

*The Bougainville Crisis and Politics
in Papua New Guinea*

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In its sixteenth year of independent statehood, the political regime in Papua New Guinea (PNG) remains a vibrant liberal democracy of the Westminster parliamentary type with extensive devolution of powers to nineteen provincial governments, each with its own elected assembly and cabinet. But having retained a unilateral capacity to alter functions between itself and the provinces, and having kept a tight hold on the revenue sources and the purse strings, the central government is not as constitutionally shackled as in a true federation. The public service and the judiciary are not decentralized.

From the pre-independence, self-government period of the early seventies right up to 1991, governments in Papua New Guinea have been coalition governments of up to five parties. The party system is highly fractionalized. The parties in it are a combination of feeble electoral machines that sputter into life just before elections and pragmatic parliamentary factions with no strong internal discipline, no abiding adherence to an ideology or party principles, and no deep loyalty to party leaders. Together with the coalition character of governments, these attributes of the party system have made the country's politics not only extremely open and tolerant, but also somewhat unstable and unpredictable.

Four genuinely free elections since 1972 have resulted in only one change, in 1982, of an incumbent government. But three changes of government through a vote of no confidence on the floor of Parliament, in 1980, 1985, and 1988, have occurred. The effectiveness of this method of changing government has been a factor in its frequent use. An atmosphere of government panic, lack of will, instability, and open auction of support of members of Parliament to the highest bidder has often resulted.

Have the fundamentals of PNG politics changed as a result of the Bougainville crisis? This paper will provide first an update of the Bougainville crisis to 15 November 1991, two and a half years after the giant Panguna copper mine was forced to close and a state of emergency was declared in the province, and more than eighteen months after the government abandoned the province to the rebels under a cease-fire agreement. Second, changes in policy or trends in the political process that can be attributed to the rebellion, or that have been hastened by it, will be addressed. Finally, I will attempt to answer the question: Where does it all lead to?

THE BOUGAINVILLE CRISIS: 15 NOVEMBER 1991

The devastation that has overtaken the North Solomons Province, the richest, the most advanced, sophisticated, and almost certainly the best run province in Papua New Guinea (Axline 1986), seems to confirm the essential vulnerability of progress in postcolonial states of recent vintage. The political future of the province was no clearer on 15 November 1991 than it was on 1 March 1990, the day an ambiguous cease-fire agreement was signed between the national government and the Bougainville rebels (Saffu 1991*b*).

By 16 March 1990 representatives of the national government, perhaps exceeding their obligation under the agreement, had withdrawn all security personnel from the province, including general-duty policemen who were there before the buildup of government security forces. The rebels were supposed to surrender their weapons. But they did not, and they could not be made to. Instead of undertaking peace talks, which were expected to follow the cease-fire, the rebels declared their independence on 17 May. Only the combined effects of a total economic blockade imposed by the national government and the failure of the new Republic of Mekaamui to attract international recognition finally brought the rebels to peace talks on board a New Zealand frigate, the *Endeavour*, on 29 July 1990.

The so-called Endeavour Accord, reached on 6 August, did not touch on the fundamental question of Bougainville's political status. This was deferred to future talks. The accord was primarily about restoration of services, which the government undertook to ensure, while the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) leaders undertook to guarantee the safety

of government personnel returning to provide those services. The government sought to use the Endeavour Accord to resurrect its authority in the province. But the attempt to infiltrate troops back into the province along with services so angered the BRA leadership that the follow-up peace talks, expected in September or October, did not materialize until 22 January 1991 at Honiara, the Solomon Islands capital.

The Honiara talks and the declaration that resulted on 24 January once again side-stepped the difficult issues of secession and independence, the reopening of the Panguna mine, and whether the subsidiary of Conzinc Rio Tinto of Australia, Bougainville Copper Limited, would be allowed to return to operate the mine. As Father John Momis, the Melanesian Alliance leader and the only Cabinet member from the North Solomons Province, of which Bougainville is the largest component, stated: "To deal with all the issues together would lead to an impasse in a short time" (*PC*, 25 Feb 1991). "Patience," he said, "is the mother of success in this exercise" (*PC*, 26 Feb 1991).

