

*Television and Dependency:
A Case Study of Policy Making
in Fiji and Papua New Guinea*

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During the 1980s many Pacific Island nations faced important policy decisions in response to a proliferation of communication and information technologies, many of which were offered to them by enterprising foreign private interests. The launching of satellites with footprints over a large part of the Pacific basin, as well as improved terrestrial broadcast technologies, removed previous impediments to the establishment of national television services, such as remoteness from capital cities and rugged terrain. For the many Pacific Island nations without broadcast television services, the potential incursion of these technologies has been a matter of caution and concern, as was expressed, for example, at the Pacific Television Meeting sponsored by the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union and the South Pacific Commission (Horsfield 1990a, 1990b; cf Thirlwall and Hughes 1989; Lie 1990).

The comparatively larger populations (by Pacific Island standards) in both Papua New Guinea and Fiji, combined with the new technologies, made the potential market for commercial television in these two nations appear lucrative to a number of Australian and New Zealand entrepreneurs in the early 1980s (see Horsfield 1990b; *PIM*, May 1985, 33–35; April 1986, 26; Oct 1986, 25–26; Fell 1986). Against this background, Australian Kerry Packer's Publishing and Broadcasting Limited company (PBL) made successful proposals to both the governments of Fiji and Papua New Guinea to set up commercial television stations in each country in 1985 and 1986 respectively. In Papua New Guinea, another Australian company, the Parry Corporation's Newcastle Broadcasting Network (NBN), had also been granted a television license in 1984. In both countries the

decisions to grant the licenses involved a reversal of long-standing government policies that had given broadcast television a low priority compared with other development needs. In both countries this low priority status had resulted from many years of often extensive investigations into the advisability of setting up broadcast television.

What were the reasons for this apparent change of heart toward television on the part of the Fiji and Papua New Guinea governments in the mid-1980s? How much "room to maneuver" did each state actually have in its policy-making process? In this paper we address these questions with the assistance of the perspectives and findings of dependency theory. In particular we focus on the nature of the processes of negotiation and on the interface between transnational company and national government. This interface is also the object of dependency theory. Thus, we explore the dependency notion that weaknesses inherent in the political systems of both countries, coupled with their respective histories of economic dependency dating back to their colonial periods, may help to explain particular political decisions.

THE RELEVANCE OF DEPENDENCY THEORIES

The introduction of new (or the expansion of existing) televisual services within any country is inevitably linked with notions of economic development and the provision of better, more sophisticated communication services to government, business interests, and the population generally. In developing nations such as Fiji and Papua New Guinea, the establishment of communications infrastructure continues to be seen as important, both to political aspects of "nation-building" and to the growth of an efficient, modern economy.

Development is itself a problematic term whose meaning has been influenced by several theoretical approaches. Development theory began in earnest soon after World War II, with largely US-led initiatives to bring the newly independent former colonial nations "up to the level" of the industrialized world. The provision of communication infrastructure was seen as facilitating a top-down diffusion model of development (Lerner 1957; Pool 1963).

The meaning of the term *development* is now in flux with the decline of the classical model of modernization postulated by Lerner, and the critique of global inequalities initiated by dependency theories. Dependency

theory was originally postulated by the UN Economic Commission for Latin America in the 1950s and was then taken up in different ways by economists and sociologists of the critical neo-Marxist school (see especially Prebisch 1963; Frank 1969; Amin 1982; Larrain 1989). In general terms dependency theory contends that peripheral Third World nations are systematically disadvantaged in the international marketplace by the power of the central industrial states. Explanations for the impediments to development can be found in a range of formulations of dependency theory, including Seers' notion of the importance of a country's geographic and historical specificities (1981), and Cardoso and Faletto's highlighting of the importance of local relations between labor and capital (1979). Another perspective is Wallerstein's world-system theory, which sees dependency in global terms (Wallerstein 1982). According to this view, the "communications revolution" ensures that the last frontiers of the developing world (Papua New Guinea and Fiji included) are incorporated into the capitalist world system (Wallerstein 1990).

The notion of dependency has also been extended to include cultural domination by the developed industrial nations (Smith 1982; Boyd-Barrett 1982; Tang and Chan 1990). The idea that communication media could exacerbate dependent relationships was applied by communication researchers such as Nordenstreng and Varis (1974), Nordenstreng and Schiller (1979), Tunstall (1977), Smythe (1981), and others who formulated theories of cultural and media imperialism. The UNESCO call for a New World Information and Communication Order (MacBride 1980) arose directly from international debates informed by the application of dependency theory to an increasingly international media industry that was controlled predominantly by the wealthy industrial nations. Dependency theory has been criticized for failing to account for individual countries' specificities (Seers 1981), and for recommending restrictions on the free flow of information. However, dependency theory continues to be of particular relevance to non-Western (or "non-Northern") perspectives on communication theory and on explaining government policy-making processes generally (see Fisk 1970; Hagan 1987; Samana 1988; Horsfield 1990b).

For the purposes of this paper dependency theory is relevant to the question of whether governments such as those in Fiji and Papua New Guinea actually had "a choice" when it came to accepting or rejecting the foreign television companies. The answer may lie in the articulation of

each country's political processes with the interests and representatives of foreign capital (Robinson 1972; Seers 1981; Stauffer 1983). In their writings on dependency theory, Cardoso and Faletto describe the "new" form of development in which "the public sector, the multinational corporation, and the modern capitalist sector of the national economy are joined," a union that "requires the economic action of these various groups to be possible politically" (1979, 163). The compliant role of the national government in neutralizing objections to the entry of the foreign company is vital to the company. This support may be expressed in terms of a myth of development that stresses the development benefits said to flow from the introduction of television. Local hegemonic interests also hope that television will facilitate the reelection of the government. However, as this study will show, a totally compliant relationship between the foreign television company and the state is not necessarily guaranteed. Many local factors can intervene to destabilize such a brittle alliance, as Australian entrepreneurs discovered to their cost. The haphazard and idiosyncratic nature of politics in Papua New Guinea has been well documented (Morauta 1986; Samana 1988; Turner 1990). In Fiji, the military coups of 1987 demonstrated the fragility of the syncretism of the British Westminster-style parliamentary system and the traditional chiefly system, against a background of increasing demands for equal representation by a growing population of Fiji Indians and the reactions of the indigenous elite and *tauvei-ni-vanua* 'people of the land' to these demands (Tarte 1987; Scarr 1988; Norton 1990; Garrett 1990).

