8

Constituting Common Futures: Reflecting from Singapore about Decolonisation in Fiji

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In 1996, Brij Lal was one of the authors, in important ways the principal author, of a report on Fiji's constitutional needs. The report, Parliamentary Paper #34 of 1996, was titled *The Fiji Islands: Towards a United Future*. This report is widely remembered for its inclusion, a spirit of inclusion stretching from detailed review of sometimes contradictory global standards for constitutional ordering of indigenous rights, minority rights and other protections, to the measured inclusion of a wide range of voices seeking ways to reconstitute Fiji, including ways to mend fences but also ways to remove them. The report is correctly remembered as an intervention into Fiji's politics reminding all of the necessity of a commons, the exigency of finding legal means to reconcile ethnic Fijian interests with Indo-Fijian presence and vice versa. However, it should not be neglected that this report also decisively turned the measure and focus of Fiji's politics towards the future. Both of these dimensions of the report—the insistence on building a commons for Fiji and the emphasis on the future as measure of the political good—are of interest here. Neither of these goals was novel, but we sense that this report, addressing its circumstances, was a significant moment in Fiji's fraught political dialogues. By making a common future the necessary good for Fiji's politics, Brij Lal, in a quiet way, helped to accomplish what

generations of Indo-Fijian political leaders have sought to do: establish incontrovertible and equitable terms of belonging for the Indo-Fijians of Fiji.

Reflecting on the second half of the twentieth century, that twilight period now in the domain of 'history', we reflect as well on visions of a common future, and the circumstances that necessitate them. Fiji has a troubled place in the roll of nation-states. We want to reconsider that, by setting it in a much more salutary place in a grimmer political history—the decolonisation of places where the nation-state model did not easily fit. Here we relocate Fiji's decolonisation, and the political and intellectual interventions of Brij Lal, in a history that does not take 'countries', 'nations' and 'nation-states' for granted, but locates the last of the 'new nations' in the decolonisation era otherwise, not merely in a history of nation-states. Where Benedict Anderson depicted late decolonisation as a 'last wave', latecomers adopting an established form, we see creative variation, under extreme pressure, in a more complex history of situations. In short, we want to reconsider the decolonisation of Fiji within the history of partitions, to notice all that it was not. Yes, Fiji was fractious, troubled, ethnically torn asunder, falling repeatedly to military takeovers. It has been overswept many times by that all-too-frequent alternative to the nation-state normal, in which not democracy but the political army connects nation and state. But Fiji's ethnic fences were never remade into walls, and its streets, in fact, never ran with blood. It is not an accident that Fiji's decolonisation came late. Nor was this late date a feature only of local conditions. Many in Fiji were certainly ambivalent about decolonising, and no few, especially among chiefs and their supporters, were as hostile toward it as many, especially among Indo-Fijians, were avid for decolonisation. Not only for this reason, Fiji was amongst the hardest cases for independence seekers and the waning British Empire to constitute. Fiji's actual constitutional ordering followed, and we think was subtly but decisively shaped by, everyone's experiences of the reversal of efforts elsewhere.

Thus this chapter looks at the ordering of Fiji, its people(s) and their common future that was embodied in its constitution at independence in 1970. It brings together our interest in South Asian diasporas, dynamic Fijian political histories, and the specific post-World War II historical conjuncture that formed the world of nation-states—interests we share with Brij Lal. But the chapter also reframes consideration of Fiji through comparison with experiences elsewhere, and specifically with Singapore

(independent in 1963 as part of Malaysia, and in 1965 on its own as Singapore). And it raises questions about partition. In so doing, it seeks new insights into the situation that multiple agents believed they faced in planning Fiji's constitution.

Partition is not usually raised when we think about Fiji. But the 1950s and 1960s were an era of partitions. These followed double touchstones from the 1940s. One was the quintessential partition of allegedly irreconcilable cultural difference—the religiously justified national partition of India into India and Pakistan. The other was the quintessential Cold War partition of Germany into East and West. In varying admixtures, the 1950s and 1960s saw partitions invoking either or both principles, usually both. Kashmir was pushed into impossibility, Korea and Vietnam into standoffs, civil war further split Pakistan and endemically fractured Burma. Against this backdrop, planners, both imperial and local, had to reckon with religion, ethnicity and geopolitical filiations, local and global factions often redoubling the lines of potential conflict, especially in yet-to-be decolonised Fiji and Malaysia. Both Cold War politics and ethnic asymmetry were keys to the Malaysian civil war, which the Empire addressed as a communist insurgency and suppressed with a successful counterinsurgency campaign (including Fijian military participation). Suspicion of ethnic Chinese political aspirations in favour of Malay 'sons of the soil' bumiputera thereafter had two motivations, inspired both by proindigenous sentiments and Cold War anxieties. In Fiji, similar elements were in play, especially as the Empire's old guard reacted to 'the Nehru era'. What then do we learn about Fiji in 1970 if we read it in the wake of Singapore in 1965? Not a simple story. Even where ethnic and religious divisions overlapped with geopolitical anxieties, the Empire used more than one tactic, especially as failures taught their lessons. To bring the Fiji 1970 constitution into new focus, this chapter will relocate Fiji in the history of deployed partition strategies. We will consider geographical partition and electoral partition as two opposites to common futures in late decolonisation.