Even more prominently than in the Endeavour Accord, the restoration of services, government and commercial, was the centerpiece of the Honiara Agreement. A civilian task force, eventually headed by Father Momis, and dominated by Bougainvilleans who were at least BRA sympathizers, was set up to oversee the restoration of services, reconstruction, and, hopefully, the return of Bougainville to normalcy. Once again, the BRA was expected to surrender its weapons to a proposed multinational force and to aid the recovery program. While the BRA held on to its weapons, it demanded the withdrawal of government security personnel from Buka Island, which had become heavily occupied, by invitation, since September 1990, and was the interim administrative headquarters of the North Solomons Province.

As with the Endeavour Accord, each side sought to extract from the Honiara Agreement a moral cover for the ultimately irreconcilable agenda of Bougainvillean secession versus PNG national unity. Also, as with the earlier accord, the nonattendance of rebel leader Francis Ona and Commander of the BRA Sam Kauona left them free to repudiate aspects of the agreement they believed undermined their cause. Despite the slightly higher moral advantage which the PNG government derived from the Honiara Agreement (both parties agreed "to embark on a joint programme of peace, reconciliation and rehabilitation within the current framework of the PNG constitution"), the restoration of services by

the national government, given the de facto BRA control, made a creeping consolidation of independence and secession look almost as likely as creeping re-integration. An inherently unstable situation was created, where the temptation to use force was bound to be strong on both sides.

Thus, Sam Kauona's death threat to the task force members who in February accompanied the first ship to call at Kieta wharf since the imposition of the economic blockade in March 1990 was not surprising. The BRA leaders accepted fuel and medicine but rejected food. Imported food was neither strategic for BRA political control nor necessary for people's physical survival. On the contrary, unless people got used to the absence of imported food, the BRA's authority could be undermined. Similarly, the unauthorized landing of troops in northern Bougainville in April 1991 by the commander of the troops on Buka, Colonel Leo Nuiua, was not surprising.

Unlike Momis and the members of the task force, the soldiers and the relatively few Cabinet members with more mainstream, statist outlooks, such as then Deputy Prime Minister Ted Diro and Defence Minister Ben Sabumei, believed that restoration of government and commercial services must follow government control of an area (ie, government security personnel must be around) otherwise the BRA could achieve secession by stealth. Colonel Nuiua's action in landing troops and blowing up a bridge to secure military advantage embarrassed, frightened, and divided the government. It also breached the Honiara Agreement's prohibition of the use of force (but, then, the rebels had not shown any marked desire to honor the agreement's provisions either). The "incursion," as Father Momis termed it, was a clear instance of soldiers acting outside the political control of the civilian government. However, the colonel got away with only a reprimand, far less than Father Momis wished, because the operation was deemed a military success. Colonel Nuiua's effectiveness in eliminating BRA influence on Buka was seen as promising for a similar result elsewhere. Further, the government accepted his claim that the chiefs and other influentials invited him. By the end of April, the prime minister could say, more optimistically than truthfully, that "the state is back in control on Bougainville" (*PC*, 29 April 1991).

A critical third round of talks was scheduled for the end of July. The government's position, reiterated by the prime minister and by the government negotiators, was that unless Ona and Kauona agreed to attend, the

talks would not be held. Further, the prime minister insisted that the third round of talks deal with the political questions “once and for all” (PC, 27 Feb 1991). But as the end of July approached, the multinational force demanded by the BRA before the next talks, and agreed to at Honiara, was not in place. The rebels suddenly renewed their attacks on the troops in July, inflicting casualties. Key members of the rebels’ negotiating team were in Geneva at the end of July to lobby the world community to recognize Bougainvilleans as an endangered minority people, under threat from a government bent on exploitation and suppression of their human rights (PC, 1 Aug 1991). It was announced that 26 August had been agreed on as the new date for the talks. But it was clear that unless the rebels decided not to insist on the presence of the multilateral force, the talks would not be held on the appointed day. Indeed, they were not, and a new date in October was announced. The October date passed with no talks and no new date.

