	93.7% ^{xxvi}
Life expectancy at birth (years):	71 ^{xxvii}
Under-five mortality rate:	18 (per 1,000 live births) ^{xxviii}
GDP :	USD 3.869 billion ^{xxix}
GDP per capita:	USD 4,400 ^{xxx}
Economy based on:	Tourism, sugar, garments
Development implications:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variety of minerals available (gold, silver and copper on land; gold, silver, copper, lead and zinc in the EEZ) • Vulnerable to natural hazards such as cyclones, hurricanes, storm surge, coastal flooding, river flooding, droughts, earthquakes, landslides, tsunamis and volcanic eruptions • Political instability has severely affected the economy • Some tension between ethnic Fijians and Indo-Fijians • Heavy reliance on remittances from overseas workers • Increasing urban migration • Declining Indo-Fijian population due to emigration and low birth rate

SOURCE: http://www.commonwealthofnations.org/sectors-fiji/civil_society/international_ngos/

NATIONAL CSO CASE STUDY #1:

AIDS Task Force of Fiji (ATFF)

a) *Who are we?*

HIV/AIDS in Fiji remains a significant healthcare problem due to the lack of education and support systems based on the prevention and treatment of the illness. The AIDS Task Force of Fiji began as a program initiated by the Methodist Church in Fiji (SAFAIDS, 2013). Since 2003 they have incorporated HIV/AIDS Education and Healthcare as a part of their '4 Corner' youth program aimed at both men and women, and developed the Aids Task Force based on development of Policy based on HIV health (SAFAIDS, 2013). The ATFF has been involved in regional healthcare and support for individuals diagnosed with the illness (WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific Region, 2001). The ATFF calls on the Fijian Ministry of Health for a coordinating body aimed at responding to and identifying specific needs required for prevention and treatment of AIDS domestically (WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific Region, 2001).

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b) Key Mission Statement

"The AIDS Task Force of Fiji has a very clear vision of the priorities leading from research to action. We now have a baseline which will help us to design and implement effective programmes to reach a diverse range of men who have sex with men and transgender people in Fiji. This study represents a valuable contribution to ongoing national and regional efforts to ensure that these communities are better served and better protected," (UNAIDS, 2019)

c) What services do we provide?

The ATFF provides services aimed towards the testing of HIV/AIDS and other STI's at one of the ATFF Clinic's based in Labasa, Lautoka City, and Suva (Government of Fiji, 2019). The ATFF Provide services which allow for STI diagnosis, treatment, and counselling services, improved access and promotion of the rights of sex workers, transgender people, and men engaging in homosexual relationships (Ministry of Health, 2012). The ATFF also promotes community respect for these alienated demographics and promote the health of individuals experiencing HIV/AIDS or other STI's (Ministry of Health, 2012). One 2011 report by the ATFF focusing on community wellbeing calculated that the percentage of homosexual and transgender individuals who knew where to get HIV testing and preventative contraception in Fiji was 40%, demonstrating the success of the organisation following decades of stigma and confusion surrounding the illness (AIDS Data Hub, 2012).

d) Funding and Budget

The ATFF has strong ties with the Ministry of Health in Fiji, allowing them a platform for funding and development. The Government of Fiji's expenditure on national HIV response groups in 2010 and 2011 accounted for 20% of the total Healthcare budget for each year (US\$2.1 million and US\$2.5 million respectively) (AIDS Data Hub, 2012). The ATFF also receives funding and support from international sources, notably the Australian and New Zealand Government's alongside United Nations Agencies (AIDS Data Hub, 2012). The figures below provide further insight into the HIV/AIDS Budget between 2015 and 2016, demonstrating the growing need of the Fijian community for continued support for this issue (UN Aids, 2016). The national HIV response programs, especially the ATFF, remain highly dependent on international donations.