Fiji's late decolonisation is sometimes attributed to colonial assumptions about perceived primitivity and unreadiness. But we wonder whether it was actually complexity that held it off: ethnic complexity, the politics of decolonisation and rule, the politics of Cold War. And as well, the longstanding parochialism of the British in Fiji itself. Long after Indian independence, they misunderstood Gandhians as communists. Long after the Bandung conference, they did not see how the world was moving.

We think that they tried, in Fiji's 1970 constitution, in (ironically) their five-year plans, and in their newly ensconced, 'apolitical' and enshrined civil service, to sustain as much of the imperial civility and estrangement in governance as possible. We think that they left it to Fiji itself to find a path to commons and future.

To honour Brij Lal

Let us emphasise from the outset that this argument is our own; if it is flawed that is on us and not something to blame Brij for inspiring. The term 'common future' we borrow, of course, from Brij Lal's work. It is not the title of the 1996 parliamentary report, which perhaps avoided the set-piece politics of a 'common roll', and spoke of moving Fiji toward a 'united future'. But the issues intrinsic to the common-roll voting debate are perhaps the most durable theme of Lal's decolonisation history. Or perhaps, equally, the importance of the commons and the importance of the future: his deliberately modernist works generally inspire us to contribute to reflections on modern Fijian history. In the last 20 years, Brij Lal has published on an epic scale a textured and reliable history of Fiji's complicated political vicissitudes, accomplishing something remarkable in the world of history writing, giving his country a reliable history of its independence era, a history leading right to its present moment. Rare is the historian willing and capable to so commit to people who can answer back. Equally rare, obviously, is the academic who can work so effectively within and in fact against political crisis. Brij Lal has had a remarkable career. We contribute here a comparative chapter seeking to illuminate parts of the long history he has captured by way of a particular comparison. We hope that it embodies Brij Lal's scholarly commitment to writing untold history and acting to constitute and make real political possibilities.

We first came to Fiji in 1982. We first 'met' Brij through reading his scholarship on indentured Indian migration to Fiji. As John began his ethnographic research on Indo-Fijian business and devotional life, and archival research on Fiji Indians in world anticolonial history, and Martha her ethnography of Drauniivi past and present, and her historical ethnography of British suppression of Fijian anticolonial movements, Brij Lal's *Broken Waves* came to provide the essential framework, the first real history of Fiji as a nation, and the first truly synthetic and actually modernist vision of its past, present and future. Our works thereafter—

Brij's as a socially astute historian and John's and Martha's as historical anthropologists—have intersected productively over the years.¹ We must have 'met' in the mid-1980s via letters (pre-internet!), finally actually in person at a conference we invited him to in 2000. Initially, Martha's work on anticolonial Fijian political-religious movements (Kaplan 1989, 1990, 1995) and more recently on the export of Fijian Water (2005, 2007) may have seemed separate from John's Indo-Fijian historical anthropology (Kelly 1988, 1991, 1992), but over the years we (Martha and John) came to commit ourselves to writing in ways that challenge colonially constituted, ethnically separate histories of Fiji (Kaplan and Kelly 1994, 1999; Kelly and Kaplan 2001; Kelly 1995, 2005, 2011: 235–49). As our historical writings moved from events in the 1920s and 1930s into the decolonisation era (papers that eventually became our book *Represented Communities* (2001)), we began to pursue simultaneously, the historical origins of the Fiji coups and the lessons from Fiji's history for a political anthropology of decolonisation and the nation-state. In all this work, we recurrently take inspiration from Brij's histories of Fiji as a whole. Brij Lal's histories of modern Fiji lay the foundation for all future histories of independent Fiji. And his political engagements, his humane political commitments and positive political contributions will prove never to have compromised his insightful histories. He is an inspiration for all scholars who aspire to relevance.

No communities without representation

In this chapter, as in *Represented Communities*, we analyse literal constitutions and other constituting moments to argue for an anthropology of nation and nationalism that takes seriously the manufacture of social charters as well as colonial realities and legacies. At the beginning of the twentieth century, imperial polities organised most of the world.

1 For instance, Brij and John shared an important commitment to using historical knowledge to illuminate the potential for common and humane relationships in Fiji: each published a translation of Totaram Sanadhya's 'Story of the haunted line', an inspiring story of Totaram's salvation from despair through his devotion *and* through moral and humane exchanges of food and care between indentured worker and Fijian villagers in the late indenture era. Happily, Brij's version in the *Journal of Pacific History* reaches a global scholarly audience focused on Indian diaspora as well as Pacific scholars and university students (Lal and Shineberg 1991). John's version, included in a volume along with his translation of Totaram's *My Twenty-One Years in the Fiji Islands* (co-translator Uttra Singh) was published by the Fiji Museum (despite a delay caused by the 1987 coup), and makes available in English this important original text on Fiji–Indian history to Fiji citizens, as well as to tourists and visitors (Sanadhya 1991).

Within these predatory, hierarchical polities, peoples (often referred to as 'nations') were assorted 'racially' by colonisers. In European empires, races were ranked as more or less civilised. Following World War II, this world of empires was replaced by a UN world, reconstituted as a field of individual, bounded nation-states. Explaining this rapid change, Anderson identified nations as imagined communities of people aligned in horizontal symmetry, and found nationalism to be the culture of 'modernity' (Anderson 1983). Anderson argued as well that the nation-states began in the Euro-American world and spread in a last wave to the rest. We think twentieth-century history was less evolutionary and more complicated. While victorious Americans, impoverished British imperials and others planned a global order of formally symmetric nation-states in the new world order of United Nations, across the decolonising globe, asymmetrically situated agents, including cosmopolitans and 'sons of the soil', socialists, liberals, communists, and communalists, ethnic champions and utopian planners, faced dilemmas grounded in local asymmetries in the planning of new nations.

