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STATE BUILDING RECONSIDERED: THE ROLE OF HYBRIDITY IN THE FORMATION OF POLITICAL ORDER

KEVIN P. CLEMENTS, VOLKER BOEGE, ANNE BROWN, WENDY FOLEY, AND ANNA NOLAN¹

Abstract: *This article argues that 'tradition' is not giving way to 'modernity' in the South Pacific. On the contrary, custom and tradition are enjoying something of a resurgence as actors in Melanesia and Polynesia rediscover the ways in which custom enables the development of resilient communities, strong social relationships and indigenous modes of dealing with conflict and restoring social harmony. Through the lens of 'political hybridity' (which argues that Weberian models of the state should not trump customary forms of governance and vice versa) this article argues that there are evolving hybrid institutions, blending the strengths of both traditional and modern cultures, that may be more appropriate to South Pacific cultures than conventional Westminster models. The argument is developed in relation to six Melanesian and Polynesian communities.*

Keywords: *political hybridity, State effectiveness, Melanesia*

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The problem of how to build state systems that

- (i) do 'justice' to indigenous cultures
- (ii) facilitate high levels of 'democratic' participation and
- (iii) ensure effective delivery of government services

continues to challenge bilateral, regional and multilateral development agencies in most parts of the world.

¹ The Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies has been commissioned by AUSAID to explore the concept of political hybridity in six case studies within the Pacific. We have been working to establish a framework that makes both theoretical and empirical sense. It has been an exciting intellectual endeavour. We welcome comments and criticisms on this perspective as we refine the ideas and do the field research. As Director of the Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, Professor Kevin Clements acknowledges the important contributions of each of his co-authors.

The dilemma is how 'stable and well established democracies' can work with less democratic regimes in order to build capable, effective, legitimate and relatively uncorrupt state institutions in situations of poverty, inequality, corruption and structural instability. Francis Fukuyama framed the problem as follows: 'Can informal institutions embedded within social norms [or *'hybrid institutions'*] be made to work more effectively for development outcomes in the absence of a functioning Weberian state system?'²

It is probably more useful, for both analytical and policy purposes, to adapt Fukuyama's question in order to focus attention on whether new kinds of 'hybrid' political institutions can evolve that will combine the comparative advantages of both the classic Weberian system and traditional or customary institutions.

In most countries in Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia, for example, the modern OECD model of the state has not evolved as predicted, and what state institutions exist are largely incapable of meeting the specific political, economic and social needs of different countries and cultures within the region. Similarly, customary and traditional forms of order have been challenged and in many cases severely undermined by colonial rule and market capitalism and have often been usurped by individuals and groups for specific partisan interest rather than the common good of a village, community or province.

This means that individual security is neither guaranteed by the state nor by traditional mechanisms, and individuals and groups find themselves caught between tradition and modernity without conventions or institutions to guide appropriate economic, political or social behaviour. The challenge facing analysts and policy makers, therefore, is how to think about this problem in non-dualistic ways so that the Weberian state does not trump traditional order or vice versa. In other words, how can we think about this problem in a way that combines the strengths of both modern and customary systems in a new form of political organisation?

Socio-cultural evolutionary theory as proposed by theorists such as Ferdinand Toennies, Max Weber and Talcott Parsons³ assumed change processes that are irresistible and universal. Evolutionary theory argues that societies move in a more or less linear direction from traditional to modern forms of economic, social and political forms of organisation. In the process of evolution, state institutions become differentiated and acquire a measure of autonomy from traditional economic and social systems. In Max Weber's view, the mark of a 'developed' state is that it has separate administrative, representative and executive capacities and has a 'monopoly of coercive force' so that it is able to control the territory under its sovereign jurisdiction. At a minimum, states should be able to counter any resistance to legitimate authority and (more optimally) provide basic services in order to 'win' popular legitimacy. In this evolutionary process from traditional to modern, it is assumed that modernity will trump tradition. It will do so because market forces and industrialisation will generate irresistible dynamics in favor of possessive individualism, justified by ideologies or myths such as consumer sovereignty in the economy and citizen sovereignty in the polity. What evolutionary theory seems to have ignored, however, is the strength, resilience and persistence of custom and tradition both as a source of identity and as a means of organising social, economic and political systems in a modern, globalised world system.

