

RE-THINKING AND RE-FRAMING CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN FIJI - A STRATEGY FOR DEMOCRATICALLY CONTAINING FIJI'S MILITARY IN POLITICS

PRESENTED BY:

Raijeli Drodrolagi Nicole

FORMAL RESPONSES BY:

Dr. Megan Mackenzie, Political Science and International Relations (VUW)

SEMINAR INTRODUCED AND FACILITATED BY:

Dr. Teresia Teaiwa, Pacific Studies (VUW)

Monday 3rd of October

6pm – 7.30pm, Victoria University of Wellington, 6 Kelburn Parade

ABSTRACT: The 1987 military coup marked a turning point in Fiji's history with the military setting into motion its direct intervention in domestic politics. Since then, the country has had 4 coups, 3 constitutions, 4 general elections and at least a dozen governments. The December 2006 coup touted as the *coup to end all coups* belies the reality that the Fiji military is quite accustomed to intervening in domestic politics. Hence, the proposed 2014 elections raise the important question: what is the role of the military in post-election democratic times? This seminar argues that any re-democratisation project in Fiji needs to critically re-visit Fiji's civil-military framework. In doing so, the seminar, drawing on my dissertation "Civil-Military Relations in Fiji: A Concordance between the Military, Political Elites and the Citizenry" highlights Rebecca Schiff's "Theory of Concordance" (1995) as a framework to unpack civil-military relations (CMR) in Fiji and to articulate a possible pathway to regaining civilian control of the military. Schiff's point of departure from the dominant paradigms of CMR does not posit absolute separation between the key civilian and military institutions. Rather the theory suggests that effective civil-military relations can be realised via the extent to which the political elite, the military and civil actors find agreement, and accommodate one another in the definition of the values and objectives of the armed forces. Applying Schiff's theory to Fiji, the seminar will highlight ways in which the citizenry—specifically—civil society—can be empowered to *proactively* engage with the military. I propose an engagement that contains the military and opens up paths to free elections and democratic civilian rule.

BIO: Raijeli Drodrolagi Nicole recently completed her Masters in International Law and Politics at University of Canterbury. She has extensive experience in policy development, lobbying and advocacy work, working with NGOs, unions, employer groups and governments at the United Nations. She returned to New Zealand in December 2007 after holding the position of Executive Director of the Isis International-Manila, an international women's human rights info-com organisation that monitors and reports on Asia-Pacific governments' responses to women's rights and other development issues. She currently works at the Department of Internal Affairs in Christchurch.



Light refreshments will be provided
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