This is an analysis of the politics in Fiji, which has remained topical in the past one decade since the occurrence of the coup in 1987. The general understanding in the beginning was that external factors were responsible for the coup, but that is not the absolute truth, as developments in the recent past have indicated. Fijians have faith in the democratic system and Fijian Parliament unanimously passed the new constitution in August 1997 which supports democratic polity and parliamentary system. The constitution is further supplemented by a detailed Bill of Rights that bestows equal protection to all Fijian citizens. The new law will guide the parliamentary elections currently scheduled for May 1999. The new constitution is more dynamic than the opposition parties expected, and is indeed a major first step towards restoring stability and confidence in Fiji.

The new constitution also moves Fiji into a historically significant transition, from contention to reconciliation and rebuilding. As important as reconciliation is to restoring political stability to Fiji, it will not mean immediate economic growth. This transition is underway at a peculiar time. The Fijian economy is now in its weakest point since the mid-1980's when the biggest drop in GDP occurred.

Some recent developments would certainly have a positive impact on Fijian economy. The declaration signed by the leaders of all political parties and representatives of parliament for the establishment of a multi-party government would encourage stability in Fijian politics. The declaration includes the process of choosing the Prime Minister and the size of the cabinet. The powers of the Prime Minister to appoint and dismiss cabinet minister and the manner in which the cabinet conducts its business is also highlighted in the document. The relation between the legislative and executive arms of the government, the role and obligations of the Parliamentary opposition and the role of Parliamentary Select Committee which will review the legislation is also mentioned in the declaration.
The Fiji's highest traditional decision making body, The Great Council of Chiefs met in June 1998 and decided that Fiji should invite Britain's Queen Elizabeth to become the country's Head of State again. She was Fiji's Head of State, represented by a Governor General, till 1987. All these developments certainly have a positive impact on Fijian economic and political stability.

Further the obstacles to rapid economic growth will remain for some more time. The Fijian Government realizes that there is an urgent need for long-term lease reform, as the money by the tenants can be reinvested in new technology only if they have assured access to the land. Mechanisms that need to be put in place to attract more capital to Fiji include tax holidays, rapid depreciation and other programmes to make it possible for business to set up shop and expand. There are also proposals to restructure government, privatize public enterprises and commit to developing a dynamic market economy, but transforming a communal economy with market elements to a market economy will take time.

The decision for rejoining the Commonwealth has clearly shown that access to large market is critical to economic vitality. Having taken an immensely important step toward normalcy and stability, Fiji now needs to embark on a new path to reform and aggressively transform itself in order to gain worldwide recognition as a viable economy.

An analysis of the politics in Fiji indicates that the role of external factors has been substantial and in order to examine them, this thesis has analysed them into six chapters. Chapter I deals with the brief analysis of the land, people, social setting, geographical and politico-economic issues of Fiji. It also presents an overview of the historical background which is important to understand the politics of the region.

Chapter II analyses the political scenario and strategic concerns of the South Pacific Region. This region is one of the most politically complex and least studied area of the world. There is a tremendous diversity of political and constitutional systems among the island states of the Pacific. There has also
been a growing involvement of outside powers and the US, Britain, Japan, France and China are playing significant role.

Chapter III examines the present economic scenario and the future prospects of the Pacific region. The trend which has become very noticeable in the last few years has been a matter of growing concern at the level of economic management and competence on the part of many island governments. All the islands have serious problems with regard to developing sustainable economic growth. Most of them are dependent on external aid, and are unable to evolve indigenous capabilities.

Chapter IV has analysed the economic condition of pre and post-coup Fiji. The economic restructuring, departures from democratic principles and practice, the drive for Fijian Political Supremacy, the erosion of multi-racialism, and the rise of ethnic Fijian nationalism had long term implications. This chapter has also examined the impact of coup on some vital sectors of economy, i.e. tourism, trade, foreign aid and foreign collaboration.

Chapter V analyses the role of external factors behind the 1987 coup and its international dimension. The reaction of Britain, the U.S, Australia, New Zealand, India and other countries towards the coup and their role in the present politics of Fiji has also been discussed. Finally in Chapter VI there are concluding observations. The indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians cannot ignore one another as they are complementary in social life and development of the country.

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