National and global capitalism has not succeeded in trumping traditional economies, and representative democratic institutions have not completely replaced customary or traditional rules and rulers. On the contrary, there has been a 'radical' reassertion of tradition and the importance of a relatively undifferentiated approach to social, economic and political

² Lecture by Francis Fukuyama to Ausaid, February 2006.

³ Ferdinand Toennies, *Community and Society* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1957); Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (London: Macmillan, 1949); and Talcott Parsons, *Societies: Evolutionary and Comparative Perspectives* (New York: Random House, 1966).

organisation in a variety of high and low context cultures.⁴ This can be viewed both positively and negatively. The articulation of tradition and custom can generate a strong sense of continuity, trust, and order in complex social systems. Negatively, tradition can also be used as a justification for practices which are reactionary and negative for groups such as women and youth. Custom is sometimes used to justify patriarchy and patterns of domestic violence, for example, and may also be used to negate the positive contribution of youth in cultures which venerate age. The challenge confronting development specialists, policy makers and agents of change is how to work with traditional authorities as they focus on how to play a progressive role for the life and well-being of their communities in the 21st century.

Nowhere is this more important than in relation to the development of appropriate mechanisms for ensuring the security of individuals and groups, involving appropriate forms of community governance and effective machinery for the peaceful settlement of individual and collective grievances. These issues are normally assumed to be the preserve of the state (at both local and national government levels). In many conflict zones, however, state systems fail in their duty of care and are a primary source of insecurity for citizens. They are incapable of delivering security, order, predictability and essential services such as education and health. Far from creating environments, therefore, within which robust markets can emerge, the state system is often a primary source of predation and an impediment to economic growth or what might be called 'affluent subsistence'.

This has given rise to the 'fragile, failed and failing state' literature which focuses attention on the problems that generate failed and failing states, such as rampant corruption, predatory elites, an absence of the rule of law, and severe ethnic and religious divisions. The 'fragile state' literature argues that there will be no development without security and there will be no security without strong and legitimate state systems capable of imposing their will on potentially recalcitrant citizens.⁵

The solution to vulnerability, therefore, is the development of an effective military, police and penal capacity as the first and most pressing imperative confronting modern state systems. The failed and failing state perspective has been quite influential with policy makers in the last five years, with the result that much attention has been dedicated to enhancing state effectiveness so that state systems can control their populations and territory, in order to reduce their vulnerability to and capacity to do violence.

While the diagnosis might be correct, the prescriptions thus far have not been particularly successful and in some instances have enhanced the repressive capacities of the state without increasing the security of citizens. These initiatives have by and large reasserted the centrality of a strong state system based on classic 'Westphalian principles' in the absence of either the historic, economic or geographical conditions that make such systems possible.

They have emphasised respect for the sovereign equality of nation states externally without, in many instances, a corresponding respect for the dignity and basic rights of all people within the state. A good case could be made that much of this literature has focused too much attention on state entitlements without paying the same attention to state responsibilities both internally and externally.

⁴ In a 'high context culture' like Vanuatu, for example, there has been a strong and robust reassertion of the importance of 'Kastom' and the power of traditional chiefs. In a 'low context culture' like the Vatican, the current Pope has revived the tridentine Latin Mass and reasserted the primacy of traditional Catholicism over all other branches of Christianity. Both of these examples illustrate how traditional behaviour can reassert itself even in modern and post-modern times.

⁵ Foreign Policy and Fund for Peace, *The Failed States Index*, Washington Foreign Policy, July-August 2005; see also Foreign Policy and Fund for Peace, *The Failed States Index*, Washington, Foreign Policy, 2007.

Ashraf Ghani and others⁶ have responded to some of these criticisms in their analysis of what they call the 'sovereignty gap'. This refers to the incapacity of most states in the developing world, and certainly most states in Melanesia, to protect citizens and extend basic services to the whole population.

Ghani *et al* reiterate the mantra that most developing states have limited internal accountability and responsibility and do not possess a monopoly of force. Their solutions, however, still focus on enhancing good governance and the central functions of the state in the hope that this will generate the conditions within which development can take place. In this view, 'trickle down' will only occur once development assistance has 'trickled up' to reinforce central state functions! The underlying concept of the state that they propose remains some variation on the European OECD model, without much practical appreciation of other non-state sources of order, stability and development. Indeed, it is somewhat surprising how little of this literature considers state-civil society relationships, and more surprising still how little attention is given to the relationships between state systems, civil society and customary orders. It is simply assumed that if state systems can be made capable, effective and legitimate, they will fulfill something akin to the traditional Weberian functions of the state.