Judging by the correspondence columns of the national daily, the *Post Courier*, the belief seemed widespread that the government had lost its way on Bougainville. The chief government negotiators both resigned, one in February and one in March, out of frustration, while both the prime minister and the defense minister publicly doubted the BRA’s commitment to a peaceful solution (PC, 19–22 July 1991). At the end of June, after an interview on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation program “Four Corners,” in which he allowed his obvious frustrations with both his commander and the government to get the better of his judgment, Colonel Nuiia had to be sacked. Nuiia’s replacement had still not taken up the post on Buka by 15 November, insisting that the government clarify its objectives in Bougainville and the military’s role in them. A reduction of military personnel in Buka and Bougainville, from an estimated 800–1000, was announced (PC, 15 July 1991). Meanwhile, on the recommendation of the task force, Father Momis pressed on with the establishment of district coordinating authorities on Bougainville because “people are complaining about services not reaching them.” He appealed to the government for more funds for the reconstruction program (PC, 1, 4 July 1991). By November, Cabinet had approved the establishment of six district authorities, four on Bougainville and one each for Buka and the atolls (Nissan, Carteret, Mortlock, Tasman, and Fead), in what could be regarded as an attempt at a bureaucratic solution, as against a military or even a political solution.

IMPACT ON POLICY AND ATTITUDES

The political impact of the Bougainville crisis can be viewed usefully from a legislative standpoint. Between January 1989 and the end of August 1991, 108 bills were passed by the PNG Parliament. These included routine legislation such as appropriation bills and their consequential bills to change taxes, duties, and tariffs. Of 37 acts in 1989, only the Emergency (Bougainville) (General Powers) Act passed, in July to legalize the declaration of emergency in June, was clearly induced by the crisis.

In 1990, 43 bills were passed, of which only the Mining (Amendment) Act and the Land (Amendment) Act presented a *prima facie* case for investigation to determine the extent of their relationship with the crisis. The first amended Chapter 195 of the Mining Act to give exclusive rights to traditional landowners to mine alluvial gold found on their land up to a depth of 20 meters. The second gave the minister more discretionary powers over land in disaster areas. To the extent that Bougainville provided ammunition to the opposition in its perennial effort to replace the government, two related bills passed in July, the Parliamentary Secretaries Act and the Parliamentary Secretaries (Consequential Amendment) Act, could by a stretch of imagination be linked tenuously with the Bougainville crisis. They provided the government with an opportunity to exercise further patronage over the backbench in order to secure support during the frequent motions of no confidence.

The 1991 parliamentary sessions passed more laws that might appear to be responses to the Bougainville crisis. In the May sitting, the Investment Promotion Act and the Peace and Good Order Act were passed. The former created an Investment Promotion Authority. There is no question that the Bougainville crisis has dealt a blow to investor confidence in Papua New Guinea. At least, the government's hiring of international image-makers to counter the effects of the crisis in this regard suggests that that is its perception. Wesley-Smith attributes the supersession of the regulatory National Investment Development Authority (NIDA) by the Investment Promotion Authority to the need to restore investor confidence and entice foreign investors into the nonmining private sector, in accordance with the IMF- and World Bank-supported Structural Adjustment Programme (Wesley-Smith 1991). Loathed by prospective foreign investors as obstructive, NIDA had been recommended for abolition at least five years earlier by the influential Independent Group that reviewed the PNG economy

(Goodman, Lepani, and Morawetz 1985). The Peace and Good Order Act, on the other hand, is a law aimed at reining in what several PNG governments have regarded as excesses of democracy and liberty, by controlling processions and public meetings. It is also a disguised Vagrancy Act. It attempts to deal with the problem of squatter settlements by making it an offense to occupy, under certain circumstances, the land of another person.

Two other laws passed in the same session of Parliament, Constitutional Amendments no. 11 (Liberty of the Person) and no. 13 (Protection of the Law), were in the same vein as the Peace and Good Order Act. By strengthening the law-and-order agencies of the state at the expense of individual liberty, they had more to do with the country's burgeoning law-and-order problem than with anything else. They were passed at this time, as were six other constitutional amendments in the July 1991 session, including the significant breakthrough, the Constitutional Amendment (Motions of No Confidence) Act, because for the first time the government had the numbers to satisfy the amendment procedures: two-thirds majority (seventy-three members) in two sessions of Parliament separated by at least two months.