In the cases under consideration, an alliance of sorts did emerge between state and foreign capital, which made the introduction of television politically possible. This alliance was facilitated by a series of accommodations by each side (elaborated later):

- the very attractive "no cost" proposals presented by the foreign television entrepreneurs;
- a seemingly radical departure by the government from previous television policies;
- political processes and commercial negotiations that favored secrecy and irregularities; and
- the apparent blurring by political leaders of the "development" benefits of television with the leaders' own personal and electoral needs, and the identification by foreign entrepreneurs of their own interests as the "public interest."

However, the two case studies discussed here also provide some evidence that the processes that increase dependent relationships are far from inevitable. Foremost among this evidence is the *resistance* or obstruction provided to commercial television by political opponents to Mara in Fiji and Somare in Papua New Guinea, by social and religious leaders (especially in Fiji), and, ironically, by the very unpredictable and idiosyncratic political processes inherent in both countries, which had facilitated the acceptance of the foreign television companies in the first place.

The Attractive Foreign Television Proposal

The changes in television policy in Fiji and Papua New Guinea should be viewed in the context of Australian policy toward the Pacific, as well as the state of Australia's television industry in the mid-1980s. During the 1980s Australia felt an increasing need to be a visible presence in the Pacific region (Hayden 1987, 175-176), prompted partly by the growing interest of other foreign presences in establishing their influence there: Libya, the USSR, France, Japan, the United States, and China. Communications technology was perceived as one way to maintain an Australian presence in the Pacific. With the launch of the first Aussat satellite in 1985, Australia hoped to gain a strong foothold in communications in the Pacific.

The 1980s were an important time for the Australian television industry, a time when the possibilities of satellite delivery of television and telecommunications generally were exciting government bodies and private business enterprises alike. Networking across the Australian continent held the promise of greater economies of scale than had previously been possible for stations broadcasting mainly to the capital city audiences of Sydney or Melbourne. At this time the television companies were still in relatively sound financial health and looking for new markets. Expansion in Australia was limited by the ownership rules of the Broadcasting Act of 1942, and in this context the Pacific Island nations, despite their modest economies, were viewed as attractive television markets by new and old television entrepreneurs (*PIM*, April 1986, 26).

Kerry Packer's Australian Channel 9 network had, in 1984, made an offer to six Pacific nations of 50 hours of selected international television programming daily via the Intelsat satellite, at a cost to each country of A\$100,000 (US\$69,000) for ground receiving stations. The offer had Australian government support, including technical and production training. In 1986, too late to beat Packer into the Pacific, Television New Zealand

proposed to the South Pacific Forum countries that it broadcast public service television to the region via Intelsat. Alan Martin of that company argued that Pacific nations “have a right to expect that television will be used to protect local culture [and that the] stimuli for behaviour and standards should still come from local pulpits . . . and not from the West Coast of America” (*PIM*, Oct 1986, 25). The Forum declined the New Zealand offer, mainly for financial reasons, and Fiji accepted Packer’s proposal.

One year earlier, in 1983, a local video production company in Papua New Guinea invited in Newcastle Broadcasting Network 3, a subsidiary of the Perth-based Parry Corporation, to help them set up Papua New Guinea’s first broadcast television station. After only a few weeks, the network dispensed with the local company, and by the end of 1984 had successfully negotiated with the Cabinet of Prime Minister Michael Somare for a license to operate the country’s first broadcast television station.

Changes to Previous Television Policies

In both Papua New Guinea and Fiji, government decisions to introduce commercial broadcast television appeared to contradict existing policy regarding television. The Papua New Guinea government’s granting of the license to Newcastle Broadcasting Network, which resulted in the network broadcasting only to the National Capital District (around Port Moresby), was a major departure from previous government policy, documented in Cabinet decisions of 1982, 1983, and 1984 (*PNG*, 28 May 1985, 24), which had agreed to use Aussat to provide, among other things, a nationwide radio and television service under the auspices of the state-owned National Broadcasting Commission. The granting of the license departed from the findings of several government inquiries into the feasibility and advisability of introducing television to Papua New Guinea, conducted several times over the previous eighteen years. These enquiries had generally concluded that television was a low priority in the country’s economic development, and that if it were introduced at all, it would focus on educational uses (Broadbent 1966; McNamara 1972; Lepani 1977; Kalo 1987).

In Fiji, television had also been resisted, chiefly on “quality of life” grounds, with the Christian churches exercising a major influence. Several factors underlay Fijian resistance to broadcast television: the need for a prior electrification of the whole nation to prevent “an unwanted rural

migration to the urban areas" (Bongiovani 1983), the low priority of television in terms of development needs; the inclusion only of urban districts in the broadcast area; the lack of success of early experimental television projects (Bentley 1982; Kua 1983); the importation of alien ethical values; and the deformation of ways of life, such as rural workers neglecting work to watch daytime television (Anderson 1980).

In both countries, concern had been expressed that Pacific Island communities needed protecting from US-dominated mass cultural products. Papua New Guinea Opposition Leader Paias Wingti expressed concern about the potential harm that unregulated foreign programs might do to local languages, cultures, and the formation of cultural identity among young people (*TPNG*, 8 Aug 1986, 6). However, in the case of Fiji at least, some commentators felt that these fears had been exaggerated: Fears of a population gorged on a Coca-Cola culture to the exclusion of its own heritage are probably unfounded. The commercial stations will conform to sensible regulations covering content—if only to protect their licenses. In any case, most island cultures are vital and dynamic and probably well able to recover from the initial shock of broadcast television. They are not, as some people fear, unable to look after their traditions (*PIM*, Oct 1986, 5).