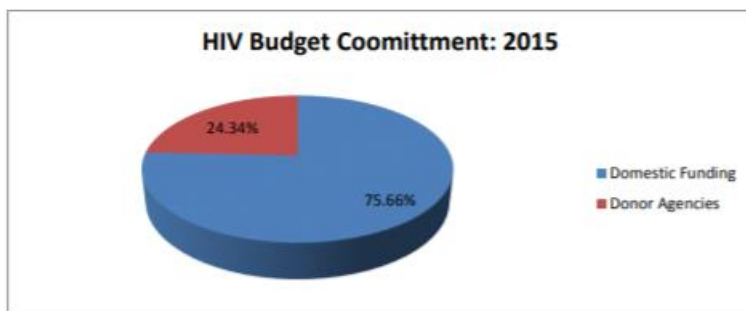


Figure 21: Financing Sources for Fiji

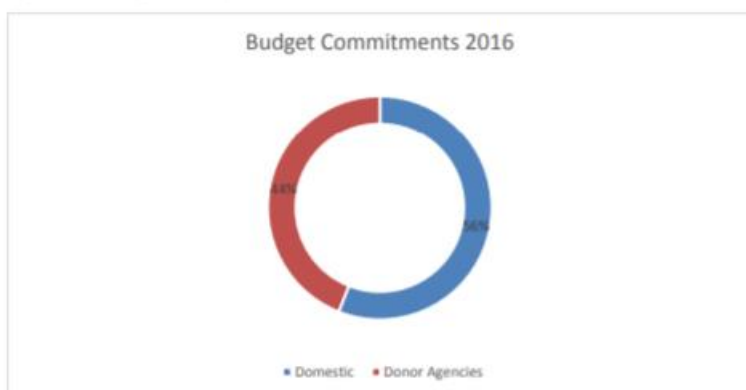


Figure 22: 2016 Budget Commitments

The bulk of expenditure in the AIDS Spending Category is attributed to Prevention [Target 1] – Table 1 and figure 23].

ASC	Amount (\$)
Target 1: Treatment, Care & Support	\$154,972.00
Target 2: Prevention of Vertical Transmission of HIV	\$77,152.00
Target 3: Prevention	\$355,660.00
Target 7: Community Mobilization	\$32,224.00
Target 8: Government & Sustainability	\$12,145.00
Target 9: Critical Enablers	\$10,235.00

Table 1: AIDS Spending Contribution

SOURCE: AIDS Data Hub, 2012.

NATIONAL CSO CASE STUDY #2:

Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM)

a) *Who are we?*

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement began in April 1986 with the aim of promoting women's socio-economic and political status within Fiji (FWRM, 2018). Based on the foundations of feminism, human rights, multiculturalism, and fair lawful governance the organisation remains a prominent force in the promotion of women's rights throughout Fiji (FWRM, 2018).

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Members

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Board Chair	Makareta Waqavonovono
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Founding Member	Imrana Jalal
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Treasurer	Shradha Sharma
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Board Members	Virisila Buadromo, Anna Cowley, Ashlyn Lal, Neomai Maravuakula, Esetea Nadakuitavuki, Natasha Khan, Liliwaimanu Vuiyasawa
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b) Key Mission Statement

“For the women of Fiji to be free from all forms of discrimination, have equal access to opportunities, and to live in a health environment where the principles of feminism, democracy, good governance, multi-culturalism, and human rights prevail!” (FWRM, 2018).

The objectives of the FWRM remain to publically promote and address issues of women’s rights, status, and opportunity through Fiji, to advocate for better legislative promotion of women’s rights in Fiji, to promote equal access of services and opportunity for women in Fiji, and to ensure the sustainability of the organisation throughout Fiji and the Pacific (FWRM, 2018).

c) What services do we provide?

