“Role of the Security Sector in the Democratic Transition in Fiji”,

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Professor Vijay Naidu,
School of Government, Development & International Affairs, University of the South Pacific
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Introduction

- Thanks to IDEA, the Government of the Republic of Mongolia - Chair of the Council of Member States of International IDEA in 2016 & NAM.

- Fiji is a small South Pacific archipelagic state-pristine tourist destination but also known as ‘coup coup land’!

- Multi-ethnic population of est. 900,000, 80% on ‘main island’ of Viti Levu

- Indigenous Fijians (iTaukei) (58%), Rotumans, Indo-Fijians (34%), Mixed –race people, Europeans, Chinese & other Pacific islanders –Melanesians, Polynesians and Micronesians.

- Multi-ethnic society but a predominantly single ethnic security sector, especially the military.
Security Sector & Overthrow of Democratic Governments

• British colony from 1874 to 1970

• Divide & Rule-independence constitution based on communal politics – issues around ‘democracy’

• Security Sector – military, police, prisons. Military and Peace keeping role.

• Military dominant & ethnic in character with 98% iTaukei –seen as underwriting chiefly power in governance of country. 3,500 regulars/ 1,600 reservists.

• 1987 May coup –overthrow Fiji Labour Party-led coalition government, returning Alliance Party leaders to power.

• 3 more coups to follow –September 1987; 2000; 2006.
The Security Sector’s Role in Transition to Democracy

• Almost 8 years of military dictatorship- oppressive rule by decree, & denial of human rights such as ‘Freedom of Expression’ & ‘Freedom of Association’

• 2012 Yash Ghai’s People’s Draft Constitution thrown out & 2013 Republic of Fiji Constitution imposed by Presidential proclamation

• Severe undermining of democratic processes – media, trade unions, civil society organisations.
The Security Sector’s Role in Transition to Democracy – Pros & Cons of 2013 Constitution

- Common National Identity
- Single National Constituency
- Open List Proportional Electoral System
- Multi-Party system
- General Election 17 Sept 2014
- Economic & Social Rights in Bill of Rights
- Secular State

- Immunity to military for coups (Chapter 10, 155-58)
- RFMF to ensure security, defence & wellbeing of Fiji & all Fijians
- Retention of all decrees from December 2006 to first sitting of parliament Oct 2013 (173 (2)
- MIDA
The Current Situation

• Executive very strong, Legislature & Judiciary weak

• Fiji First Party resounding success in 2014 General Elections close to 60% of votes cast & 32 seats in parliament

• SODELPA 15 MPs & NFP 3 MPs minus one each

• Bipartisan approach missing

• ‘Democratic institutions’ slow recovery.
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