Apparent Irregularities in Decision-making Procedures

The decisions to grant broadcasting licenses to foreign commercial companies were not only a surprising departure from both nations' previous policies, but they were also characterized by minimal public debate and apparent irregularities at the level of negotiation, perhaps because of a sense of urgency on the part of both prime ministers to have the licenses granted quickly. For example, in Papua New Guinea, Parry's Newcastle Broadcasting Network originally began negotiating with the local licensing authority, the Posts and Telecommunications department. However, when the department advised the government that controls were needed in the form of a broadcasting tribunal, it was replaced in the negotiations by an interdepartmental committee set up especially to make recommendations to Cabinet on the introduction of television. This committee in turn was replaced some five months after it was constituted because it, too, recommended proceeding cautiously. In its place a special state negotiating team was formed consisting of the departments of the Prime Minister, Finance and Planning, and the State Solicitor. This team had the specific

task of negotiating with Newcastle Broadcasting Network and Niugini Television Network for the introduction of television (Kalo 1987, 96).

Given the obvious pressure that was coming from “high levels” in government, including Prime Minister Michael Somare, it was not surprising that Cabinet decided in November 1984 to direct Posts and Telecommunications to grant Niugini Television Network a license to commence commercial television broadcasting in Papua New Guinea as soon as possible. In addition to the “fast-track” given to the negotiations, other irregularities were apparent. These included the absence of Deputy Prime Minister Paias Wingti from the Cabinet meeting at which the licensing decision was made, and the fact that Sir Ebia Olewale, an old friend of Somare’s, had been given a 10 percent share of the new company in return for services rendered to it and to Newcastle Broadcasting Network. Subsequently, the opposition inferred in Parliament that Sir Ebia used his friendship with Somare, and his government connections, to smooth Newcastle Broadcasting Network’s passage through Cabinet (PNG, 5 Nov 1984, 8; PC, 5 Nov 1984). Later, when Wingti had defected from the ruling Pangu Pati, largely over the television issue, and was leader of the opposition, he alleged that two senior government officials regularly conveyed confidential information relating to Cabinet discussions and deliberations to the representatives of Newcastle Broadcasting Network (PNG, 28 May 1985, 17).

Somare and Communications Minister Roy Evara consistently failed to answer these allegations about the irregularity of the negotiations, leaving themselves open to charges of impropriety. The effect of the irregularities was that the government rushed through the agreement with Niugini Television Network “without proper planning, prior debate or sufficient consideration of the entire issue” (PNG, 6 June 1985, 22–23). It could further be argued that the granting of *another* television license, to Media Niugini (backed by Publishing and Broadcasting Limited) in March 1986, was a clear rebuttal of Somare’s critics, eager to portray him as having a vested interest in Niugini Television Network.

With the idiosyncratic nature of politics in Papua New Guinea (often labeled “the land of the unexpected”), such an action as licensing a second television station was scarcely surprising. One could argue that such a move on Somare’s part signaled an irreverent form of resistance, a refusal to allow Papua New Guinea to be shackled by the monopolistic ambitions of one foreign television company. This “each-way bet” phenomenon is

not unusual with leaders of less wealthy countries when negotiating mutually advantageous deals with foreign companies.

In Fiji, as in Papua New Guinea, the decision to introduce broadcast television seemed to be influenced more by arguments put by foreign television companies than by local public debate or government priorities. In Fiji, too, negotiations were characterized by certain irregularities. Here, the people of Fiji had even fewer opportunities to debate the television issue—prior to decisions being taken—than had those of Papua New Guinea. An agreement was made by Prime Minister Ratu Mara's Alliance Party government in July 1984 to grant a broadcast television license to Kerry Packer's Publishing and Broadcasting Limited, but the agreement was not made public until some eleven months later. There were allegations of F\$30,000 (US\$18,000) kickbacks to Suva city councillors for surrendering undeveloped parkland to the Crown so that the council could fulfil its agreed contribution of a site for lease to the newly formed Fiji Television Corporation for its new premises (*FT*, 8 June 1987, 3).

Not until after the signing of the agreement with Publishing and Broadcasting Limited did the Fiji government announce that "matters relating to television are open to parliamentary debate" (*FT*, 27 Mar 1986). However, the debate was restricted to formulating the enabling legislation, not whether or not television should commence, or what form it should take. Public debate questioned both the secrecy surrounding the agreement and the advantage it was felt the company had been given. Both the Labour coalition opposition and the press criticized the fact that detailed submissions had not been sought from other companies because the government had already accepted Channel 9's offer (*FT*, 22 Mar 1986; Keith-Reid 1986). Six other companies, including Parry's Newcastle Broadcasting Network and Television South Pacific Limited (a local company) had originally applied to set up a television service but only Publishing and Broadcasting Limited was asked for a detailed submission. A further controversial aspect of its negotiations with the Fiji government was the company's recruitment in Fiji of Australian Information Service Officer Warwick Cooper to work on its satellite interests, while on twelve months' leave of absence from his employer. Suspicions were that Cooper, as a public servant, "might be involved in a conflict of interest" (*NT*, 20–26 Dec 1985).

Prior to the government calling for submissions to set up television, Kerry Packer and Lynton Taylor, head of Publishing and Broadcasting Limited, went to Fiji in September 1985, to have talks with the govern-

ment. They returned “with the contract in their hands” (*FT*, 22 MAR 1986). Taylor claimed that this preproposal meeting was not unfair, but rather a result of the company’s “entrepreneurial spirit” (*FT*, 22 Mar 1986). Robert Keith-Reid, Suva editor of *Islands Business* magazine, believed that Packer’s success was “just plain lucky” (Keith-Reid 1987): Packer and Taylor simply happened to arrive in Fiji to coincide with Ratu Mara’s announcement, giving their company a clear field as no other potential competitors were aware at the time of the change of policy. If this was a genuine coincidence, their arrival was indeed fortuitous.

Peter Stinson, minister for Economic Development and Planning, felt the government’s method of dealing with a foreign company was justified: “Even if the Press does not like the way we went about the whole thing, I don’t think they can deny that we have got a damn good deal” (*FT*, 13 Aug 1986). Regrettably, Stinson did not elaborate on the business ethics of the deal, or define “good” in relation to other possible offers. Just as in Papua New Guinea, the decision to accept Packer’s offer was made, not by the Parliament, but by a Cabinet committee—the Television Facilitation Committee—a circumstance that guaranteed secrecy because the committee’s proceedings were not available to the Parliament.