The FWRM provides a number of services which are aimed at the empowerment and advocacy of women’s rights in Fiji. One such initiative is the Intergenerational Women’s Leadership Program which is aimed at the development and enhancement of the leadership capabilities of young Fijian females aged ten to twenty-five years (FWRM, 2018). The program aims to develop the leadership and advocacy skills of young women in national, regional, and international levels through workshops and education materials (FWRM, 2018). Another key program of the FWRM is the Women’s Employment Rights initiative, which works to promote the reformation and advancement of women’s working rights in Fiji (FWRM, 2018). The FWRM’s work in employment reform began in the late 1990’s with the goal of tackling the social and economic disadvantages against women following the labour reform’s occurring in Fiji during this time (FWRM, 2018). Alongside these programs the FWRM maintains a number of other services, including promotion of citizenship rights, Women’s access to justice, and a number of leadership forums based around the promotion of women.

d) Funding and Budget

The FWRM maintains partnership networks based on advancing gender equality with a number of other organisations and state-funded programs. Partners include the Pacific Sexual Reproductive and Health Rights (SRHR) Feminist Coalition, Pacific Partnership on Gender, Climate Change and Sustainable Development (PPGCCSD), Asia Pacific Forum on Women,

Law and Development (APWLD), Development Alternatives for Women for Women in a New Era (DAWN) and the Pacific Young Women Leadership Alliance (PYWLA) (FWRM, 2018). The PYWLA is composed of a number of regional and United Nations Organisations, including the UNFPA, UNWOMEN, and UNICEF (FWRM, 2018).

The FWRM receives funding from the Australian Government, with current aims to spend approximately AUD\$26 million in the decade spanning 2012 and 2022 on women's empowerment in Fiji (DFAT, 2019). In 2017, a specific program was set up within the Australian Government to support the FWRM, with goals to transition from an independent local group with secure donor funding through private sector and local donations by the year 2022 (DFAT, 2019). The Fund is located in Suava, nearby the headquarters of the FWRM, governed by a Committee comprising of members coming from the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, DFAT, women's civil society and the private sector (DFAT, 2019).

NATIONAL CSO CASE STUDY #3:

Foundation for the People of the South Pacific International (FSPI)

a) Who are we?

The Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific International is a regional network of which ten independent CSO's work together in the Pacific for the reasons of enabling self-sustainability and development (FSPI, 2019). The FSPI is an non-government organisation recognised under the Charitable Act Trust of Fiji committed to working together towards the common goals of self-reliance, justice, peace, and sustainable development (PCCP, 2019).

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Type of organisation Indigenous Peoples/Local Community Organisation

Location Fiji

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b) Key Mission Statement

FSPI's mission it to work within the Pacific Island region and community centred programs to foster self-reliance and a sense of partnership (FSPI, 2019). This is done through development projects based on the identified needs of the community with the aims of improving quality of life throughout the Pacific (FSPI, 2019).

c) What services do we provide?

FSPI has implemented a number of initiatives aimed at the development and sustainability of the Pacific Island Region. One of these programs is the establishment of the CRISP Marine

Protected Areas, which is aimed to support the establishment and enforcement of effective community based Marine Protected Areas to improve the management of protected zones (FSPI, 2019). The aim of the program is to empower communities and local leaders to protect and manage the coastal biodiversity and ecosystems through the sustainable use of maritime resources in order to ensure the longevity and wellbeing of marine resources and habitats (FSPI, 2019). Other programs are similarly aimed at the empowerment and engagement of local communities in issues affecting Fiji and the Pacific Island region as a whole.

d) Partners

Partners are based in Timor–Leste, Fiji, Kiribati, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and metropolitan partners based in Australia and the USA (PCCP, 2019).

INTERNATIONAL NGO CASE STUDY #1:

Pacific Islands Association of NGO's (PIANGO)

a) Who are we?

The Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (PIANGO) is a regional network of NGO focal points or coordinating bodies known as National Liaison Units (NLU's) (NEXUS, 2019). PIANGO was formally established in 1991, and today boasts 23 member countries and territories throughout the Pacific (PIANGO, 2019). PIANGO serves the Pacific through strengthening the building the capacity of the civil society sector in member states through giving CSO's a voice in policy formulation and development (PIANGO, 2019).