The challenge facing policy makers is not so much the goals of state capability, effectiveness and legitimacy as what constitutes appropriate means to achieve these ends. This article argues that until customary norms, values and institutions are taken seriously, and incorporated directly into state building dynamics, these goals will remain elusive.

OECD-style states are in the minority rather than a majority within the United Nations. Most states in developing parts of the world, and in particular within Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia, represent what can be called 'hybrid' political orders. The locus of much social order and effective governance in these states resides in non-state forms of customary rule rather than in government institutions. This does not mean that these states should be seen from the perspective of 'state incompleteness', nor from the perspective of either 'not yet' properly built or 'already' failed. Rather than thinking in terms of 'fragile states', it is theoretically more appropriate and practically more fruitful to think in terms of hybrid political orders. Instead of assuming that the complete adoption of Western state models is the most appropriate avenue for conflict prevention, security, development and good governance, therefore, it might be more appropriate to focus on models of governance which draw on the strengths of social order and resilience embedded in community life. Without wishing to idealise custom and tradition we hypothesise that this holds particularly true for societies in the Pacific. Hybrid models which genuinely blend or combine traditional and modern norms and practices are more likely to deliver effective, functioning and legitimate outcomes, precisely because they build on the hybridity and multiplicities of existing political orders.

The current political and scholarly debate about state fragility and state-building thus frames the issues at stake too narrowly. It sometimes sees only the problems (real though they are) without also taking into account the strengths of the societies in question, acknowledging their resilience and encouraging indigenous creative responses to the problems and strengthening their own capacities for endurance.

Talking about 'weak' states, for example, implies that there are other actors on the domestic socio-political stage that are strong in relation to the state. In the states of the Pacific, the state is only one actor among others. The state order is only one of a number of orders claiming to provide security, frameworks for conflict regulation and social services.

⁶ See Ashraf Ghani, Clare Lockhart and Michael Carnahan, 'Closing the Sovereignty Gap: How to turn failed states into capable ones', *ODI Opinions* 44, July 2005.

In Melanesia, for example, neither colonial rulers nor post-colonial governments have been capable of establishing a legitimate state monopoly of violence in the territories that became independent nation states. In particular, they have not been able to impose effective control over the peripheral outlying areas of their own state territory. There is a considerable sovereignty gap in these systems. Effective control cannot be exerted over the whole state and services cannot be provided by central state institutions. Although state institutions claim authority within the boundaries of a given state territory, only 'outposts' of the state can be found in large parts of that very territory. It is a societal environment that is to a large extent 'stateless'. The state has not (yet) permeated the whole of society.

Having no state institutions, however, does not mean that there are no institutions at all. Rather, traditional non-state societal institutions are of major importance. Traditional societal structures – extended families, clans, religious brotherhoods, village communities – and traditional authorities such as village elders, headmen, clan chiefs, healers, religious leaders, etc. determine the everyday social reality of large parts of the population in developing countries even today, particularly in remote peripheral areas. Legitimacy rests with these actors, and not with state institutions, and this lack of legitimacy is a decisive feature of a state's fragility. Thus state fragility is not only a problem of political will, functions, institutions and powers of enforcement and implementation, but also a problem of preferences, perceptions and indigenous legitimacy.

State fragility, therefore, has two sides to it: fragility with regard to functions and effectiveness, and fragility of legitimacy. People on the ground often do not perceive themselves as 'citizens of the state' (at least not in the first place). They identify themselves instead as members of some sub- or trans-national, non-state societal entity (kin group, tribe, village). For them it is *the community* that provides the nexus of order, security and social safety, and not the state.

This has extraordinary consequences for their (dis)loyalty to the state. People are loyal to 'their' group (whatever that may be); legitimacy and authority rests with the leaders of that group, and not with the state authorities. 'The state' is perceived as an alien external force, 'far away' not only physically (in the capital city), but also mentally. This of course significantly reduces the capacity of state institutions to fulfil core state functions effectively.