No doubt there were advantages for both Publishing and Broadcasting Limited and the Fiji government in the agreement that was finally drawn up between them. The company was to provide the entire working capital of about F\$5.5 million (US\$3.3 million), all of which would presumably come from Australia, “preventing an outflow [from Fiji] of foreign exchange and enhancing foreign exchange receipts” (*FT*, 22 Mar 1986, 3). Fiji Television would be allowed to transmit locally and to receive Intelsat television programs from Sydney for rebroadcast. The license gave it a twelve-year monopoly, after which the government could allow other companies to provide domestic television services. Control of Fiji Television and its programming would be vested in a board of five directors, three of whom would be local people. A “Television Broadcasting Act” would help regulate program content, which would be drafted on the results of a planned social impact study.

The social impact survey seems to have been intended to defuse concerns about the sociocultural impact of television. This survey, paid for by Publishing and Broadcasting Limited, was done by the Roy Morgan Research Centre of Melbourne. Two Roy Morgan employees came to Fiji for a month and visited the two main islands of Vitu Levu and Vanua Levu. They worked with the support of a government-appointed advisory

committee made up of the deputy manager of the Fijian Broadcasting Commission; a planter from the north; a former senator, Reverend S. Yabaki; and the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Information. The committee was set up hurriedly and asked to cover a wide range of issues and to nominate key informants. However, when it wanted to seek submissions directly from the public, the Roy Morgan researchers ruled that it was not part of their brief from Publishing and Broadcasting Limited.

The notion of any form of independence in the study is highly questionable. The survey sample of "54 people from various walks of life and ethnic groups" (Keith-Reid 1987), with 35 of them from Suva, was perceived by the Fiji press as unrepresentative in a country of 700,000 people. Keith-Reid, a respected local journalist and editor, stated that the Roy Morgan study was a farce and was not really a social impact study at all, but simply market research to plan advertising and choice of program content. He also queried how television could be monitored before it began broadcasting. The study's suggestion that a government body monitor content was regarded skeptically by some, such as the Reverend Yabaki, who opposed monitoring if it meant censorship, and believed prior vetting of the considerable volume of programs would be impractical (Yabaki 1987). In effect, the station would be left to choose program content without input from the people of Fiji and with likely detriment to local content.

Blurring of Personal, Commercial, and Public Interests

Mattelart, Delacourt, and Mattelart have argued that it is not inevitable that economically underdeveloped nations become dependent on rich nations and on transnational capital for the development of viable film and television industries or services, with the consequent saturation of the underdeveloped nation with foreign cultural products (1984). Rather, they have argued, the state may have more power than is commonly believed. However, most Third World states tend not to exercise this power for the benefit of their people but have tended to identify with the power elites, usually in the national capital, who form "organic alliances [with] transnational capital on the basis of common interests" (Mattelart, Delacourt, and Mattelart 1984, 64).

We shall now examine these "common interests" more closely, as they relate to the activities of Australian television companies and the governments of Fiji and Papua New Guinea during the mid-1980s. Some of the interests of the television companies in setting up stations in two major Pacific Island nations have already been stated: these two countries held

the promise of an increased market for the Australian companies. The market prospects would be even greater if a long monopoly could be negotiated, as occurred in Fiji. Satellite and improved broadcast technology seemed to allow for previously unheard-of economies of scale, if the centralized networking that characterized Australian television could be expanded across the Pacific.

The advertising potential in Fiji particularly, but also in Papua New Guinea with its large number of foreign and transnational companies, was a strong motivating factor for the television companies. However, this very advertising—the heart of commercial television's profit—exercises a strong control over program content and is in potential conflict with any regulatory function a government might seek to exercise. Commercial interests argue that this is true democracy, because the people are voting for programs with the ratings. The issue of regulation became a key component of the Wingti government's attack on television during its early months of office in 1987. Publishing and Broadcasting Limited expected to make a clear profit of F\$600,000 to F\$1 million per year (US\$360,000 to US\$600,000) selling largely foreign content via Intelsat to Suva (*FT*, 13 Aug 1986). Ross Addison, of the Wilson Addison advertising company in Suva, was optimistic about Fiji Television's likely profitability. For example, transnationals such as Colgate-Palmolive and Westpac had said they would double their Fiji advertising budgets for television (Addison 1987). Addison said that the prime target of advertising would be the "Fiji-Indian housewife." However, as the Morgan report noted, the profitability of advertising would depend on the popularity of the programs shown. The report claimed that if program content were "heavily skewed to information and education and . . . the entertainment component [were] a combination of the best available outside Fiji mixed with as much quality local product as possible" then Fiji Television might fail "to attract significant audiences in order to satisfy advertisers" and would require sponsors not only to pay for air time but to underwrite the costs of "quality local programs" (Morgan 1986). Thus, Morgan plausibly introduced the commercial rationale for including a high level of cheap, "ready-made" imported program material, with little allowance for local programming beyond low-cost news and current affairs shows. This rationale put the notion of development clearly in commercial terms, rather than in such terms as might have been worked out by the governments of Fiji and Papua New Guinea in consultation with their citizens for their long-term benefit.

In Papua New Guinea, similar operating principles for the profitability of the television station were articulated by the two companies. Profits would depend on advertising contracts, which would be motivated in Media Niugini's view by the vast pool of untapped consumer wealth presumed to exist in the mineral-rich highland provinces (Thorley 1987), and, in Niugini Television Network's view, by the large expatriate and local population living in the National Capital District. The failure of either Parry's Niugini Television Network or Packer's Media Niugini to procure a monopoly similar to the Fiji Television agreement in Fiji surely reduced this potential for profit. In Papua New Guinea also, the National Industries Development Authority required that ownership of all foreign-owned companies be devolved largely (70 percent) to Papua New Guineans within twenty years of registering as a Papua New Guinea company. A strong incentive for short- rather than long-term profitability had emerged. The implications for programming are that foreign entertainment programs are favored over more expensive local productions.