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b) Key Mission Statement

PIANGO views its primary role in the Pacific Region to be in providing a, “catalyst for collective action, to facilitate and support coalitions and alliances on issues of common concern, and to strengthen the influence and impact of NGO efforts in the region.” (NEXUS, 2019). This is understood to be possible through providing NGO's in the Pacific a platform for initiating action and to work with other nations to enable fair and sustainable development (NEXUS, 2019).

c) What services do we provide?

PIANGO provides a number of services aimed at promoting the role of NGO's throughout the Pacific so as to ensure their significance in civil matters. The organisation maintains 23 member nations and territories, spread throughout the Pacific. The 2013-2015 PIANGO

Strategic Plan establishes a number of key goals which set the tone of the direction of PIANGO in the next decade (PIANGO, 2019). These include the envisioning of a facilitated building of Pacific Expert ideas and solutions for Pacific issues within the context of the region in order to build a community of leadership and peace between member states (PIANGO, 2019). The organisations major aims include strengthening the CSO platform in the Pacific, ensuring effective development, using evidence-based policy advocacy, and ensuring the development of Pacific Island Leadership (PIANGO, 2019).

d) Funding, Budget and Partners

In March of 2014 PIANGO was appointed as the Regional Coordinator for the Pacific region, allowing it to receive funding for activities through the International Forum of National Platforms (PIANGO, 2019). Additional funding has been secured through the African Disability Alliance for domestic projects in five of the Pacific Island nations (including in Fiji) (PIANGO, 2019). Non-state partners of PIANGO include Bread for the World, the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness, the International Forum of the National NGO Platforms, and the Pacific Island Forum (PIANGO, 2019). Member Countries are listed below (PIANGO, 2019):

<u>Country</u>	<u>National Liaison Unit</u>
Australia	ACFID – Australian Council for International Development
American Samoa	American Samoa Association of NGOs (ASANGO)
Cook Islands	CICSO – Cook Islands Civil Society Organisation
Federated States of Micronesia	FANGO – Federated States of Micronesia Association of NGOs
Fiji	FCOSS – Fiji Council of Social Services
Guam	Pay’uta
Kiribati	KANGO – Kiribati Association of NGOs
Marshall Islands	MICNGOs – Marshall Islands Council of NGOs
Nauru	NIANGO – Nauru Island Association of NGOs

New Caledonia / Kanaky	UTLN Kanaky – Unité Territoriale de Liaison de Nouvelle-Calédonie Kanaky
New Zealand / Aotearoa	CID – Council for International Development
Niue	NIANGO – Niue Association of NGOs
Papua New Guinea	PNGCSOF – Papua New Guinea Civil Society Forum (Interim NLU)
Samoa	SUNGO – Samoa Umbrella of NGOs
Solomon Islands	DSE – Development Services Exchange
Tahiti	Hiti Tau
Tonga	CSFT – Civil Society Forum of Tonga
Tuvalu	TANGO – Tuvalu Association of NGOs
Vanuatu	VANGO – Vanuatu Association of NGO

Interim Members

Bougainville	Nikana Ma’atara
East Timor	FONGTIL – Forum NGO Timor Leste
Palau	PCAA – Palau Community Action Agency
Wallis and Futuna	Association Culturelle de Vailala
West Papua	

Observers

Hawaii

INTERNATIONAL CSO CASE STUDY #2:

Habitat for Humanity (H4H)

a) Who are we?

Habitat for Humanity began operating in Fiji in 1991 through its Australian branch, and has since assisted in the building of homes for over 70,000 Fijians (Habitat for Humanity, 2019). H4H's projects focus on disaster response and relief through temporary housing and housing repair projects. When required they also provide the capabilities of improving damaged infrastructure, improvement of water and sanitation systems for rural and remote communities, and disabled housing access (Habitat for Humanity, 2019).

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b) Key Mission Statement

“Seeking to put God’s love into action, Habitat for Humanity brings people together to build homes, communities, and hope.” (Habitat for Humanity, 2019).

c) What services do we provide?