The 'fragile states' discourse with its focus on a functioning and effective state organisation is in danger of missing a critical point: the relative disengagement of the people on the ground from the introduced state.⁷

What we are seeing in countries as diverse as New Zealand, Australia and most of Melanesia and Polynesia is that traditional actors and institutions, customary law and indigenous knowledge have shown considerable resilience and in many places are enjoying a resurgence that defies 'modernisation' theory. It is the indigenous actors and institutions that provide what order there is in the peripheral territories of each state. They form an integral and important dimension of local governance – all the more so as the state's 'outposts' are mediated by 'informal' indigenous societal institutions that implement their own logic and their own rules within the (incomplete) state structures.

The infiltration of the 'outposts' of the state distracts them from the ideal type of 'proper' state institutions, e.g. clientelistic networks penetrate state institutions, with kinship ties determining who is in charge and how the 'outposts' actually operate. State institutions are captured by social forces who make use of them not in the interest of the state and its citizenry, but in the interest of traditional kinship-based entities. Hence the complaints about clientelism

⁷ For instance, in their presentation of the functions of the modern sovereign state Ghani *et al* do not address these important issues of state-civil society relationships and legitimacy: see Ghani, Lockhart and Camahan, 'Closing the Sovereignty Gap: How to turn failed states into capable ones'.

and nepotism (*wantokism* in the Melanesian context), parochialism, corruption and inefficiency with regard to state authorities and the public service.⁸ On the other hand, the intrusion of state agencies has an impact on the local societal orders as well. Customary systems of power and rule are subjected to deconstruction and re-formation as they are incorporated into modern state structures and processes.

An additional important dimension of societal and political life in fragile states is the emergence and growing importance of new non-state institutions, movements and formations. This is a consequence of poor state performance, and their activities contribute to the further weakening of state structures. In situations where state agencies are incapable of or unwilling to deliver security and other basic services, people not only rely on their traditional societal structures, but also increasingly turn to other social entities for support since those are perceived as more powerful and effective: warlords and their militias in outlying regions, gang leaders in townships and squatter settlements, ethnically based protection rackets, millenarian religious movements, transnational networks of extended family relations or organised crime, new forms of tribalism – but also NGOs and other elements of civil society and local or global social movements. These new formations often are linked to traditional societal entities and try to use them for their own goals (power, profit, and so on).

Finally, developments at the international level, induced by the various aspects of globalisation, also put pressure on the state in its conventional form as a 'nation-state'. The state-building approach hence is not only at odds with local traditional forms of social and political order in the Pacific and other regions of the Global South, but it also has to cope with the fact that certain functions of the state are challenged by international developments such as the evolution of international regimes, the emergence of an international civil society, the growing importance of a global capitalist economy, the World Trade Organisation and other international organisations.

Regions of fragile statehood thus are places in which diverse and competing claims to power and logics of order and behaviour co-exist, overlap and intertwine: the logic of the 'formal' state, the logic of traditional 'informal' societal order, and the logic of globalisation and international civil society, as well as societal fragmentation in various forms (ethnic, tribal, religious). Thus what we call 'hybrid political orders' combine elements of the introduced Western model and elements stemming from local indigenous traditions of governance and politics.

Hybrid political orders differ considerably from the modern Western-model state. Governance is carried out by an ensemble of local, national and international actors and agencies. In this environment, state institutions are dependent on the other actors – and at the same time are restricted by them. Hybrid political orders can also be perceived as, or can become, 'emerging states'. Prudent policies could assist the emergence of new types of states, drawing on the Western state model, but acknowledging and working with the hybridity of particular political orders. This might be of particular significance in the Pacific Islands, where small populations and narrow economic bases can weaken the potential for generating state revenue.

In our view, attempts at state-building that ignore or fight hybridity are likely to experience considerable difficulty in generating functioning, effective and legitimate systems.

Recognising the hybridity of political order should be the starting point for any endeavours that aim at conflict prevention, development and security. One has to search for ways and means of constructive interaction and positive mutual accommodation of modern state

⁸ See Jane Turnbull, 'Solomon Islands: Blending Traditional Power and Modern State Structures in the State', *Public Administration and Development*, volume 22, 2002, pp. 191-201.

and traditional local as well as civil society mechanisms and institutions. A central question is how to articulate formal state-based institutions, informal traditional institutions and civil society institutions, so that new forms of statehood emerge which are more capable and effective in Pacific Islands circumstances rather than according to strictly Western models of the state.