The impact of the Bougainville crisis on the legislature's agenda has been extremely slight. An Insurgency Act was reportedly drafted in 1989 but was never introduced. An Internment Bill was introduced in the July 1989 session but was withdrawn. One area where the impact has been relatively heavy is the budget. The impact on mining, investment, and defense policies is far less than might be expected because pressures for changes in all these areas were under way before the rebellion. The profile and influence of the World Bank and the IMF on policy-making have increased. Papua New Guinea's relations with Australia and Indonesia have been made even closer by the crisis, while the increasing use of Solomon Islands communications and health facilities by the BRA has drawn angry protests from Port Moresby, leading to speculation that Papua New Guinea might propose an extradition treaty with the Solomon Islands.

Without access to confidential government papers and top policy-makers, it is not always easy to maintain a distinction between policies that have been caused predominantly by the rebellion and those that have merely been speeded by it. Similarly, in the absence of surveys and in-depth interviews, the impact of the Bougainville crisis on such public attitudes as those favoring authoritarian measures and those reinforcing

Melanesian distrust of contract, particularly with foreigners, can only be inferred from policies and actual behavior. But in three areas the impact on attitudes has probably been substantial: landowners' sense of empowerment, which has reached new and, from the point of view of those in charge of the state, very disruptive heights; attitudes of top security personnel to politicians; and provincial governments' sense of their power vis-à-vis the national government.

The most obvious impact of the Bougainville crisis has been economic and essentially recessionary. Apart from the loss of foreign exchange and revenue from the Panguna mine itself, the loss of over three thousand jobs at the mine, and the collapse of service companies dependent on the mine and on the incomes of its employees, tree crop exports from the North Solomons Province dried up with the flight of plantation workers and managers and the imposition of economic blockade. In 1988, the province was the second largest producer of copra and accounted for 45 percent of the country's cocoa exports. According to Weisman, simulations of the PNG economy with the Computerized General Equilibrium Model developed at the Australian National University showed that over the medium term the loss to the economy from the closure of the Panguna mine would represent a decline of about 7 percent in real income (Weisman 1991, 47). The latest issues (1990 and March 1991) of the *Quarterly Economic Bulletin* from Papua New Guinea's central bank tell the same story. For instance, economic activity, as measured by the gross domestic product, declined by 1.4 percent in 1989 and by 3.7 percent in 1990, while formal employment in the nonmining sector outside the North Solomons Province declined by 5 percent in 1990 (Bank of Papua New Guinea 1991).

Cuts in government expenditure attributable to the crisis began in June 1989, following the closure of Panguna in May. The government imposed a K25 million reduction in its expenditure, not much of a dent in a budget of K1 billion because it anticipated a decline of only K20 million to the end of the year (Weisman 1991; K1 equals approximately US\$1). The finance minister claimed he incorporated the likely effects of the closure in his K1.1 billion 1990 budget which was passed in November 1989. But the December 1989 decision by Bougainville Copper Limited to "mothball" the mine triggered a package of measures in January 1990, including a 10 percent devaluation (and, over the year, a further depreciation of the kina by about 10 percent), further cuts of K100 million in government expenditure, and a restrained wages policy.

The cooperation of the Public Employees Association (PEA), the largest and most powerful union, helped to minimize the political impact of these economic measures. Despite the higher inflation rate that was expected to flow from the devaluation (at 7 percent the 1990 inflation rate became the highest since 1984), the employees' association entered into an agreement with the government in January 1990 to limit pay increases by up to 2 percentage points below the Wages Board determination for July 1989 to March 1992. That the considerable economic impact has not fed into the political process in any significantly disruptive way may be attributed partly to the association, but luck and appropriate policies have also played a role.