The H4H initiatives in Fiji are largely based on supporting communities following disasters and constructing liveable and suitable infrastructure. One program, started in 2010, is the Community Water Projects called the ‘WASH Program’ which is based on constructing and improving infrastructure for water and sanitation systems in rural and remote communities throughout Fiji (PIANGO, 2012). Funding for this program is reliant on bilateral donors, amongst which includes the EU, the Japanese Embassy, Australian DFAT, and New Zealand Aid (PIANGO, 2012). As of 2019 the program has assisted over 5,000 families across 100

Fijian communities (PIANGO, 2012). Another significant service provided by H4H in Fiji is their Disaster Response initiative in which Fiji forms part of the task force designated for the Pacific region through the branches based in Australia and New Zealand (PIANGO, 2012). The program aims to provide immediate assistance to families affected by increasingly significant natural disasters, including hurricane and flood damage (PIANGO, 2012). The 2016 Cyclone Winston demonstrated the strengths of this program, which was able to assist in helping over 7,000 families through their Emergency Shelter Kits and throughout the following period H4H provided services in rebuilding and improving community water, hygiene, and sanitation training, as well as the rebuilding and recovery of houses and important facilities (PIANGO, 2012).

d) Budget, Funding and Partnerships

Habitat for Humanity is able to operate in Fiji largely through resources made available via partnerships with governments, bilateral and non-profit organizations and international volunteers (Habitat for Humanity, 2019). H4H maintains a charitable status, allowing it to claim tax concessions for fundraising as well as receive Australian Aid through DFAT, the Australian NGO Coordination Program, Civil Society Wash Fund, and the Australian Humanitarian Partnership (Habitat for Humanity, 2018). The total revenue of H4H Australia in 2017 was AUD\$6,457,852, up from AUD\$4,487,034 in 2016 (Habitat for Humanity, 2018). Grant funding from the Australian Government increased in 2018 from AUD\$1,135,396 to AUD: \$1,190,818 (Habitat for Humanity, 2018). Overall, there appears to be a recognition of the importance of funding the H4H programs throughout Australia including those in Fiji.

PALESTINE IN FIJI

a) Fiji's Diplomatic relations with Palestine

Whilst there has been some communication between Palestine and Fiji in recent years, both states are yet to establish formal diplomatic relations. In 2015 the Palestinian Ambassador to Australia, New Zealand, and Pacific Izzat Abdulhadi attended the Pacific Islands Development Forum in Fiji, marking a significant step in the dialogue between both states (Embassy of the State of Palestine, 2019).

b) Fiji's United Nations Voting Patterns

UN General Assembly Resolution 43/177 (Dec 1988) ABSENT

Taking place in 1988, the vote concerned the acknowledgement of the 'State of Palestine' in the UN. Fiji was absent from the General Assembly vote.

UNESCO Voting on Palestine Membership (Nov 2012) ABSTAINED

The UNESCO vote on whether Palestine should be accorded membership in 2012. Fiji abstained from voting, being one of fifty-two countries to do so, whilst Australia voted against the resolution.

UN General Assembly Resolution 67/19 (Dec 2012) ABSTAINED

Resolution 67/19 refers to the vote in the UN General Assembly to accord Palestine as a non-Member Observer State. Fiji abstained from voting, being one of the forty-one states to do so. Australia also chose to abstain.

UN General Assembly Resolution ES-10/L.22 (Dec 2017) ABSTAINED

The UN Emergency Session in late 2017 was focussed developing a consensus on whether US President Trump's decision to make Jerusalem Israel's capital should be "null and void". America was deeply against the vote, and threatened to jeopardise its relations with states

who voted to pass the resolution. Fiji abstained from voting, being one of thirty-five countries to do so. Australia also chose to abstain.