While agreeing that nation-states are not given by race or place, we have argued that the historical conditions of the current order of nation-states are specific and specifiable. We see the history of the nation-state to be very recent, coming into being after World War II when, for example, India and England turned from being colony and coloniser, to nation-states. The UN world was formed as anticolonial struggles, Marxist, anarchist, *swaraj* and others, found their possible end points within the form engineered by postwar American power. An American plan for a world of independent, limited liability political entities, a world in which very Protestant self-determination would orient political futures and organise and delimit political wills, was put in place post-World War II. Imperial trade preferences weakened as Americans deliberately destroyed currency and investment barriers, and decolonisation rushed forward, colonisers squeezed between their own exhaustion and bankruptcy and their well-earned rejection by the people in almost every colony. The Americans gave this movement its trading-zone vocabulary for mutual recognition, locating 'new men' seeking 'self-determination' everywhere. And this postwar order proved robust enough to sustain, across the late decades of the twentieth century, the postwar commitment, also, to peace. The UN charter banned war between nations and states. How much of this Pax Americana followed from respect for the new system and how much from fear of atomic weaponry is not easy to judge, but in some combination

the system weathered the 'Cold War' that its own unresolved ideologies engendered, and even kept that Cold War cold while decolonisation proceeded to its hard cases.

Sutured together in the nation-state and the decolonisation era are the idea of the bounded, territorial and independent state, and the sharp demarcation of its citizenry. In the twentieth century's new version of self-evident human rights, people are endowed with rights by their states. In this new order, people gain economic and social freedoms, civil and political rights, first of all within the nation-state that is their own. These rights and freedoms were not legally imagined as the imposition of any outside force. They could only rise with the yeast of self-determination, the new state coming into its own. But history provided state-makers of the 1950s and 1960s, both imperial and local, with problematic real situations: diasporic realities, religious rivalries and international security entanglements added complexity to colonial race hierarchies, resulting in a range of situations of self and other awaiting the new schemes for rights determination. In India, partition was mandated as a last colonial act, truly mandated, the British argued, by the given differences of religion and community, an implacable divide unsurmountable in peace. From flattened and guilty Germany came the paradigm of the partition made necessary by global political alignment, military occupation reread as the form for, and therefore of, local political will. In Fiji, more than 20 years later, we see a constitution that tried to turn colonial race categories into communities of self-determination. We hope that the motives behind that 1970 Fiji constitution can be clarified by a review of events in Singapore in between. Singapore was affected by both kinds of motives for partition. Both in the imperial decisions to create a Malaysia including Singapore in 1963, and the Malaysian decision to separate them in 1965, we shall see the operation of the two partition logics, communal and transnationally political.

It is possible to narrate Fiji's history as a story of local struggle over rules for communal representation and communal privilege, a politics of movements to sustain or repeal colonial colour lines, to outline Fiji against colonial shadows. We know this because we have done it. Fiji's 1930s restrictions on democracy, even while self-determination was sought in many places globally in the 'Wilsonian Moment' following the Versailles negotiations (Manela 2007), make sense as an effort of official Fiji to insist on racial difference and hierarchy in order to swim against the tide of oncoming self-determination, long before the outset of actual decolonisation in the

British Empire (Kelly and Kaplan 2001). There is much to be said for this measure of Fiji's recent difficulties in the entrenchments of its late colonial past. We wish to add, now, some further reflections on motives behind Fiji's 1970 constitution, remembering the intense and recent genealogy of partitions communally and/or geopolitically motivated. Taking our analysis beyond the effects of British animus for Fiji's Indians, of late imperial contrariness and loathing for Gandhi and his successful Congress, we want to reflect on the more particular partition strategies, electoral as well as geographical, that put Fiji in 1970, into its first postcolonial shape.

Constitutions at independence: Fiji and Singapore

As we will see, at independence in 1970 the governance of Fiji depended upon an elaborate machinery of group representation. The 1970 constitution reproduced the unequal political relations formed in the colonial era in favour of ethnic Fijians and chiefly power, and through 'communal rolls' it reinforced and further reified 'race' as a category in Fijian social and political life. Surprisingly—from a Fiji perspective—Singapore's 1965 constitution had a 'common roll'. But this commons came only after partition.

Fiji's constitution at independence in 1970

In 1970, Fiji's national government (at independence the Commonwealth Dominion of Fiji) followed the so-called Westminster model, with a governor-general (a Fijian chief) representing the queen, and a bicameral legislature of appointed Senators and elected members of the House of Representatives. Electorally, the majority party's (or coalition's) leader became the prime minister. Most of the seats in the House of Representatives were 'communal' with three voters' rolls: Fijians, Indians and General Electors. To be a voter in Fiji, people were required to register themselves as members of one of those rolls, in accordance with their 'race' ('General Electors' were European, part-European, Chinese, and primarily, other Islanders, in the local terminology).