Pursuing such an approach means emphasising the positive potential rather than the negative features of the current situation: not to stress weakness, fragility, failure and collapse, but hybridity, generative processes, innovative adaptation, opportunity and ingenuity. This also means approaching community resilience and customary institutions as assets that can be drawn upon in order to forge constructive relationships between communities and governments, and between customary and introduced political and social institutions. An approach to state-building that takes account of, and supports, the constructive potential of local community, including customary mechanisms where relevant, is a necessary complement to strengthening central state functions and the political will of state representatives. The main problem is not the fragility of state institutions as such, but the lack of constructive linkages between the institutions of the state and society. The organic rootedness of the state in society is decisive for its strength and effectiveness. Hence engaging with communities is as important as working with governments and central state institutions.

Given the importance of legitimacy for state stability or fragility, the development of a sense of citizenship is an essential component of state-building, at least as important as functioning and effective state capacities.⁹ Institutions of governance can only be effective and legitimate if the people have a sense of 'ownership'. Citizenship and the interface between state and society, rather than only the quality of state institutions in themselves, are therefore critically important to enhancing the effectiveness of state institutions in emerging states. Unfortunately, building citizenship has so far received much less attention and support than building central government institutions.

There are often real frictions between people's customary identity as members of traditional communities and their identity as citizens of modern ('nation'-) states and society. Nevertheless, a broadly constructive interaction of these identities is essential for building citizenship and state under conditions of hybrid political order. Engagement with, not rejection of, customary community-based identities is a necessary part of citizenship formation.

It is on these grounds that we consider that agencies working on enhancing state effectiveness should focus not only on the core functions of the state but on the fundamental community sources of legitimacy as well. State functions are not an end in themselves, but a means to provide citizens with development, internal and external peace, and human security. Under conditions of political hybridity these goals may be better served by supporting positive mutual accommodation than by concentrating solely on the institutions of the state. The relationship between state institutions and other sources of social order may be constructive, but it might also be destructive or neutral. The challenge is to find ways of supporting constructive interaction. In order to assess the potential for new types of exchange between state and society it is useful to address three core dimensions of the relationship between the state and the other elements of hybrid political orders, namely:

substitution, i.e. the identification of functional equivalents of the state outside state institutions. The relation between these functional equivalents and state functions needs more thorough investigation which might lead to the next category:

⁹ Of course, both tasks are closely linked: effective state institutions will enhance the legitimacy of the state, and a notion of citizenship will make the establishment and the functioning of state institutions easier; however, each is a separate task that deserves its own specific approach.

complementarity, i.e. the identification of areas of overlap between modern state approaches and customary approaches. This will lead to the investigation of potential for or actual articulation with state institutions; and finally:

incompatibility, i.e. the identification of customary approaches that conflict with modern state approaches.

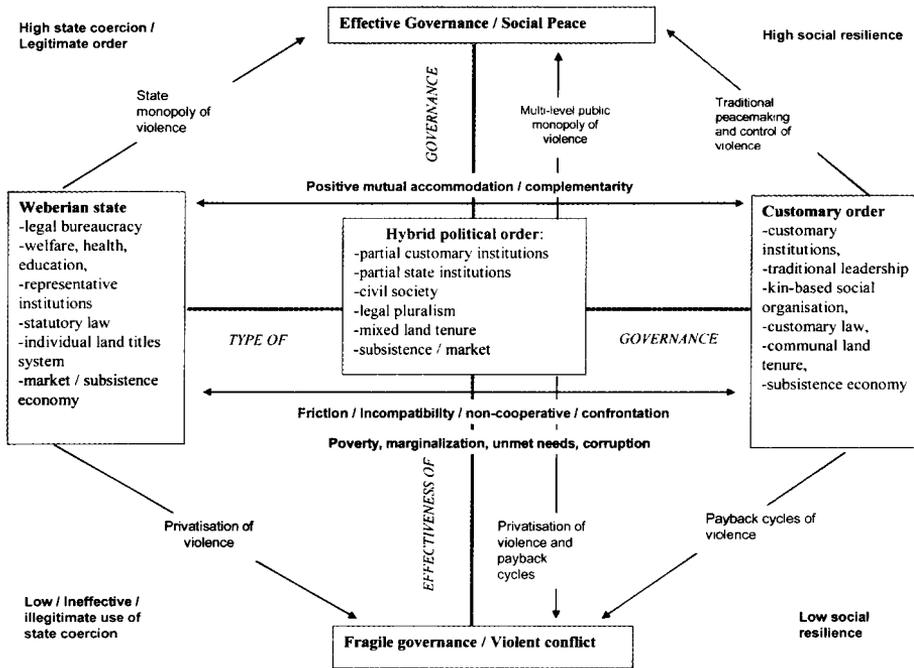
Assessing core state functions in the light of the three dimensions of substitution, complementarity and incompatibility enables both a richer and a more realistic analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of Pacific Island states. It underpins a broader understanding of what a functioning and effective state might look like in the Pacific and would also help identify ways to support the emergence of such states.