The twenty-year time-frame necessary for profitability was probably underestimated by Publishing and Broadcasting Limited, as Bond Media's marketing manager later acknowledged: "It's not going to be easy to make a profit in Papua New Guinea. . . . Eventually Bond will make money, but it's going to take a fair while for that to happen, and that's ignoring the government policy of eventual 100 percent national ownership" (Hall 1988). Niugini Television Network, on the other hand, realized that its chances for profitability were severely diminished when the Papua New Guinea government granted the second television license to Media Niugini (Finlay 1987). The network's perceived profitability was confined largely to the expatriate audiences in the National Capital District and to advertising contracts with large local and multinational companies. It had no intention of exploiting the potentially lucrative highland audiences (Finlay 1987). Since its diminished profitability was directly related to their loss of monopoly, this further points to the possibility that in removing that monopoly, Somare (in dependency theory terms) was offering "resistance" to the commercial "force."

In Fiji, however, Publishing and Broadcasting Limited succeeded in eliminating business competition. As one of Packer's station managers later said of Packer's (and later Bond's) push into the Pacific: "If someone else comes in there, that wouldn't be so easy for Bond" (Hall 1988). The twelve-year monopoly the company negotiated with Ratu Mara's govern-

ment would appear to have averted this problem. Papua New Guinea represented for Bond Media (PBL's successor company) an important link in that company's planned worldwide satellite organization, which included the United Kingdom, China, New Zealand, Australia, the Cook Islands, and Chile.

So much for the interests of the television companies. The benefits that the Mara and Somare governments saw for granting television licenses to foreign commercial companies have been articulated by the politicians themselves in varying degrees of explicitness. The major benefits appear to be electoral. Both Ratu Mara and Michael Somare were facing imminent elections and both had promised that television would be introduced in time for them. Somare had the added incentive of giving the Papua New Guinea people television in time for the tenth anniversary of independence (in 1985).

That politicians have often exploited the relationship between accessibility to centralized information and political hegemony has been documented (Katz and Wedell 1978; Mattelart, Delacourt, and Mattelart 1984). It is likely that both Somare and Ratu Mara saw benefits in television as a tool to inform an ethnically disparate and geographically scattered electorate of the positive achievements of the central government. In addition, videocassette recorders were becoming very popular, even in areas away from the national capitals, and the popularity of a government that added a national broadcast television to the proliferating (but non-centralized) videocassettes would seem greatly enhanced.

Some indication of Somare's personal enthusiasm for the project is shown in one of his speeches to Parliament: "The company will be trying [television] out in Port Moresby, Lae, Mt Hagen and Goroka. I wish they had included Wewak [center of Somare's own East Sepik electorate] because I would really love it, but they did not" (PNG, 27 May 1985, 5). In addition, Murray Finlay, manager of Newcastle Broadcasting Network's newly formed Papua New Guinea company, Niugini Television Network stated: "We were more than welcomed by the government of the day . . . and the Somare government . . . was in a mood of wanting to attract foreign investment of all types and when the offer came along from a foreign company to come and establish a television service, it was welcomed" (Finlay 1987).

As justification for the decision, Somare and the then Communications Minister Roy Evara offered five reasons for granting a license to Niugini Television Network. The service would, they claimed, offer a large

amount of programming in education and health issues (PNG, 5 Nov 1984, 10). There would be a steadily increasing level of local content, beginning at 20 percent, as the television station became more established (PNG, 28 May 1985). There would also be majority Papua New Guinea ownership of the network (PC, 9 Nov 1984). It was claimed, too, that the television service would be introduced at no cost to the government. However, this has not been clearly established, since Papua New Guinea's Posts and Telecommunications department was supposed to be investing in the microwave bearers for the service (PNG, 5 Nov 1984, 9; 28 May 1985, 22). Finally, Somare and Evara emphasized that "television is already in Papua New Guinea" in the form of cable, video, and satellite, with the implication that the introduction of a broadcast service would allow it to be regulated—in contrast with the other unregulated televisual services (PNG, 5 Nov 1984, 9).

Ratu Mara's personal enthusiasm for broadcast television has not been as well documented as Somare's. However, Ratu Mara had announced as early as September 1985 that Fiji would get broadcast television before the next election (due in early 1987) (FT, 21 Sept 1985, 3, 6). He attempted to placate anti-television groups in Fiji with the promise of a social impact survey to ascertain the type of television the people of Fiji wanted (FT, 3 July 1986, 10).

It is therefore reasonable to assume that both Somare and Mara believed they stood to make some political gains from having television established in their countries as a tool for commercial, economic, and social development. Both leaders were facing elections (in which each ultimately failed to be reelected). In addition to the perceived electoral advantage, it is also very likely that each leader saw the nation-building potential of television. Moreover, in both Fiji and Papua New Guinea the television companies had strongly emphasized social and economic benefits during the negotiation process. Finlay's comments about the Papua New Guinean's "enormous thirst for information" and Hall's comments about Fiji's commercial development typify this emphasis (Finlay 1987; Hall 1987).¹

OPPOSITION AND RESISTANCE

In neither Fiji nor Papua New Guinea was the momentary intersection of local political and foreign commercial interests a guarantee of long-term commercial success. The dependency process was neither inevitable nor

predetermined. Resistance emerged from the obvious quarters of the parliamentary opposition and the social conservatives, including religious, educational, and traditional leaders. Both countries also possessed some institutional channels through which opposition could be expressed, with varying levels of effectiveness.

The most notable opposition to commercial television in Papua New Guinea came from Paias Wingti, for whom television was one of the issues that helped galvanize his political opposition to Somare. When unsuccessful in fighting the issue at Cabinet level, he fought it in Parliament as leader of the opposition. Once elected prime minister (for his first term), he first asked Niugini Television Network to delay beginning transmission until the results of an inquiry into broadcasting were made available (Kalo 1987). When the network refused, Wingti attempted to use the legislature to reverse the decision to allow it to commence broadcasting (the Television Control and Prohibition Act). In turn, the network resorted to the judicial system to fight Wingti's legislation, and the Supreme Court of Papua New Guinea found the Act unconstitutional. Wingti's Communications Minister, Gabriel Ramoi, attempted several times to put in place legislation that would regulate initially only broadcasting, but later *all* Papua New Guinea media. However, this all-inclusive legislation was never put to parliamentary vote because of persistent and vocal opposition from the established print media. The television stations had been in favor of the establishment of a regulatory tribunal, because they felt it would bring the other media (including videocassette recorders, pay-television, and the press) under the same technical and local content obligations as they themselves operated. Despite these various attempts to resist and then control television, there is still no set of guidelines or regulations governing television broadcasting that might embody the countless submissions by a wide range of Papua New Guinea people to the inquiry into broadcasting of January 1987 (Finlay 1987; PNG, 26 Feb 1987, 17; Kalo 1987).