Under the 1970 constitution, the House of Representatives had 52 members. Twenty-two members were Fijians, 12 elected by Fijians, and 10 elected by all of the voters (on the national roll) in particular districts. Twenty-two members were Indians, 12 similarly elected by Indians, and 10 by all of the voters in their districts. Eight were General Electors, three elected by General Electors and five by all the voters in the districts. Note that at the time the numbers were not proportionate. In 1980, Fijians who were 44 per cent of the population elected 42 per cent of the elected representatives. Indians who made up 50 per cent of the population also elected 42 per cent of the representatives, while General Electors at 6 per cent of the population had 15 per cent of seats (Lal 1986: 76). The over-representation of General Electors worked largely to ethnic Fijian advantage, since General Electors tended to form coalitions with the predominantly ethnic Fijian party. The second house, the Senate, had appointed members, eight named by the Fijian Great Council of Chiefs, seven named by the prime minister (head of the party in power), six named by the opposition party, and one representing people from the island of Rotuma. Thus, change in the majority party in the lower house would make literally one vote difference in the upper house, and could not provide a majority there without Great Council support. As Brij Lal has summarised:

The logic of the electoral system adopted at independence was that the voters of Fiji would continue to vote on racial lines. A racially based electoral system engendered racial voting, inevitably at the expense of the greater national good. Fiji after independence was not a 'nation' of diverse peoples with common hopes and aspirations but a coalition of competing ethnicities with their own communal agendas. Elections came to be seen not as contests between political parties with competing ideologies, but as zero-sum racial contests. An election lost was thus seen as a loss for a 'race' (Lal 2008: 78).

Singapore's constitution at independence in 1965

In 1965 Singapore's constitution also followed the Westminster model, with the prime minister coming from the party with the most members of parliament elected. It was unicameral. Read in light of Fiji's constitution, the most surprising feature of the Singapore constitution of 1965 is that Singapore's system employed a 'common roll'. Voters in each district were identified by residence in the district, but neither candidates nor voters were organised by communal categories. This is despite the fact that

Singapore, like Fiji, had been a multiethnic British colony. Singapore did and does require people to identify themselves for national identity cards according to 'race' categories. And these categories do figure in key aspects of citizenship such as eligibility for Housing Development Board flats, which are ethnically balanced. But in 1965 they did not shape electoral representation.²

What can we learn from the difference between these two electoral systems that reveals the electoral partition so consequential for Fiji? The creation of Singapore in 1965 was part of the disassembling of the Federation of Malaysia, that is, part of a geographical partition. In this fashion Singapore gained 'common-roll' democracy in 1965, something Fiji is still working on. But Singapore's commons came into being via dramatic, violent events, and while its freedom enabled its modernism to accelerate, it also turned Singapore inward. In contrast, as we shall see, Fiji's electoral system, for decades, made appeal to common future suspicious, and instilled partition into every electoral act.

Independent Fiji 1970

In Fiji's constitution at independence, visions of a common future were predicated on balancing colonial 'race' categories. Unity was literally envisioned as tripartite; 1970 Independence images of a 'three-legged stool' envisioned national leadership by ethnic Fijian chiefly elites and ethnic Fijian commoner landowners, with Indo-Fijians as the economic backbone and the British crown as guarantor of the parliamentary system.

2 See Kevin Tan (2014) for a comprehensive discussion of Singapore's constitution. There have been changes in Singapore's constitution and representative system since 1965. For example, in 1984 nonconstituency MPs were introduced. Since 1988, some districts are represented by Group Representation Constituency (GRC) slates, which also serve as town administrative councils and require an ethnically mixed slate. In 1990, nominated members of Parliament were introduced (K. Tan 2014: 54–55). And from 2016 on, election of the president (a largely ceremonial gravitas head of state position) was reserved for members of a particular 'race' (defined threefold in the law as Chinese, Malay and Indian or other) in the event that no member of that race had been elected in the previous five elections. Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean represented the change as one promoting general citizenship: 'Every community should aspire to producing leaders that may one day represent the nation in the highest office' (*Channel NewsAsia* 2016; but see also Jaipragas 2016). In independent Singapore, unlike independent Fiji, 'race' categories have not defined or restricted voting rolls.

Arguments for ‘common-roll’ voting were rejected in favour of ‘communal rolls’. Thus colonial contradictions pervaded the postcolonial possibilities creating a political climate in which multiple Fijian coups took place.³

Whether Fiji was to have a common-roll or communal-roll system had been much debated in the move toward independence. Yet, ultimately, proponents of a common roll acceded to communal rolls, in order to ensure independence itself. In 1946, European, Fijian and Indo-Fijian representatives sat on Fiji’s Legislative Council, a board advisory to the governor. The majority of representatives were European, and were appointed by the governor. The colony’s European residents also had three elected representatives. The Indo-Fijians elected three representatives, and three Fijian representatives were appointed (Norton 1977: 8).