a) Fiji's Diplomatic relations with Israel

Fiji and Israel first established formal diplomatic relations in 1970, with the first major visit to Israel by a Fijian official representative taking place in 1978 (Wikipedia, 2019). Historically relations between the two states have been generally friendly. Fiji has been the biggest contributor of soldiers to UN Peacekeeping missions per capita, with the largest contingent of peacekeepers serving on the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) which is situated on Israel's South-West border (Levin, 2017). During Prime Minister Bainimarama's 2016 visit to the Middle East he shared his warm wishes 'on behalf of all Fijians', claiming that the special bond the two states share due to the extensive number of Fijian troops and their families who have spent time in Israel allows shared cultural experiences and understandings of one another (Government of Fiji, 2019). Israel's leadership in water technology is particularly appealing to Fiji, and discussions between the two states concerning proposals for an overturning on the way water is managed in the Fijian agricultural sector would offer Fiji, "a tailored approaches to crop production and farming practices that are better suited to the changing weather conditions caused by climate change" (Levin, 2017). In early 2016 Israel coordinated with its Canberra embassy and IsraAID to send a team of experts to assist in areas of water, shelter, livelihood, and personal wellbeing in Fiji following the wake of Cyclone Winston (Levin, 2017).

b) Official statements concerning Jerusalem

In 2016 the Fijian Prime Minister Bainimarama met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem during a visit to Israel (Reubers, 2016). Bainimarama, who was touring the Middle East at the time with the intention of discussing current UN Peacekeeping in the region, spoke to Israel in a plea concerning combating climate change (Reubers, 2016). Bainimarama's speech at the time pointed to a desire for closer relations between Israel and Fiji, with the Prime Minister stating, "I'm also looking forward to Israel's support, Sir, on a range of issues, on medical, on renewable energy, including agriculture, especially our effort to draw global attention to the need for more decisive action on climate change" (Reubers,

2016). The significance of an official diplomatic interaction between the two state leaders in the city is notable despite nothing specific being stated regarding Fiji's stance on Jerusalem.

a) Fiji's Diplomatic Relations with The United States

America first established diplomatic relations with Fiji in 1971 following its independence (US Department of State, 2019). Acting as a key power in the Pacific, the US was considered a leader in the region (particularly following the events of World War Two). However, in 2006 the Fijian military coup led to a distinct turn away from traditional western allies. Following the events of the coup the United States suspended \$2.5 million in aid and refused to recognise the interim government established following the events (Wikipedia, 2019). In response to deteriorating relations with Western allies, Fiji turned towards China and Russia.

In September of 2014 Fiji held its first democratic elections since the coup. These elections were supported by the US through a Multinational Observer Group consisting of 13 countries which assessed the elections as fair and free (US Department of State, 2019). After the 2014 elections the US reinitiated security assistance and lifted financial assistance restrictions it had placed on the Fijian Government in 2006 (US Department of State, 2019).

Currently USAID funds a number of regional projects assisting communities to access financing, build institutions and infrastructure, and adapt to climate change (US Department of State, 2019). The Ready Project is one which financially assists in supporting climate finance and management capabilities for the period spanning 2016-2021 (US Department of State, 2019). Fiji also receives Foreign Military financing in order to equip its military and participates in the International Military Education and Training Program (IMET) which sends Fijian officers and personnel to professional military training and development courses based in the US (US Department of State, 2019).

The US is amongst Fiji's key trade partners. Major imports into the US from Fiji include bottled water, tuna, and sugar, whilst the US imports to Fiji machinery, transport equipment, and food (US Department of State, 2019). Tourism is another area whereby the US contributes to Fiji's economy. Fiji remains a party to the US-Pacific Islands Multilateral Tuna Fisheries Treaty which provides \$21 million per annum to Pacific Island parties (US Department of State, 2019).

b) Fiji's Diplomatic Relations with Australia

Australia today is one of Fiji's largest trade and investment partners, with two-way goods and service trade reaching AUD\$2.05 billion in 2017 (DFAT, 2019). Australia largely exports wheat, liquefied propane and butane, meat and paper to Fiji, whilst its major imports include gold and textiles (DFAT, 2019). The major Australian export to Fiji remains travel and transport, and as of 2017 Australia remained Fiji's largest tourism market, accounting for over 43.4% of all visitors during this period (DFAT, 2019). Tourism is significant to Fiji's economic wellbeing, accounting for approximately 25% of the national GDP (DFAT, 2019). The Australian government remains a key investor in Fiji's FDI, valuing AUD\$1.34 billion in 2017 (DFAT, 2019).