The government's cautious easing of credits to the nonmining sector in 1990, the happy coincidence of the opening of new gold mines at Misima (1989) and Porgera (1990) and expansion of output at Ok Tedi, and the impact of oil discoveries on further prospecting in 1989 and 1990 all helped to contain the economic impact of the Bougainville crisis. World Bank- and IMF-sponsored international support for the stabilization measures and balance of payments in May 1990, to the tune of US\$710 million, also helped, as did the substantial government draw-down of the Mineral Stabilization Fund, K84.7 million in 1989 and an estimated K80 million in 1990. On the negative side, the opportunity that commentators saw for Papua New Guinea to become leaner and healthier (Weisman 1991), through a radical structural adjustment and a drastic pruning of the public service, has largely been passed up.

In the area of investment, Wesley-Smith attributes to the Bougainville crisis the decision to lower by 25 percent (from 75 to 50) the local equity participation required to qualify an enterprise as local. The realization that this was needed to promote growth in the economy had been around for some time. But the Bougainville crisis provided the occasion and the necessary will to withstand the expected "nationalist" condemnation, which duly came from the Melanesian Chamber of Commerce.

In the area of mining, a new set of policies emerged in April 1989. The new policies could easily be mistaken for an effect of the Bougainville crisis because they gave landowners and the provincial governments a far greater opportunity to participate in negotiations and to benefit from mining operations. Landowners now enjoyed higher royalties of 20 percent (instead of 5) of 1.25 percent of production; and a 5 percent equity participation (the same as for the provincial government), half of that at cost and

paid for from future earnings (there had been no such opportunity before). Landowners also enjoyed preferential treatment for employment, training, and contracting for services and operations connected with the mine. They were to be chosen ahead of people from the province who were themselves to be chosen ahead of other Papua New Guineans. All these and other higher benefits to landowners and provinces could be explained as lessons from the Bougainville crisis. However, as Jackson has shown, the pressures that resulted in these changes predated the Bougainville rebellion (Jackson 1989). What the crisis did was impart a sense of urgency to reforms that were already underway.

The same is true of defense. In a number of statements, Ben Sabumei, the defense minister since May 1989, has indicated that his successful Cabinet submission to expand the PNG Defence Force, among other changes, was the result of the operational inadequacies exposed by the counterinsurgency on Bougainville. It may be difficult to judge accurately the fighting ability of a defense force in a counterinsurgency situation within its own country, especially when political directives have not been consistent and single-minded. Nevertheless, it is apparent that the image of the Defence Force as a competent fighting machine has suffered as a result of the Bougainville crisis. To overcome the operational weaknesses ascribed to the low ceiling for defense workers, an increase of two thousand armed forces personnel over a four-year period was deemed necessary by the Defence Council and was approved by the Cabinet.

However, a substantial increase in defense personnel, beyond the current ceiling of 3200, had been one of the most insistent recommendations made by a General Defence Board of Inquiry into the February 1989 soldiers' riot in Port Moresby (Saffu 1991a). A Defence White Paper tabled in Parliament in 1988 had also argued for an increase in the numbers of the Defence Force. As for mining, the Bougainville crisis essentially confirmed for defense policymakers the evident soundness of their policies.

A shift in emphasis in the functions of the Defence Force coincided with the Bougainville crisis. Both external defense and defense against internal threats to state and government were established by the PNG Independence Constitution as Defence Force functions. Undertaking civic action programs and providing relief operations in national disasters and emergencies were the other functions. An increasing realization that external defense was not a viable function, if mighty Indonesia was the putative external enemy, an awareness of the armed forces' potential to contribute

to infrastructural development, plus the escalation of a law-and-order problem that necessitated call-outs of defense personnel to support the embattled police, suggested shifts in emphasis away from external defense. These were crystallized in the 1988 Defence White Paper where defense against internal threats to the state and the nation-building capabilities of the Defence Force, through civic-action programs, were particularly emphasized. By virtue of being the most serious internal threat so far to territorial integrity and authority of state in Papua New Guinea, and with the prospect of a massive reconstruction to be undertaken at its end, the Bougainville crisis has been a vindication rather than a cause of the shift of emphasis in the Defence Force's preoccupations.

On the other hand, there is enough evidence for the view that the Defence Force is becoming increasingly politicized, both in the sense of the armed forces being drawn more deeply into politics, especially partisan politics, and in the sense of officers and men becoming more politically aware and, consequently, less respectful and less submissive toward civilian authority (Saffu 1991a). The Police Department appears to be no less politicized. The Bougainville crisis is contributing enormously to the further politicization of both forces.