The development of more fully legitimate state processes in the Pacific, grounded in community life, will necessitate a sophisticated, ongoing, flexible process of exchange between the local-endogenous and the introduced-exogenous systems. There is no guarantee that this process of exchange will always be successful; it is an open question whether societal and political life in the so-called fragile states in the Pacific region can sustain this – not least depending on the political will of main actors. However, we hold the view that societies in the Pacific region have – if compared to other regions in the Global South – specific advantages that give reasons for optimism.

To summarise: functioning and effective statehood means that internal and external actors need to focus as much attention on the dimensions of legitimacy and citizenship as they do on strengthening the core functions of the state. It is our contention, based on working in Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands and Timor Leste [East Timor], that building new forms of state and citizenship that are based on a positive mutual accommodation between the Weberian state and customary order will transform hybrid political orders into emerging states that – in the long run – will generate new forms of governance beyond the model Western state. Thus in addition to enhancing the state through reinforcing its core functions, a model of governance that is more sensitive to the multi-stranded character of political order in the Pacific will produce more realistic assessments of social and political resilience and the potential for serious violent conflict. In order to develop this new thinking it is important to have some schematic representation of a model that encompasses ideal types and realistic possibilities. The schema represented below is a heuristic device that enables us to begin analysing and understanding the extent to which ‘modern’ Weberian types connect with ‘traditional’ types of governance. It should help us understand something of the relationship between forms of government and types of political leadership, political responsibility and new concepts of citizenship. If we can understand these better and build institutions around and from them it should be possible to generate higher levels of political accountability, legitimacy and effectiveness.

The schema focuses attention on ways in which there might be a more intentional blend between traditional and modern forms of governance, with neither having either a theoretical or practical primacy. By applying the concepts of substitution, complementarity and incompatibility it should be possible to begin mapping where the Weberian state and traditional conventions and institutions have a comparative advantage. Where no obvious advantage can be identified a case can be made for the development of ‘hybrid’ forms that build on the strengths of both systems. In all of this, the aim is to build on the strengths of community, to highlight how kin and other relationships can be made resilient and adaptable and how security might be guaranteed by both traditional and ‘modern’ institutions. Policy makers need to ensure that the Weberian model possesses a legitimate monopoly of violence and that communities are able to

generate high degrees of social resilience. This is best achieved by attending to the positive features of the spheres of state, civil society and customary rule.



The pursuit of positive synergies between modern and traditional orders (although this is a problematic dichotomy because of the bias towards modernism) always takes place within specific economic environments. In most parts of Polynesia and Melanesia these economic environments tend to be characterised by quite high levels of poverty, hardship and inequality. They are also biased towards urban rather than rural areas. The schema presented above is aimed at developing some research hypotheses on factors that advance or impede functioning, effective and legitimate political order.

In this schema there are three ideal types of political order and governance: namely, the ideal type of the Weberian state at one end, and the ideal type of non-state customary order on the other, with the hybrid political order in between the two. The Western OECD states come closest to the Weberian state in reality, while traditional Melanesian and Polynesian societies were forms of customary order (this type, however, can hardly be found any longer in today's world). In the Pacific region as well as in other parts of the Global South the hybrid type of political order dominates: it combines elements of both the Weberian and the customary ideal type, but normally in an unintentional and ad hoc fashion.

The three types can provide pathways to functioning, effective and legitimate governance and hence social peace, and all three types are susceptible to fragility or even collapse and violent conflict. Hybrid political orders, however, seem to be particularly vulnerable. The co-existence of state and customary institutions can be non-cooperative, incompatible or even confrontational and hence lead to frictions that cause fragility, failure and collapse.

Given the ubiquity of hybrid political orders in the Pacific and the Global South the challenge therefore is to take hybridity as a starting point for endeavours of state-building by means of positive mutual accommodation of state and customary institutions. This might lead to the emergence of new forms of the state that do not simply copy the Western Weberian model and that flow from high context cultures, combining strong social relationships, high social resilience, and effective and legitimate political institutions. Hybrid political orders need to be analysed in order to identify the dynamics that strengthen resilience and diminish fragility.