At the so-called Deed of Cession debate in the Legislative Council in 1946, European members argued that the original deed of cession ‘giving’ Fiji to Queen Victoria and her heirs in 1874 provided that the British would preserve and protect Fijian interests. These arguments were clearly directed at quelling Indo-Fijian initiatives for greater legislative representation. Fiji Indian Legislative Council Member A.D. Patel pointed out the irony of colonial claims to protect Fijians against foreigners, and made powerful humanistic and political economic arguments against the colonial position. He said:

It should be well understood and well appreciated that we came here to play our part in turning this country into a paradise. Indians came here and worked here for those people who gobbled up half a million acres of free-hold land from the Fijian owners. We came and worked, under a semi-servile state, and thank God, saved the Fijian race from the infamy of coming under the same system. As a matter of fact, if anything

3 While Fiji’s earlier coups were explicitly ethnic Fijian nationalist projects, in the military coup of 2006 the regime shifted the narrative of power seizure. It was not explicitly Fijian ethnonationalist (although the military forces and leadership are still overwhelmingly ethnic Fijian). Instead, it was a military coup similar to other military coups across the globe, in which the goals of military rule supplant other political stances. The regime propounded an ‘anti-corruption’ message and imposed military rule, claiming provocation, as colonial governments did, by disorder and disaffection. Colonial tactics, notably censorship of the press, were in full force. The implications for self-determination, and for advocacy of forms of belonging by Fiji citizens as a whole, or Indo-Fijians in particular, are sobering. The military leadership of the 2006 coup has succeeded in assembling around themselves a political party, Fiji First, that has won the 2014 elections, held on the basis of a single national voting constituency. Whether this victory will open postracial democratic possibilities for Fiji it is much too early to say. On the one hand, the single national constituency plan has ended multiple disproportions and ethnic unfairnesses in prior districting systems. On the other hand, any civil government led by coup makers is obviously compromised in its ability to secure democratic rights and civil freedoms.

the coming of my people to this country gave the Fijians their honor, their prestige, nay indeed their very soul. Otherwise I have no hesitation in saying that the Fijians of this Colony would have met with the same fate that some other indigenous races in parts of Africa met with (Patel 1946: 48).

A.D. Patel envisioned a Fiji in which sacrifice and service made Indo-Fijians part of the common future. But in the colonial era, it had been assumed that different populations or 'communities' had different natures and roles to play in the colonial polity, and would each be represented separately in the governing bodies of the colony. At this key moment in world history, with the impetus to world decolonisation taking shape, Fiji's colonial Europeans and Fijians sought to enhance the colonial Fijian 'polity within the polity' and to secure special Fijian paramountcy. Patel's arguments on behalf of the Indian contribution to Fiji failed to reshape the colonial Fijian chiefly position (see also Lal 1997). Even more crucially, as Fiji moved slowly towards independence, a model of representation based on 'communal' rather than 'common' electoral rolls dominated Fiji's politics, with fundamental implications for the future of Fiji as a nation.

The colonial British had ruled Fiji through a paternalist system of indirect rule based on their chiefly system, and preserved Fijian land ownership, such that ethnic Fijian kin groups currently own 83 per cent of the nation's land, inalienably. Indeed, the aristocratic British colonial rulers of Fiji formed a bureaucratic alliance with Fijian high chiefs. At independence in 1970, Fijian chiefs were Fiji's highest national leaders, and Fiji's first, and succeeding, constitutions have all been written to ensure various degrees of ethnic Fijian political paramountcy and landholding rights. Ethnic Fijians have predominated in civil service and in Fiji's military, but many still gain their livelihood partly from subsistence economic activities on communally owned land. In contrast, the Indo-Fijians came to colonial Fiji as indentured labourers, in the era of colonial capitalist plantations. Exploited in Fiji's sugar plantation system, they served as the economic backbone of the colony and nation. They also resisted European domination in Fiji, and joining with the nationalists in India, sought political and economic parity with colonial whites, and a path to self-determination. Farming on leased land, and entering diverse fields of professional and wage work, Indo-Fijians have predominated in many areas of business and wage labour, while ethnic Fijians predominated in government.

Throughout the twentieth century, many Indo-Fijians led Fiji toward independence. The majority of Indian indentured sugar plantation workers and their descendants shared—and contributed to—Gandhian initiatives to end British imperial dominance in India and to establish independence throughout Empire. Anticolonial political-religious initiatives by ethnic Fijians arose mainly in hill and hinterland areas, were of limited scope, and were suppressed by coalitions of British colonial officials and ethnic Fijian chiefs—many of whom held office in the system of indirect rule (Kaplan 1995; Macnaught 1982). World War II saw the end of the British imperial era, and the beginning of the UN era of nation-states. In Fiji, the war brought into sharp focus the differing colonial pasts and different visions of the future of ethnic Fijians and Indo-Fijians. Most ethnic Fijians envisioned a postwar world run along similar lines to the imperial politics of colonial Fiji. The majority of Indo-Fijians, like the Indian nationalists, were more attuned to impending decolonisation. Ethnic Fijians fought eagerly on behalf of the British during the war. Most Indo-Fijians followed Gandhi in refusing to fight for an imperial system that classed them as inferior. Colonial governors censored truthful news accounts about Congress's successes and India's inevitable independence. Faced with the Indo-Fijian challenge, British political rhetoric in Fiji forged an ever-stronger alliance with ethnic Fijians, drawing upon ethnic Fijian fears of Indo-Fijian population growth, and denigrated Indian and Indo-Fijian anticolonial resistance.

Cold War politics conflated colonial self–other relations with India and overseas Indians. Early twentieth-century colonial allegations of potential 'Bolshevism' embraced hinterland ethnic Fijians, especially their political-religious leaders and Jehovah's Witness converts as well as anticolonial Indo-Fijians and emerging unions of maritime workers (largely ethnic Fijian) and of cane growers (largely Indo-Fijians).