More subtle undermining of the profitability of the commercial television companies was present in the "hard-bargaining" tactics of the Papua New Guinea government during the negotiations. The issue of who was to pay for the microwave bearers to transmit television to other major centers outside Port Moresby (a development not encompassed within Niugini Television Network's original plans) considerably delayed the agreement between the network and the government, to the financial detriment of the network. In Fiji also, most of the hardware costs of installing televi-

sion were to be borne by the company, with the government largely providing land. In Papua New Guinea, Niugini Television Network had also failed to get the government to invest directly in their station (as Publishing and Broadcasting Limited had been able to do in Fiji), thus taking on themselves almost all the burden of expenditure for setting up the station.

In Fiji, opposition to television came more from conservative social forces such as church leaders. While not actually opposing the introduction of television, the Reverend Yabaki of the Fijian Council of Churches, an adviser to the government on television policy, argued that stronger legislation was needed to control the commercial company and that stricter control be directed toward developing more endogenous programming, in spite of the stated extra expense (Yabaki 1987). Opposition to commercial television in Fiji also came from the press, who feared a popular competitor. Vijendra Kamar, editor of the *Fiji Times*, argued that television should be state owned, because of the medium's power, and that its introduction should be delayed until it was affordable and certain to present programs that would foster Fiji's varied cultures (Kamar 1987). Kamar, together with the manager of FM-96 and the editor of *Pacific Islands Monthly*, also feared that the advertising "cake" would be sliced too finely if commercial television were introduced.

Religious and community leaders consulted by the Roy Morgan company when conducting its social impact survey did succeed in having some of their views represented in the final report. The report's recommendations included guidelines for programming, such as controls on sexual explicitness and violence; bans on cigarette and alcohol advertising; positive injunctions for the promotion of Fijian culture; production of special rural, women's, and children's programs; and for programs to be scheduled to avoid working hours.

However, in Fiji, just as in Papua New Guinea, the legislation to embody the concerns of the religious and community leaders was not drawn up or enacted prior to the signing of the agreement with the foreign television company. Moreover, the agreement with Publishing and Broadcasting Limited in Fiji stipulated that "the government cannot promote legislation that goes against the agreement, and must consult with F-TV where practicable, on any proposed legislation" (*FT*, 13 Aug 1986, 1).

The Fiji Labour Party was another source of opposition. They disapproved of the awarding of a twelve-year monopoly to Publishing and Broadcasting Limited without a prior independent social impact study

(*PIM*, Dec 1986, 8). On its election to government in April 1987, the new Labour coalition government immediately announced that there would be a review of the television agreement, and “a further social impact study emphasising the importance of local content” (*Australian*, 27 April 1987, 18).

The coalition government was prevented from following through by the military coup of May 1987, the negative economic effects of which led to Fiji Television paying off its local workers and all expatriate workers returning to Australia by the end of 1987. Fears of increased interference from Christian religious leaders and greater levels of government control were also motivating factors in Bond Media’s departure. Neither the Fiji government nor Bond Media ever withdrew from the original agreement, but it was effectively nullified when the station failed to go to air by the February 1988 deadline. Apart from closed-circuit marketplace “warm-ups,” Fiji Television never commenced transmission.

Following the 1987 coup the re-formed Ratu Mara government became more circumspect in its consideration of further offers of television from foreign companies. However, it has still not set up processes for public consultation on the issue. Despite its calling for and receiving a number of tenders in 1990 from local and overseas interests, the Fiji government, at the close of 1991, was still delaying any decision on a domestic television service (Huddy 1991).

Meanwhile, in Papua New Guinea, Niugini Television Network found itself at the end of 1987—its first year of operation—in an uneasy compromise with the state. By March 1988, the network, which had said it could never make a profit while more than one television company was operating in Papua New Guinea, ceased operation. The reasons for its closure related partly to the ailing financial position of the parent company, Parry Corporation, and partly to the unrecovered expenditure on the network itself. Niugini Television Network had failed to negotiate the monopoly it claimed to need for profitability; it had failed to get a large share of Papua New Guinean investment and, perhaps more important, it had failed to get the government to invest directly in the station. Had it continued operating, it would presumably have had to divest a majority of its shares to local people within twenty years, according to Papua New Guinea law.

Media Niugini then appeared to be the winner. By 1988 it had expanded its operation to Lae on the northern coast via land transmitters and by the end of 1989 had extended transmission to at least seven other urban and

mining centers, making use of Bond Media's access to the Intelsat satellite. It had also made compromises, such as being prepared to put to air non-broadcast-quality government education and health programs (Thorley 1987), thereby considerably enhancing its standing with the administration. These contrasted with Niugini Television Network's more rigid policies.

And the government and people of Papua New Guinea? They have a broadcast television service that provides limited representation of themselves and their country in locally produced programs and advertisements that make up roughly 20 percent of viewing time. However, it is not a television "of the people," but very much an imported institution in which culture is largely interpreted for the people by foreign managers who are short-term residents of the capital city.

The frustration felt by many Papua New Guinean policymakers in relation to television in their country was expressed eloquently by Communications Minister Brown Sinamoi at the Pacific Regional Television Conference in Suva in November 1989:

Television in its various forms is already in Papua New Guinea, but it is in a chaotic and most unsatisfactory state. None of them can be considered or accepted as promoting Papua New Guinea cultural values. Because of lack of adequate television policies by successive governments, a situation has been reached in Papua New Guinea that would not be tolerated in most other countries. (Horsfield 1990b, 14)

CONCLUSIONS

Writing about the dialectics of the expansion of the Australian manufacturing industry into Indonesia in the early 1970s, Short gave as the major reasons for the investment decision "the limited size of the [Australian] domestic market and the desire to promote export goods and services" (1978, 115). A similar desire to expand beyond the limited domestic market motivated the television companies and their clients, the advertisers, in the 1980s. In the case of expansion into Papua New Guinea and Fiji, it could be added that, although profits from the new ventures would have been neither immediate nor very great, by becoming established in those particular markets, the respective companies were hoping to keep competitors out. For Bond Media in particular, Papua New Guinea was intended as part of that company's planned worldwide satellite organization.