Despite issues concerning diplomatic relations following the 2006 coup, Australian relations finally resettled to an all time high since the in 2019 coup. Australian Prime Minister Morrison and Fijian Prime Minister Bainimarama announced an elevation in the state's bilateral relations through the 'Fiji-Australia Vuvale Partnership' (Vuvale meaning 'family' in Fijian) (DFAT, 2019). The partnership aims to deepen security, economic, and social ties between the states and commits to greater bilateral political cooperation (DFAT, 2019).

c) List of Nations with Embassies Located in Fiji

Australia	Kiribati	Solomon Islands
Cuba	Malaysia	South Africa
China	Marshall Islands	Spain
France	Micronesia	South Korea
India	Nauru	Tuvalu
Indonesia	New Zealand	United Kingdom
Japan	PNG	United States

Accredited Embassies located in Canberra (Includes Israel amongst a number of others)

PALESTINE-FIJI: COMMON AREAS OF INTEREST

A) Role of China and Russia in the Pacific

Following the 2006 military coup in Fiji there was a turn away from traditional western partners towards China and Russia. In July 2007 Interim Finance Minister to Fiji, Mahendra Chaudhry, outlined the state's new 'Look North' strategy whereby it recognised the power of wealthy Asian nations including China and Korea (Wikipedia, 2019). In September of 2019 China's Ambassador to Fiji Qian Bo stated that Fiji relations with China have never been stronger or more respected in both states (Boyle, 2019). Ambassador Bo stated, "We have reached a historical height. Last November, President Xi Jinping met with the Leaders of the South Pacific Island countries where Leaders of each of these countries agreed to lift the bilateral relations to a comprehensive strategic partnership featuring mutual respect and common development and cooperation agreements under the Belt and Road, education and tourism were signed, opening a new chapter in the development of bilateral relations." (Boyle, 2019).

China's role in Fiji is relevant due to its long sympathetic stance towards the conflict in Palestine. China has been sympathetically aware of the Palestinians since 1955, where at the Third World Conference at Bandung China voted for the repatriation of Palestinian refugees (Harris, 1977). In 1965, China became the first major power to diplomatically recognise the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, making it at the time the principle Arab World recipient of Chinese Aid (Harris, 1977). Beijing has long endorsed the establishment of an independent sovereign Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital and has refused to label Hamas as a terrorist organisation in accordance with believing its role in defending the Palestinians right to 'self determination' (Baroud & Rubeo, 2019). It is understood that China has long desired to take a larger role in resolving the Palestinian-Israeli issue, with Chinese Foreign Minister Hua Chunying stating in December of 2017 that, "*China's position on the Palestine issue is consistent. We support and actively promote the Middle East peace process. We support the just cause of the Palestinian people to regain their legitimate national rights... We are willing to continue offering constructive assistance to promote the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.*" (Goa, 2019).

The state of contemporary relations between Fiji and China is significant due to the threat it poses to western powers, specifically Australia and the US, operating in the region. China's increased activity in the Pacific comes as a result of China's Belt Road Initiative (BRI) which

has prompted competition with Australia for re-engagement with the Pacific (Mudaliar, 2018). Small island states wield proportionately significant power in international politics which is coveted both by China and the West (Mudaliar, 2018). China has thus increased its donations to the Fijian navy and maintains a strong policing relationship with Fiji, allowing it the power to initiate the arrest of native Chinese on Fijian soil (Mudaliar, 2018).

However, China lacks the economic leverage on Fiji that it has in other Pacific Island states, with Fiji's Attorney-General, Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, claiming that debt to China only accounts for 10.6% of Fiji's total government loans (Mudaliar, 2018). Contemporary Fiji relations with Western states also challenges China's role in Fiji, and as of 2016 Fijian-Australian relations had almost 'normalised' (Mudaliar, 2018). In late 2018 Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison declared a 'step up' in relations with Pacific Islands, pledging an AU\$3 billion package to boost military ties and fund local transport, water, and health projects (Pearlman, 2019).