In 1970, Fiji had two major political parties that gave voice to the aspirations of Fiji's peoples for the nation-state. Because of constitutional requirements, each party had mixed 'racial' membership and fielded candidates of all three electoral categories ('Fijian', 'Indian', and 'General Elector'). Each, at times, espoused more or less pluralistic ideals. However, they swiftly became parties representing different ethnic groups. The largely Indo-Fijian National Federation Party (NFP) was founded in 1964 by leaders of cane growers' unions and other unions with a history of contestation against colonial policies. The largely ethnic Fijian Alliance

Party held power from 1970 to 1986, when the new, line-crossing Fiji Labour Party won the elections in alliance with the NFP, an electoral victory answered in 1987 by Fiji's first coups.

The legacy of these colonial divisions was played out in independent Fiji. Repeatedly in independent Fiji, ostensible pluralism in policy coexisted with colonial continuations of ethnic Fijian paramouncy. The ceremonies of independence in 1970 dramatised these ambivalences. On the one hand, for the first time in Fiji's history, Indo-Fijians and other peoples had a major role in public ceremonies. The celebrations were intended to represent Fiji as a 'three-legged stool'. Language policy gave equal status to English, Fijian and Fiji Hindi. But in fact, the independence ceremonies themselves, presided over by Prince Charles, gave special weight to royalty in political life, speaking to Fiji's 'chiefs and peoples', underlining the ongoing position of Fijian chiefs, a kind of authority, leadership and appeal to tradition not open to Indo-Fijians, who had no 'chiefs' (Kelly and Kaplan 2001: 131–32). The ambivalences toward pluralism seen in the independence ceremonies of 1970 were to harden into asymmetric and polarised political parties. Before the 1986 election, the chiefly led Alliance Party could represent itself as favoured by all communities or races except Indian (and even supported by many Muslim Indians, especially in the earlier elections). But after the new Labour Party and its coalition government proved there could be an alternative possible alliance to lead Fiji—one that did not include the chiefs—ethnic Fijian chauvinists in the military declared that the entire constitutional arrangement was flawed for not guaranteeing ethnic Fijian paramouncy.

Independence for Malaysia and Singapore 1963–65

Startling, from the perspective of Fiji's independence constitution, is Singapore's 1965 common-roll electoral system. But it is not startling at all when we look back to 1963. Singapore's initial independence was as part of the Federation of Malaysia. That Federation partitioned itself less than two years later, over visions of what should constitute a common, self-determining future. Viewing Fiji in the light of this history will demonstrate how several key elements of Fiji's first decades of independence may have been new to Fiji, but were not new in the history of decolonisation.

In 1963, an agreement for the establishment of the Federation of Malaysia was signed by Britain, Malaya, North Borneo and Singapore. What future, 'common' or not, was envisioned via the Federation? Planners attempted to align multiple imperatives: the first imperative seemed to be federation itself. In Singapore, most anticolonial proponents of independence had come to envision it as requiring linkage with Malaysia. In 1963, inclusion in the Federation was central to Lee Kuan Yew and the People's Action Party (PAP), and useful to the British and to Malayan leadership as well. Planners both local and international assumed that the size of the Federation was vital for economic development. Cold War concerns drove the formation of Malaysia, from local politics to the decisions of an increasingly weary Britain, and the increasingly involved US. But visions of the commons began with, and ended with, a contradiction. For Malaysian leaders, the political primacy of Malays was critical. For Lee Kuan Yew and majority Chinese Singapore, the goal was a 'Malaysian Malaysia' (see Lau 1998, especially 246ff). Ultimately, no common future was instituted and Singapore became independent in 1965 (Lau 1998; see also Hack, Margolin with Delaye 2010; Lee 2008; Shiraishi 2009; T. Tan 2008; Trocki 2006; Wang 2005).

In a late colonial history similar to Fiji's, the British had created special political ties with Malay leaders and peoples in colonial Malaya and viewed Chinese and Indian minorities on the mainland as anticolonial and potentially communist. There was particular concern that the overseas Chinese, on the mainland and in Singapore, might be linked to communist China. Suspicion of Chinese political aspirations predated the communist civil war in the 1950s. As early as 1946, Malay political leaders argued to the British that Singapore could not be included in an independent Malaysia because its large Chinese population would make Malays a minority in the country as a whole. After the counterinsurgency suppression, this acutely and widely felt suspicion led to the incorporation of the Borneo territories of Sarawak and Sabah into the Federation of Malaysia. Thus, by 1963 colonial Malay ties and history had developed into a vision for an independent, Malay-majority, Malay-centred Malaysia. Malaysian politics and policy coalesced in the party politics of the Alliance coalition (the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), Malayan Chinese Association (MCA), and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC)). As Albert Lau has observed:

The success of the Alliance formula ... established the pattern of communally-based politics in Malaya for many years to come. Second, the years of fighting a determined communist-armed insurrection had given rise to an Alliance government that was staunchly anti-communist, autocratic and right wing (1998: 5–6).⁴

From the Fiji perspective, with an eye on the crafting of a common future, several aspects of the 1963 Federation stand out, especially representation in Parliament and the nature of citizenship within the new Federation. Lau went on to say:

When the full terms for merger, with the exception of the financial arrangements, were made public on 15 November 1961, following the joint meetings of Malayan and Singapore officials, what was revealed was that, in return for autonomy in education and labour, Singapore agreed to a more limited number of seats than its population warranted, 15 instead of possibly 24 on a proportionate basis ... The provision for special Singapore citizenship ... also reflected Kuala Lumpur's desire to insulate the Federation politically from Singapore. In order that some 624,000 Singapore citizens, who were born outside of Singapore, would not be disenfranchised under the Federation's more stringent citizenship requirements for non-Malays, it was proposed that all Singapore citizens would continue to retain their Singapore citizenship while automatically becoming 'nationals' of the larger Federation. But Singapore citizens could run as candidates for a legislative seat and vote only in Singapore. Federal citizens, in turn, could run for a legislative seat or vote only in Malaya. In short these provisions were designed to reduce the danger of Singapore's Chinese threatening the political dominance of the Malay-dominated Alliance in Malaya. At the same time, the 'special position' of Singapore's Malay community was also safeguarded in the constitutional proposals, although Kuala Lumpur accepted that the 'special privileges' accorded to their kith and kin in Malaya would not apply in Singapore (Lau 1998: 14–15).

The federal government had authority over defence, external affairs and security (Lau 1998: 14). The Federation was to be a common market, and Singapore agreed to give 40 per cent of total revenue collected to the central government. Singapore provided a loan of SG\$150 million

4 This Malaysian 'Alliance' coalition may have been an inspiration for naming Fiji's Alliance Party, headed by Ratu Mara, the party in power in Fiji from independence in 1970 until 1986. Similarly, Lee Kuan Yew spoke of the stability of a three-legged stool (and later of the power of a single-pronged seat, a 'shooting-stick') in 1965 speeches before and after separation (Kwa 2002: 108–32).

for development of the Borneo states (Lau 1998: 15–16). Like Fiji, this postcolonial new nation-state began with a tension over kinds of citizens, and the kinds were assorted along lines formed in colonial relations.

Initially, the Malaysian leadership and the Singapore leadership found common cause. But a series of differences built swiftly.⁵ Of particular representational and electoral concern was whether Singapore's PAP and Malaysia's UMNO would contest elections throughout the Federation. In 1963, in a 'snap election' the PAP gained parliamentary strength. The PAP won over their leftist opposition (weakened in part by Operation Cold Store, in which leftist leaders were detained, jailed and deported) and also over UMNO-supported candidates (Lau 1998: 21–64; Lee 2008: 220–23; Trocki 2006: 24). The April 1964 elections were an important turning point. After the UMNO, the MCA and the MIC had established branches in Singapore, the PAP moved to participate 'as a Pan-Malaysian Party on a Pan Malaysian basis' (S. Rajaratnam quoted in Lau 1998: 99). This vision of the right of the PAP and of Singapore to participate electorally more broadly in Malaysia brought the party into conflict with the UMNO vision of Malay political preeminence. In the mainland election, the Alliance (UMNO, MCA and MIC) candidates won sweepingly. While there are intricate historical analyses of the electoral results (e.g. Lau 1998: 118–24; T. Tan 2008), the result was that the PAP abruptly had become an opposition party. The rapprochement between the two political parties (the PAP in Singapore and the Malaysian Alliance) was at an end, and soon after, so was the Federation.

By 1965, the Federation was at an end. Singapore's position within the Federation was increasingly couched as a conflict. The conflict was between a vision of a Malayan Malaysia, or a Malaysian Malaysia. Lee Kuan Yew and his PAP insisted, on behalf of Singapore, that it must be the latter. Political boundaries were hardened, charged speeches and newspaper accounts proliferated (Lau 1998, 2009). Some of the conflicts were federal versus regional, for example debates over national

5 The history of postcolonial Singapore's brief federation with and then separation from Malaysia has been largely chronicled with focus on Singapore and Malaysian party politics, regional relations and British, US and UN contexts (e.g. Hack, Margolin with Delaye 2010; Lau 1998; Shiraishi 2009; T. Tan 2008; Trocki 2006). The most powerful personifications of visions of Singapore's future are found in accounts focusing on Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, and on the PAP. It is beyond the scope of this paper to trace popular and subaltern future hopes. The partition itself was negotiated and announced to a stunned citizenry. This raises questions about the nature of self-determination that go beyond the space here.

development plans, and whether federal decision on the budget excluded Singapore representation while using Singapore revenue (Lau 1998: 214). But most powerful were the issues of rights of peoples, as communities, within the new polity. Lee Kuan Yew and the PAP were accused by UMNO leaders of discriminating against Malays in Singapore. The Singapore leaders challenged racially charged rhetoric and everything that precipitated violence (Lau 1998: 186ff; Turnbull 2009: 299–300). There were riots between Malays and Chinese in Singapore (Lau 1998: 161–210; Trocki 2006: 124–26). ‘Before the riots, the PAP had assumed that it could work with UMNO. After the riots, the PAP knew it could not’ (Lau 1998: 289). Singapore and Malaysia separated on 9 August 1965.