The current financial problems of the Australian television industry, which have resulted, among other things, in the return of Kerry Packer as owner of the Channel 9 network after Alan Bond's ignominious exit, may suggest that Australian television incursions into the Pacific during the 1980s were transitory and unlikely to be repeated. However, such a view would underestimate the underlying strength of the Australian television and telecommunications industries. The Overseas Telecommunications Corporation International (OTCI), for example, has been very successful in marketing communications hardware to Kiribati and in the cooperative development of telecommunications infrastructures in Vietnam and Laos. It is now generally acknowledged that the disastrous state of the Australian television industry is due to the then owners' miscalculations, rather than to any crippling malaise in the industry as such. Moreover, even as television networks are suffering both financial woes and a poor public image in the Pacific because of the forays reported here, other "players" are positioning for entry. Perhaps the most noteworthy are Television New Zealand's services in Niue, Nauru, and the Chatham Islands and their involvement with Cook Islands Television. The Australian company OTCI did put in a bid for supplying a television service for Fiji, but has recently withdrawn from the tendering process (Huddy 1991). In turn, the Fiji government has been conducting a more orderly processing of the recent bids than of the earlier ones, but still without public consultation or debate.

The evidence presented in this paper suggests, that any profits to be made by foreign television companies from either Fiji or Papua New Guinea will be minimal. The same "Pacific way" that facilitated the entry of the foreign companies into both countries has apparently worked against any hopes the companies may have had that Pacific television was "a license to print money." The syncretism of British political and judicial institutions and Melanesian traditions produces anomalies that often take Westerners by surprise. Thus, Niugini Television Network may have won the court case against the Papua New Guinea government, but they lost the battle for a monopoly and subsequent profitability. Bond Media in Fiji, with its twelve-year monopoly and its 80 percent ownership of Fiji Television, had its seemingly secure profitability irreparably undermined by the political changes of 1987 and the consequent economic decline.

Being aware of the outcomes, we may see the irony of the methods used by the television companies to gain a foothold in each of the two nations.

There was, for example, an apparent sensitivity in both organizations to accusations of “imperialism”: Packer’s negotiator, Lynton Taylor, was keen to point out that, “We were invited in” to Fiji and other Pacific Island countries by the respective governments (*PIM*, May 1985, 33). The rhetoric was added that the television companies were essentially local companies, with a predominance of locally recruited workers, some of whom were already well known in radio. Each company adopted a strong local image—national symbols formed part of each company’s logo—and in Papua New Guinea, Tok Pisin words occur in the very names of the companies: Niugini Television Network, Media Niugini, EM-TV (*em* is a Tok Pisin word for “the,” implying “the one and only”). Another similarity is that influential local figures such as Olewale and Cooper were employed by Niugini Television Network and Fiji Television respectively to smooth the way for the company’s negotiators.

Crucial to the question of communications policy in countries such as Papua New Guinea and Fiji is the issue of development. Several United Nations conferences of nonaligned nations, beginning with Lusaka in 1970, have linked national communications policies with a movement toward self-reliance in development that is concerned not with “technical progress and industrialisation” but with “the satisfying of fundamental needs—food, clothing, housing, education, self-fulfilment, participation, togetherness and conviviality” (Mattelart, Delacourt, and Mattelart 1984). In this view culture becomes “a field for political emancipation” (Mattelart, Delacourt, and Mattelart 1984). The incursions of foreign-owned television monopolies, with their accountability to transnational advertisers, is not conducive to collective participation in the communications planning process.

Why, then, were the Somare and Mara governments willing to accept these foreign television deals? Perhaps part of the answer lies in the myth of development that is central to the rhetoric employed by leaders such as Somare and Ratu Mara and his spokesman, Peter Stinson. The rhetoric that television will promote the development of the country is rendered palatable to its population when combined with a growing demand for television’s entertainment and information functions resulting from almost a decade of exposure to pirated videotapes of off-air Australian and New Zealand (and US) television programs.

The choices faced by the prime ministers of Fiji and Papua New Guinea at the time of the foreign television offers were not simple. In each case the

establishment of television had previously been accorded a low priority: the establishment of largely foreign-owned commercial television had to overcome substantial political, social, and ideological objections. Perhaps Sir Michael Somare and Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara are modern examples of “indigenous political . . . collaborators” succumbing to “the allure of what the big society had to offer in terms of trade, capital, technology” (Robinson 1972, 120). Clearly, they were attracted by the possibility of getting television in time for their election campaigns. They may also have been motivated by the desire to give the people a “gift”—in Somare’s case (ironically) for the tenth anniversary of independence from Australian mandate rule. Somare’s position was somewhere between Wingti’s desire to preserve the culture from excessive exposure to materialist Western values and practices, and the desire to encourage foreign investment in a developing capitalist economy. At least partly for reasons of self-interest, Somare came out on the side of the foreign company, as did Ratu Mara. This notion of “self-interest,” when pursued to the extent of what is known in many Western democracies as “corruption,” is explained by Turner as a function of the imposition of Western democratic institutions and principles on traditional Melanesian political institutions (Turner 1990, 143).

The arbitrariness of the decision-making process, in terms of the lack of an orderly bidding process and of public consultation, is evident in both Fiji and Papua New Guinea. The lack of consultation, the secrecy, and the bypassing of the recommendations of previous government inquiries are features of communications policymaking not peculiar to Pacific Island nations. Similarly, the use of “social impact” studies such as the Roy Morgan study in Fiji is now a familiar ploy in attempts to diffuse controversial issues. Yet the experience reported here with nonindependent, commercially sponsored social impact studies should not discourage Pacific Island governments from initiating more rigorous, independent studies that may genuinely contribute to policymaking. At the same time, foreign entrepreneurs should not underestimate the strength and subtlety of the resistance that may be offered to them by Pacific Island governments.

