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Politics, Democracy and the Media: Case

Studies in Fiji, Tonga and the Solomon Islands

Pacific Journalism Review

Volume 12 Issue 2 (Sept 2006)

Singh, Shailendra¹; Prakash, Som²

Abstract: This article looks at three South Pacific Island nations - Fiji, Tonga and the

Solomon Islands - in terms of some landmark changes occurring in their political arenas. Fiji, beset by racial and political problems culminating in three coups, is experimenting with a multiracial, multiparty cabinet that could be emulated by other multiethnic countries. Tonga, a Polynesian monarchy, has recently seen an unprecedented number of protest marches against the ruling elite, the death of its King, and is experiencing palpable democratic changes. In the Solomons, the strong desire for a fairer political system was manifested in the 2006 riots in Honiara. It caught the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) napping and brought into question the sufficiency and focus of Australia's intervention policy in the country. The media has been a key player in these events. Regularly accused of adding fuel to fire in its coverage of crises, the media faces constant government pressure in all three countries. This article argues that rather than the media, the sources of discontent and instability are self-serving leaders clinging to outdated political systems. The authors believe political reform, not media control, is needed.



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