Conclusion: Fiji’s common future

Brij Lal named his 2008 book on Fiji’s decolonisation *A Time Bomb Lies Buried*, remembering the last memorandum written by Fiji’s last British governor. The departing governor acknowledged that the British had failed to resolve the common roll–communal roll debates, and that ‘One is therefore bound to regret that in effect a time bomb will lie buried in the new Constitution, and to pray that it may be defused before exploding’ (Lal 2008: 79). No doubt the British had many touchstones for fears that an explosion could come. Malaysian history itself gave British colonials nightmares of communalist riots and a red menace lurking in diasporic politics. We think in Fiji they feared the latter much more. Strangely, Fiji’s last governor, Robert Foster, was almost entirely ignorant of the Gandhian foundations of A.D. Patel’s NFP non-violent non-cooperation; Foster attributed the peacefulness of Fiji’s oppositional politics to Fiji’s ‘isolated position in the middle of the enormous Pacific ... shielded to a very great extent from the influence of external ideologies and events’ (quoted in Lal 2008: 99–100). Regardless of the British misapprehensions, when Fiji had its explosions, they were top-down and from the indigenous Right, and were conspicuously bloodless. And it was A.D. Patel who saw it coming. Debating, in Fiji’s Legislative Council, the 1965 London conference that committed Fiji to communal roll on its path to independence, Patel protested (just four months after the separation of Malaysia and Singapore) that with communal-roll voting:

people get used to the idea of a racial separation, racial attitudes harden and people start thinking in racial terms and racial interests which leads not to one nation but, in the course of political development, it leads to claims for several nations (Patel 2011: 73; cited in Lal 1997: 183).

Patel responded to objections that India itself had had communal issues. 'I have been questioned about India and Pakistan. That division itself is a warning to us' (Patel 2011: 72). Patel feared partitions as much as Fiji's rulers feared Indian political assertion, and with misplaced anxiety the British sought to keep peace in Fiji by asymmetric electoral partition.

We do not write an historical anthropology of constitutions at independence in order to project the nation back into either place, quite the contrary (see Duara 1995).⁶ We do not argue that either Fiji or Singapore was destined to have a common future, or that *not* having one is 'failure'. Neither do we argue that nation-states are morally inevitable or politically preferable forms. Instead, in this chapter we have focused on a moment in which global forces made nation-state forms inevitable, and actual nation-states came into being through powers and agencies local more than global. We hope it helps to reveal the many kinds of partition that have limited the development of political possibility.

The decolonisations of the 1950s and 1960s were thick with contradictory emotions, from anger and anxiety to vindication and hope. In large and small ways, actual agency of new and particular sorts developed in the new nation-states. Lee Kuan Yew called it 'the age of Nehru', praising his optimism and commitment to the future. But Lee also felt that

6 A note on historiography, for Fiji and Singapore. We do not claim that the juxtaposition is novel, and apologise for not gathering a proper set of scholarship that takes up Fiji–Singapore comparison. Further, for both Fiji and Singapore there are histories of many periods and moments in which futures were envisioned differently and in which it could have been otherwise. Fiji's history is still too often told as an encounter of Europeans and indigenes, though Brij Lal's work has made it much better understood as a three-way encounter. Mobile histories of the islands remind us that Fiji and Tonga were not always distinct entities (Hau'ofa 1994). Labour historians remind us that the Indian labour diaspora followed on 'blackbirding' of Pacific peoples (Munro 1990: xxxix–li; Moynagh 1981). Mobile histories of the seas remind us that ships' crews, never entirely 'European' but gathered from ports across the globe, including India, intersected with Pacific peoples from the 1700s on (Clunie 1984). The self (and selves) of self-determination for Fiji could have been construed otherwise at many historical moments. But the colonial experience fixed prospects in Fiji, such that any understanding of Fiji's politics entailed both the rights of postcolonial indigenes, and the rights of labour-diasporic peoples. A range of histories of Singapore emphasise an emptied island made social by the British, or an entrepôt for commerce, or a Nanyang, i.e. Chinese diaspora, a site of colonial-era Indian diaspora (Rai 2014) or a regional centre of Malay power, or mobility and systemic connection whether ancient or current (Hack, Margolin with Delaye 2010). For discussion of Malaysian perspectives on Malaysia and its partition see Shamsul 1986; Shiraishi 2009; and T. Tan 2008.

Nehru's confidence in the future of cooperation between new nations was misguided. His own experience led him to insist on 'the unpleasant facts of life' (Rodríguez 2003: 68, 78). Singapore's successes followed from his single-minded commitment to its development.

Lee Kuan Yew in 1963 and the NFP (after A.D. Patel's death in 1969) were ready to accept serious limitations on the democratic position and powers of their people—Singaporean and Indo-Fijian respectively—in order to bring potentially workable democratic nation-states into being. In a different way each was nonetheless thwarted by sons-of-the-soil chauvinists who in Fiji refused to stick to rules that had been set, and in Malaysia simply recognised and rejected real difference. In both cases, the clear felicities and virtues of sensitivity to the special needs of indigenes became the licence for scepticism of democracy and civil and political rights, with tragic consequences.

Singapore was forced to go it alone. The Indo-Fijians have faced more painful and diffuse political dilemmas, in one strange situation after another. But now Fiji again has a chance to come together, to find a common future not just as a settler metropole but as a society of indigenes and diaspora. While Singapore has lost its larger federation, Fiji has repeatedly lost democracy, and paid a further price, in generations of out-migration of many of its most talented people from every group, especially the Indians. But it again moves toward a common future, a direction well set.

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