Our conclusions about our appropriation of dependency theory are somewhat mixed. In some ways the postulated vulnerability of dependent states has been confirmed, perhaps more vividly in the case of Papua New Guinea. However, the sheer volatility of local political processes, fueled

by nationalist and conservative elements to the extent that they can gain access to the political process, must surely temper any temptation to reach preconceived conclusions about the outcomes of negotiations under conditions of dependency. If dependency theory has focused on how the incursions of foreign capital are made politically possible, then it needs also to specify the conditions under which such incursions become, if not impossible, then difficult, unstable, and suboptimal for all concerned.

AFTERWORD

Since 1987 both the Fijian and Papua New Guinean governments have shown increasing concern about the quality and development of broadcast television in their respective countries. Fiji, despite a number of tenders from foreign television interests seeking to establish television in the archipelago, has maintained a more independent attitude toward television. Through the tendering experience, Fiji's politicians and public servants have no doubt learned much about financing and managing a television service, and are now not so easily won by foreign media owners' promises of an ideal television service.

Since 1985, Television New Zealand has established an image as a Pacific television provider that has the interests of Pacific Islanders at heart. For example, it had a major role in establishing Cook Islands Television in late 1990. Interestingly, the Cook Islands government chose to ignore the New Zealand company's advice that it would not be feasible for Cook Islands Television to supply some of its own program content through endogenous production, and has been successfully producing an hour of local material each week. In this way Cook Islands Television has shown that some independence from hegemonic foreign broadcast practices is possible in the Pacific.

The recently signed Memorandum of Understanding between Television New Zealand and the Fiji government gives the government 100 percent ownership of the new Fiji Broadcasting and Television Corporation, but Television New Zealand is awarded only a technical and managerial role. This is a result of the Fijian government's continued postcoup policy of *dabe wawa, ka rai* (don't rush—let them come to you; sit back and wait and see). Such a stance has allowed the government to retain the initiative, set the agenda, and control the pace of television development, a stance that contrasts sharply with the more *laissez-faire* attitudes of the precoup

government of Ratu Mara. In addition, the Rabuka government is showing a strong interest in developing local production.

In Papua New Guinea, EM-TV remains the sole television provider, although some expatriates and wealthier Papua New Guineans also have access to satellite channels such as North Queensland Television (NQTV) from Australia, and Malaysian and Indonesian channels. After five years of operation, EM-TV is still not showing a profit, although general manager John Taylor believes it is "well on the way" to doing so (Taylor 1992). Local productions still represent less than 20 percent of its programming. Taylor claims that getting sponsorship for local productions is generally more difficult than for more popular foreign shows such as "A Current Affair" (from Australia).

EM-TV's experience over the last five years has shown that Papua New Guinean audiences prefer to watch overseas programs rather than local productions. This claim is supported by *Times of Papua New Guinea* journalist Anna Solomon, who adds that EM-TV is least popular with audiences who have access to satellite television (Solomon 1992). The company is hoping to achieve commercial viability for endogenous productions, but this is related to the experience of production crews and to audience acceptance, which Taylor believes will take some years to achieve.

One clear exception is "Mekim Musik," a program that shows local and overseas music video clips. Recent indications are that a local music industry has begun. The program has high levels of audience acceptance and sponsorship.

Other examples of recent local productions are "Ah Great Coffee" (a prize-winning documentary) and an eight-part miniseries about life in a squatter settlement that has so far not been aired because of lack of sponsorship. However, Taylor believes that confidence in local productions will come as audiences become more experienced with the range of television genres. The other side of this coin is that audiences who rarely see their own cultures represented on television are unlikely to develop an appreciation of local programs. The refusal of the commercial station to take the financial risks associated with making and showing local productions is a more subtle working out of dependency theory.

Furthermore, the few fledgling local television production industries in the Pacific Islands may have even stronger competition when the full effect of the current proliferation of Pacific satellite footprints is felt.

The existing Pacific satellites, Intelsat, Inmarsat, Peacesat and Aussat, connect Pacific countries to distant parts of the world, and more satellites are being planned. For example the Inmarsat's Project Iridium will put 77 mobile satellites in low polar orbits around the earth. . . . Moreover, Papua New Guinea and Tonga are acquiring satellite rights. (Horsfield, Stewart, and Plange 1992)

Competition among satellite providers may well result in a new wave of entrepreneurs trying to secure television deals with Pacific governments—an outcome that may ultimately prove disadvantageous to both the island nations and the satellite owners. A proliferation of satellite-delivered television is unlikely to contain a very high percentage of locally produced programs. Satellite delivery also raises further questions about the extent to which national governments would be able to control television. Under such a delivery system, cultural and economic dependency may be difficult for Pacific nations to avoid.

Note

1 Fiji Television Manager John Hall used the term *development* to mean expansion of the Fiji economy, especially in the commercial sector. He felt commercial television would contribute to this “development” by increasing sales of existing products and creating markets for new products (Hall 1987).

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Abstract

Dependency theory continues to offer the development researcher attractive possibilities for heuristic claims about relationships of cultural or economic dependency between nations. However, as recent work on dependency theory—for example, by Larrain (1990) and Wallerstein (1990)—demonstrates, claims that dependency theory provides a valuable explanatory tool must take into account the specific social, cultural, and economic circumstances and idiosyncrasies of that country. That is, dependency theory must always be a possible conclusion, rather than a premise, of investigation. Dependency theory must be answerable, therefore, to empirical investigation.

This paper details two empirical studies that furnish data for evaluating the validity of applying dependency theory to an understanding of the socioeconomic impact of televisual development in the Pacific. In the mid-1980s both Fiji and Papua New Guinea leaped enthusiastically into agreements with Australian media interests to introduce broadcast television into those countries. An examination of the policy formulation and decision-making processes of both Fijian and Papua New Guinean governments at the time shows that politicians in both Suva and Port Moresby did not cope well with the incompatible needs of profit-oriented foreign media entrepreneurs and development-oriented national groups. This paper therefore focuses on the period of the early negotiations and deal-making in the two countries, during the mid-1980s and on the social, political, and economic consequences of the resulting deals for both television institutions and their target audiences. It is argued that these consequences have been conducive to relations of cultural and economic dependency.