As early as February 1989, the police commissioner was fulminating against politicians when a "raid moratorium" was imposed on the police in Bougainville: "I am tired of political interference with police work and political indecision on issues requiring immediate police action to maintain law and order" (PC, 27 Feb 1989). According to press reports, he threatened to disobey the government. The prime minister reprimanded him while Father John Momis promised that the Cabinet would dismiss him if he carried out his threat. For his stand, Father Momis was confronted at his home a few days later by more than one hundred irate policemen who arrived in a convoy of six vehicles to warn him of trouble if their commissioner was sacked (PC, 6 Mar 1989). A chief superintendent was suspended in connection with the incident.

BRA attacks on police in Bougainville at this time were leading to public statements by top policemen who felt it necessary to draw attention to the rebellious mood among their men: "How long are we going to sit around and wait? These rebels are firing at police at will and my men are very frustrated and angry" (PC, 10 Mar 1989). A year later, the chief superintendent who had been suspended earlier was involved with the police commissioner in a bizarre drunken attempt to abduct the prime minister

and take over power (Saffu 1991*b*). The commissioner had been recalled recently as controller of emergency on Bougainville, and was reportedly about to be dismissed for acts of insubordination over the implementation of the cease-fire agreement. After a low-key attempt to prosecute these and a third officer on charges of treason, all were freed and only the commissioner was not reinstated.

In view of their greater ability to overthrow a government, the military's display of frustration and insubordination over Bougainville has received more attention (Standish 1989; May 1991). Both Colonel Dotaona, in charge of the troops on Bougainville until October 1989, and Colonel Maras, acting commander of the Defence Force during Brigadier Lokinap's suspension in 1989, publicly criticized the politicians' handling of the Bougainville crisis, their inability or reluctance to articulate objectives clearly and the military's role in them, and their inconsistency and interference in operational matters. Another top officer, the acting chief of staff, later to be in charge of the troops in Bougainville, publicly warned his minister to "refrain from making wild statements on matters affecting the operations of the soldiers and police (on Bougainville)" (*NN*, 12 Apr 1989). Another officer, a lieutenant colonel, swore at the visiting parliamentary Emergency Committee, ordering them not to meddle in things they did not know about. Two years later, the public display of soldiers' frustration and disrespect for politicians was just as vigorous.

In May 1991, a major serving on Bougainville, without any attempt whatsoever to hide his identity, wrote to the *Post Courier*, arguing that Momis must be sacked for "being in the same boat" with secessionists and the BRA. He ended his letter by saying, "if anybody should be sacked . . . lunatics like Father Momis and his Task Force members are the ones the government should sack" (*PC*, 17 May 1991). He merely got a reprimand. The commander of the forces on Bougainville, Colonel Leo Nuia, as already mentioned, plainly exhibited his contempt for the civilian government he was supposed to be under by publicly contradicting it on several critical issues relating to the Bougainville crisis and civil-military relations in Papua New Guinea. His obvious intent, to demonstrate the duplicity and the incompetence of the government, left the government with no choice but to dismiss him.

The reaction of the top brass of the Defence Force to the sacking was evident in the public refusal of Colonel Nuia's replacement to take up the position until the government had clarified the military's role in the crisis,

leading the *Post Courier* to editorialize: "Give Maras His Brief" (PC, 27 June 1991). The simultaneous announcement by the Defence Force hierarchy of a drastic reduction in troop levels on Bougainville on the grounds of shortage of funds was part of the military's reaction to the sacking of Colonel Nuia. As a spokesman argued: "Until the government can tell the Defence Force elements in Bougainville what its true role is and support this financially, we cannot be expected to carry out our task effectively without drawing unfounded criticisms from the public and most politicians who usually do not know what is happening on the ground" (PC, 11 July 1991).