In order to do so it is useful to focus on the actors and institutions of the hybrid political order and ask who is doing what and how effective their efforts are. In this way it should be possible to develop a political map that will generate a more self-conscious division of labour between the state, civil society and custom. Some of the issues that need to be addressed include identifying who is:

- providing internal (and external) security;
- organising the legal system(s) and rule of law;
- providing basic social services;
- organising political representation and decision-making;
- organising leadership;
- generating political will and commitment of leaders;
- included and who excluded in socio-political networks;
- organising accountability.

Other issues that need to be raised include identifying:

- source(s) of legitimacy;
- source(s) of citizenship/social belonging;
- perceptions of the institutions of political order by the members of society;
- organisation of economic activities, access to and distribution of resources;
- sources and management of revenues for the fulfilment of political tasks;
- organisation of personnel for the fulfilment of political tasks.

These factors can then be analysed and assessed according to their contribution to an effective and legitimate form of governance (or the lack thereof). Following this methodology will, for example, show which (combination of) institutions and actors actually provide internal security: is it an institution of the state (the police) or a customary non-state institution (the elders) – or both? And what is the relation between the two – complementarity, substitution or incompatibility?

The assessment should indicate how effectively or ineffectively the particular function is fulfilled. Finally, the overall assessment of the sum of the factors will enable a positioning to be made of the given political order in the schema along the axes of the type of governance and the effectiveness of governance. This will allow for a comparison to be made of various countries. On the basis of such analyses and comparisons a reassessment and eventually a revision of current analytical approaches, as well as the current state-building approaches, can be conducted.

It is in this context that it is useful to focus on Pacific Island states and societies. Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, Bougainville, the Solomon Islands, East Timor and Tonga – to name a few – all provide different illustrations of hybridity in action. Over the past 25 years, for example, Vanuatu has been spared violent conflict and a disruption of state functions on a large scale. However, there is considerable conflict potential that could lead to conflict escalation.

Hence one might perceive the situation in Vanuatu as pre-conflict, with conflict prevention and state-building an urgent task. On the other hand, 'kastom' – the traditional social, cultural and political order – is still very strong in Vanuatu, for the most part determining the everyday life of the majority of Ni-Vanuatu people. The country is in a critical stage of its history as an emerging state, and the prospects for development, security and peace very much hinge on the establishment of functioning, effective and legitimate forms of governance.

The situation in Papua New Guinea is highly volatile, particularly in view of the 2007 general elections. The country has to struggle with its immense diversity and the stark differences in life-worlds within its boundaries. Both the political elite and the ordinary citizens are confronted with the challenges of harmonising customary ways of life and the needs and opportunities of modern society in an era of rapid change and globalisation. Violence in parts of the country is endemic, impeding developmental progress. Shortcomings and deficiencies of formal state institutions are obvious. On the other hand, as in Vanuatu, 'kastom' in large parts of the country still provides cultural orientation, social security and political order (at least to a certain extent). Like Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea is in a critical stage of its history as an emerging state. Both paths seem possible: further deterioration or stabilisation. The latter, again, depends on the implementation of good (or 'good enough') governance measures.

After almost a decade of war, Bougainville has over the last few years gone through a comprehensive process of post-conflict peace-building, one of the rare success stories of peace-building in today's world. Bougainville seems to have a good chance of becoming one of the equally rare success stories of state-building (be it in the context of Papua New Guinea or as an independent state). The reasons for this are that people on Bougainville are pursuing a new form of state-building that does not simply copy the Western model of the state. Rather, a home-grown variety of political order is in the making, utilising customary institutions that already have proven to be effective and efficient in peace-building. If all goes well on Bougainville, a positive accommodation of traditional non-state societal institutions and introduced state-based institutions will lead to a new political order providing a sound framework for peace, security and development. A more detailed analysis of the Bougainville case might provide insights into culturally contextualised forms of state-building useful for other emerging states.