Fiji's pursuit for non-traditional partners following the 2006 coup and subsequent abandonment from Australia, the EU, and the US, led to the increased presence of Russia in state affairs. The new Fijian government responded to the loss of its great power allies by launching a 'Look North' policy, seeking to diversify Fiji's foreign relations (Madaus, 2016). The 'Look North' policy was openly welcomed by China and Russia, who were both then and currently seeking to increase their influence in the South Pacific, both in order to strengthen their power in international affairs but also to weaken the hegemony of the US in the Pacific (Madaus, 2016).

In January 2016 Russia announced it would be making significant grants to the equipment and ordnance to Fiji in support of peacekeeping operations on the Golan Heights (Powles & Sousa-Santos, 2016). The deal for some observers was indicative of the ongoing consequences of Fiji's pivot away from the West and Russia's intention to continue battling for a role in the Pacific (Powles & Sousa-Santos, 2016). The deal also reflects the diminished relationship between Fiji and Australia and New Zealand (Powles & Sousa-Santos, 2016). Russia has asserted its desire for increasing its presence in the Pacific, with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov stating that "deepening interaction with the island nations of the South Pacific is an integral part of the Russian agenda in the region" (Powles & Sousa-Santos, 2016).

Most significantly, Fiji's strengthened ties with Russia, China, and other non-conventional, non-Western powers reflects a shift in the military culture and leadership which emerged from the Fiji's coup and subsequent period of isolation due to the extensive sanctions it suffered from the West (Powles & Sousa-Santos, 2016). Foreign Minister to Fiji Kubuanbola stated that "by diversifying our relations with such countries as Russia, we are creating greater stability for ourselves" (Powles & Sousa-Santos, 2016).

B) Environmental Concerns

One of the key areas of concern in contemporary Fijian politics surrounds issues of environmental protection and sustainability. Fiji, being an archipelago of over 300 islands, is faced with a number of resource challenges and environmental concerns due to escalating problems (Wycliffe, 2019). In recent years Fiji has put forward strategic measures towards achieving sustainable economic progress and development whilst conserving its environment and resources (Wycliffe, 2019). Fiji's economic basis being predominantly tourist-oriented means that it is heavily reliant on maintaining a relatively clean and waste-free protected environment (Wycliffe, 2019).

Fiji faces major issues concerning deforestation, unsustainable fishing practices, and the introduction of invasive species which has contributed to the destruction of natural coral reefs (Belson, 2018). Rising sea levels and subsequent erosion of Fiji's coastal areas along with intrusion of saltwater inland destroying farmland and forcing the movement of peoples has contributed to increasing concerns surrounding environmental policy (Belson, 2018). As there is a distinct lack of environmental concern in the policy of allied great power nations, it is an important area Fijian leadership might be looking to collaborate on.

Palestine too faces a number of key concerns surrounding environmental degradation and resource depletion, largely attributed to the Israeli occupation and increasing shifts in climate. The occupation of Palestine prevents the population from accessing and managing land and resources, particularly water which remains scarce in the region (Agha, 2019). The Palestinian Authorities (PA's) inability to pursue adaption policies comes as a direct consequence of the occupation, which has ensured significant consequences on the health and livelihood of Palestinian inhabitants (Agha, 2019). The Occupied Palestinian Territory now has some of the world's lowest per capita water availability, and as the main source of drinking water is sourced underground approximately half of this water is extracted and used for agriculture due to poorly designed Israeli policies (Agha, 2019). The Joint Water Committee, an organ of the Oslo Accords, prevents Palestinians from making water-related decisions without Israeli approval, obstructs access to the Jordan River, and denies Palestinians permits to capture runoff water in dams (Agha, 2019). Ultimately, environmental and resource-related concerns are of a considerably high priority to Palestine's agenda. In understanding this, there is a recognition that Fiji and Palestine might collaborate in areas of shared concern.

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