Unlike the military, the nation's landowners have no means of usurping governmental authority. But in the conditions of PNG democracy, where grassroots populism holds sway, and with the onset of a minerals boom, landowners have clout. The Bougainville rebellion has enhanced their self-confidence, their perception of their ability to drive home to the government both the emulatory and cautionary lessons from Bougainville. Melanesian cultural values about land (encapsulated in the slogan Land Is Life, Land Is Marriage, Land Is Power) place landowners in a strong pressure group position, and they enhance this position by their readiness to question or ignore agreements, and to take the law into their own hands to enforce their interpretation. A populist streak among the country's politicians, illustrated by the following case, also explains why landowners constitute the most successful pressure groups in PNG politics.

Buluminski Highway, running the length of New Ireland Province, was built by German colonialists before World War I. In view of its importance to the New Ireland economy, the national government decided in 1988 to improve the road by macadamizing it. Landowners along the highway demanded compensation for land taken before the improvement program could begin. One of the best educated and otherwise far-sighted politicians in the country, the premier of the province, backed the landowners' demand.

In case after case, some of them related in the PNG political chronicles in the *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, landowners made hefty compensation demands, backed their demands with threats of violence if not met by a certain date, did indeed resort to the threatened violence, and, in the overwhelming majority of cases, ended up with some compensation and no prosecution for their lawlessness and use of violence.

The concept of eminent domain is under serious attack in Papua New

Guinea (Oliver 1989). The attack is led by some of the most sophisticated professionals who are also landowners in their own right, as members of land-owning clans. Clans own 97 percent of land in the country. Alienated land is therefore not generally an issue. The attack is driven by the minerals boom and dreams of fabulous wealth for lucky landowners. So far, Supreme Court decisions on who owns the minerals under the soil have favored the state against landowners. But the threat to state revenues and national unity inherent in the landowners' challenges is considerable.

WHERE DOES IT ALL LEAD TO?

What can one say about the political future of the North Solomons Province, a group of islands forming a political and administrative division of Papua New Guinea, of which Bougainville is by far the largest component? Despite the momentous explosion of self-determination elsewhere (eg, the apparently peaceful dissolution of the mighty Soviet Union), it can be confidently asserted that nation-states are not about to sacrifice territorial integrity at the altar of self-determination, any more than they were before the "Second Russian Revolution." National leaders can be expected to pose the question: How far down can the concept of self-determination be allowed to go? Should it mean independence and separate sovereignty for all those who demand it and show a willingness to fight for it? The question is of special significance in situations such as Papua New Guinea where the colonial period that created all these apparent "selves" really effectively began for the most part only after World War II and ended only sixteen years ago.

The prospect of the North Solomons Province emerging as a happy, prosperous, small independent state enjoying normal international recognition is the least likely of all possible outcomes of the crisis. Port Moresby's strategy of gradual, incremental "pacification," a "wartime" variant of the time-tested colonial tactic of divide and rule, means that in the unlikely event of Bougainville independence the new state is most unlikely to be coextensive with the present North Solomons Province. Buka and the outer atolls will have to be included by force. Bougainville itself may not survive as a single unit; it may have to contend with its own secessionist problems. Even if independence were eventually to emerge (say in another five or ten years) after a transitional period of increased autonomy and referendum within Papua New Guinea (in my view the best real-

istic scenario for the secessionists), the new state is more likely to be a beleaguered, struggling state than a contented one at peace with itself. The option of a merger with the Solomon Islands after independence might be a long-shot possibility.

Given the divisions within the province itself (Ogan 1990), given the consummate capacity of modern PNG political leaders to compromise, and given that the immediate neighbors who count (and through whom the wider world's limited interest in the issue will be filtered) are all on the side of the essential status quo, the most likely outcome of the crisis is that the North Solomons Province will remain a part of Papua New Guinea, but with a wider degree of autonomy than before the crisis. Perhaps the degree of autonomy the BRA will manage to extract from an exasperated Port Moresby will surpass even that enjoyed by states in a federation.

If so, the question has to be faced whether any such special status for the North Solomons can be confined to that province only, and not be insisted on by other provinces that may have no credible basis on which to operate such extensive autonomy successfully. In a sense, the question is futile. Irrespective of its likely effect elsewhere in the country, if the granting of greater autonomy will end the crisis peacefully, then there is no question that it will be granted. Common sense might suggest that even a rash of unsupportable autonomies would be a lesser threat to the state, a far more manageable predicament, than outright secession. However, greater provincial autonomy, being a less drastic demand than secession, might be more difficult for the central government to resist, with the result that a confederation will emerge.