The Solomon Islands likewise find themselves in a critical phase of peace-building and state-building. When compared to Bougainville, success seems more tenuous, although external intervention has put much effort into the process. After years of turmoil, violence was terminated and order restored by an external intervention force (RAMSI). These are important achievements. However, building sustainable peace and political order remains profoundly challenging. To what extent are difficulties encountered due to a too narrow focus on 'rebuilding' state institutions, ignoring the hybrid character of political order and the resilience of communities on the ground? A sense of lack of local ownership can also be the source of problems. Although RAMSI is presented as a 'regional' endeavour, it is very much perceived (both within the Solomons and externally) as an Australian project. Success or failure in the Solomons may have an important impact on Australia's future stance in the region. An analysis of the situation on the ground in the light of the approach outlined in this article could contribute to fresh thinking about prospects in the Solomons.

East Timor represents a somewhat different case from the others considered here, having a long history of embedded violence and occupation and an associated legacy of distrust and fractured political community. While there may be difficult international dimensions to its current state of low intensity conflict, it also provides many fascinating insights into the ways in which custom persists within the judicial and governmental sectors. Following the Indonesian withdrawal, East Timor has been the recipient of an extensive international state-building effort, with the early processes of institutional transfer occurring under the direct supervision of the

United Nations. Sadly, just over six years after the Indonesian withdrawal, the political, legal and security structures and systems at the heart of the new state have fractured, the capital (Dili) has to rely on international security forces, and an unexpected internal regional antagonism has emerged and hardened, splitting the capital and to some extent the country. Better understanding of the relationship between state-building efforts and how local people seek restoration of political community could contribute to better efforts in support of the emergence of a state in the context of post-conflict peace-building and what is likely to be a slow process of recovery.

In Tonga, a Polynesian chiefly system developed into a constitutional monarchy in the 19th century, with the contemporary political arena still dominated by the royal family and the nobility. The country (which was not directly colonised) has thus taken a different route from its Pacific Island neighbours in the interaction between indigenous and liberal political governance, and it has been associated with 'not the weakness of authority or the threat of anarchy, but an excess of authority'.¹⁰ Over the past decade, however, Tonga has been making very slow moves towards greater democratisation. Democratic transitions are dangerous, however; Tongan democratisation had been proceeding relatively peacefully until a riot in the capital city (Nuku'alofa) in November 2006 destroyed large parts of the city, leaving several people dead. These events were a traumatic experience for Tongan society, and their effects will be felt for a long time, both in the economic sphere (with a severe economic downturn) and in politics, making the process of democratisation much more difficult. A case study of Tonga provides an important counterpoint to the other studies, since the state system in that country has survived more or less in the same form for over 150 years. However, change dynamics are now in place, and the impact they will have on traditional patterns of hierarchy, power and control is likely to yield different insights into state fragility and state effectiveness.

These six cases provide different combinations of Weberian, traditional and hybrid orders and each requires further research and analysis to determine precisely how it might be possible to blend, separate, and combine different kinds of political order in order to strengthen social resilience, satisfy basic human needs, and generate peace, order and security. Most political analyses have endeavoured to reinforce, or impose, a particular Weberian model of the state, without any real recognition of the ways in which traditional and hybrid forms can generate different kinds of political behaviour, social and economic resilience, and long term sustainable structural stability. What is clear is that unless political hybridity is accorded more importance, the Weberian state systems will continue to be deficient and vulnerable; customary order will have difficulty generating the security it used to provide prior to colonisation and incorporation into the global capitalist economy; and the Melanesian and Polynesian states of the Pacific will become increasingly precarious. A focus on hybridity, on the other hand, will certainly enable more deliberate and intentional movement towards the New Zealand government's concept of 'good governance' in the Pacific. Without it, the prospects for achieving more capable, effective and legitimate governance will be problematic.¹¹

¹⁰ I. C. Campbell, 'Rock of Ages: Tension underlying Stability in Tonga', in Dennis Rumley *et al* (eds.), *Australia's Arc of Instability: The Political and Cultural Dynamics of Regional Security* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer Press, 2006), p. 274.

¹¹ NZAID defines 'Good governance as the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels, in a manner that is participatory, transparent and accountable. It is also effective and equitable and promotes the rule of law. Good governance ensures that political, social and economic priorities are based on broad consensus in society and the voices of the poorest and most vulnerable are heard in decision making over the allocation of development resources. It includes essential elements such as political accountability, reliable and equitable legal frameworks, respect for the rule of law and judicial independence, bureaucratic transparency, effective and efficient public sector management, participatory development and the promotion and protection of human rights': see NZAID, *Preventing Conflict and Building Peace*, Wellington, 2005, p. 5.