A confederal center will be even less able than now to ensure a minimal degree of administrative competence and integrity. The location of greater prizes at the provincial level in any such confederal set-up is likely to spur on demands for more provinces. The recent and current agitations to break up existing provinces in Western Province, Eastern Highlands, Morobe, East New Britain, and so on are likely to be rekindled and intensified, while new demands are likely to break out. In every province there is a disaffected or a potentially disaffected area that can produce leaders to champion its cause, however imaginary. The process of state creation in Nigeria, from three in 1960 to thirty in 1991 (and the process is far from finished), is worth contemplating in this connection. Admittedly, the population of Nigeria is at least thirty times larger than that of Papua New Guinea. But after correcting for population, economically, geographically,

and culturally Nigeria is far more integrated, compact, and homogeneous than Papua New Guinea.

The adversarial nature of the Westminster model, a feature of it that is particularly emphasized in Papua New Guinea, appears to have worked in tandem with the absence of internal party discipline to limit the kind of unanimity of views that might have aided the passing of authoritarian laws, in the face of failures and frustrations over Bougainville. In addition, the Melanesian Way, which is genuinely tolerant, liberal, and incurably casual, is a constraint on authoritarianism, civilian or military. In my view, these attributes will ensure that despite the frustrations of the security forces and their increasing politicization, military rule (as contrasted with military takeover) will be seen by a rational prospective coupist as unworkable.

CONCLUSION

The impact so far of the Bougainville rebellion on the political process in Papua New Guinea has been far more moderate and accommodable than commentators, myself included, had feared. The Panguna copper mine, which was forced to shut down in May 1989, had accounted for two-fifths of the country's annual foreign exchange earnings and one-fifth of the national government's revenue. The familiar fragility of political institutions and national integration in postcolonial states of recent vintage added to the fear (Standish 1989; Saffu 1990).

But if we carve up politics into the four dimensions suggested by Almond and Verba (1963)—regime, government, policy, and citizens' political behavior, based on their perception of self-confidence—we shall have to say that the Bougainville rebellion has had absolutely no impact as yet on the regime, defined as the basic, overall constitutional or legal framework for rulership and politics. There have been minor changes in government, Cabinet and bureaucratic reshuffles, but none of these is credibly traceable to the Bougainville crisis. Some policy changes, for example, in the mining sector, in the general area of foreign investment, and in personnel levels of the Defence Force, have arguably been hastened by the Bougainville crisis. Perhaps the crisis has had the greatest impact on the confidence of some groups, particularly landowners who have emerged as among the most powerful pressure groups in the nation's politics today.

Although the repercussions from the crisis have so far remained relatively modest, changes in the regime dimension can be expected to occur, if only because the earlier status quo, in relations between the central government and the North Solomons Province, is no longer a realistic option. The bitterness of the conflict, the fighting and deaths, the scale of violence, and the propagation of secessionist sentiment all indicate changes in the politics stemming from the crisis.

The extent and nature of these changes cannot be known precisely at this stage, given that the duration of the crisis, how it is finally resolved, and the cast of leaders at the time can all influence changes in the state's authority, center-periphery relations, and the operating methods of powerful interest groups. The magnitude of the changes envisaged will also depend to some extent on how one responds to the Griffin-Filer debate. Is Bougainville essentially a class by itself, a unique catastrophe, as the title of Griffin's paper proclaims (Griffin 1991)? Or is Bougainville a harbinger of the social disintegration that is waiting to happen at other major mine sites, Ok Tedi, Porgera, Misima, and elsewhere, with harmful consequences for political order and regime legitimacy, as Filer contends (Filer 1990)?

The North Solomons forced the provincial government system on Papua New Guinea, through the generalization of the concessions made to it in 1976 to end its first secessionist bid. There is little reason to doubt that however the second secessionist bid is resolved it will have a strong impact on the expectations and behavior of other landowners and provincial actors.

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