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Bainimarama's coup and claim of desire for ethnic equality

Separating facts from fiction

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Abstract

It is not disputed by historians that Fiji's 1987 and 2000 coups were about re-establishing indigenous Fijian control of government. In contrast, Bainimarama's 2006 coup has been popularly, but quite incorrectly, seen as removing an "indigenous-Fijian" Government of Qarase.

The Bainimarama Regime is now in the process of implementing constitutional and electoral change with the alleged objective of ensuring that the indigenous majority do not dominate the Indo-Fijian minority. Two allegedly “non-negotiable” objectives are to establish a proportional electoral system of "one person one vote", and a “new” Constitution to be guided by this Military Regime's previously formulated "People's Charter for Change, Peace and Progress".

This presentation will separate the facts from fiction in the above narrative, and explain why Bainimarama's proposed system is not at all about “protecting the Indo-Fijian minority”. Instead, given population projections, and if ethnic politics persists, then Bainimarama is likely to entrench majority indigenous control of government, quite contrary to the Regime’s alleged objectives.

Outline

Acknowledgements, sources, my role as “political participant” in Fiji

For Australians in the audience: Fiji’s history: population, people, society, politics

The constitutions and the coups of 1977, 1987, 2000 and 2006

The 2006 coup, Bainimarama’s justification? How different from the others?

The 1997 Constitution? Is it ethnically biased? Or undemocratic as alleged?

The 2000 coup: NOT a “George Speight coup”: New facts on Bainimarama’s role and the 2000 Army Mutiny

Leading to the 2006 coup: the coup in the judiciary, and Qarase’s actions.

The electoral system: was it ethnically biased? what will be the impact of Bainimarama’s proposed electoral reforms? Not what he claims.

Is there any need at all for “Affirmative Actions for any ethnic group? NO and YES:

Bainimarama’s claim of wanting racial equality and protection for Indo-Fijians: mostly fiction.

Acknowledgements

I thank Professor Hurriyet Babacan (Director of The Cairns Institute, JCU) and Professor Robbie Robertson (Head of School of Arts and Social Sciences, JCU) for facilitating my Adjunct appointment here.

I thank the many JCU colleagues who have welcomed me here.

You have a lovely campus here, with a very similar ambience to my old academic home at The University of the South Pacific campus in Suva.

I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which this campus is situated- the Irrijandji and the Gimuy Yidinji people.

Initial sources to guide you: google the names

(a) Dr Jon Fraenkel (ANU): detailed analyses of Fiji elections, especially under the Alternative Vote system of the 1997 Constitution.

(b) Professor Brij Lal (ANU): historian and member of the Reeves Commission whose Report was largely the basis of the 1997 Constitution (and the much criticised AV electoral system):

(c) Dr Robbie Robertson: book on the 2000 coup in Fiji (needs updating).

Teaching at USP for more than thirty five years I have written many articles for the Fiji public on politics, electoral systems, constitutional deficiencies and Fiji's current social collapse, as well as our economic crises. My website is under construction but already has most of the above articles on the constitution, electoral system, and politics from 1996, as well as this presentation.

<http://narseyonfiji.wordpress.com/>

Fiji's current problems have complex origins: demographic, political, economic, social, legal, and economic: too much material to cover for the average Australian:

I will need to flash through some of the slides today (those not familiar with Fiji can read them later at your leisure on my website.

Qualification: I have also been a political “participant” (and failed politician)

Founding member of the Fiji Labour Party (FLP) in 1985 (for one year)

With many other USP academics, opposed the 1987 Rabuka coup (given free accommodation for a night by Rabuka’s Government but other colleagues suffered worse treatment- Anirudh Singh (yet to receive legal compensation) and Som Prakash).

Parliamentarian (1996-1999) as Shadow Finance Minister, under National Federation Party (NFP) (FLP was other party supported by Indo-Fijians);

NFP’s partnership with Rabuka’s SVT gave birth to 1997 Constitution (and its multi-party Government provision), but both our parties lost in the 1999 election (NFP lost all its seats).

When Bainimarama did the 2006 coup, he asked me to join his Military Council: I declined.

Because of my numerous critiques of the Bainimarama Regime since 2006 (most censored in Fiji media but on international blogs) Military Regime put financial pressure on USP who asked me to stop criticising the Regime or resign: I resigned. (the Regime paid its debt to USP within days).

So I am now grateful to The Cairns Institute for giving me academic refuge until I return to Fiji.

Historical overview: problematic “Indians” on a South Pacific island?

Fiji a British colony from 1874. 1970 politically independent, but in Commonwealth.

1879 indentured Indian labourers brought to work in sugar plantations by the Australian giant, Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR)- major source of government revenues and for a 100 years, “the real government” in Fiji. CSR made a fortune and got out in 1973.

Small numbers of free Indian migrants: shops, tailors, barbers, shoe makers, laundry people, and other services.

Conditions harsh for indentured labourers who later became the thousands of small farmers who maintained the sugar industry till today.

Sugar once the backbone of Fiji economy: but virtual collapse in last five years (partly due to 2006 coup)

Tourism (largely based on indigenous Fijian labour) now the back-bone (with a gold mine, fish and water exports, and recently large remittance earnings from abroad.

Indo-Fijian population grew rapidly while the indigenous Fijian population initially went into decline (because of malaria and other diseases brought by the early colonialists).

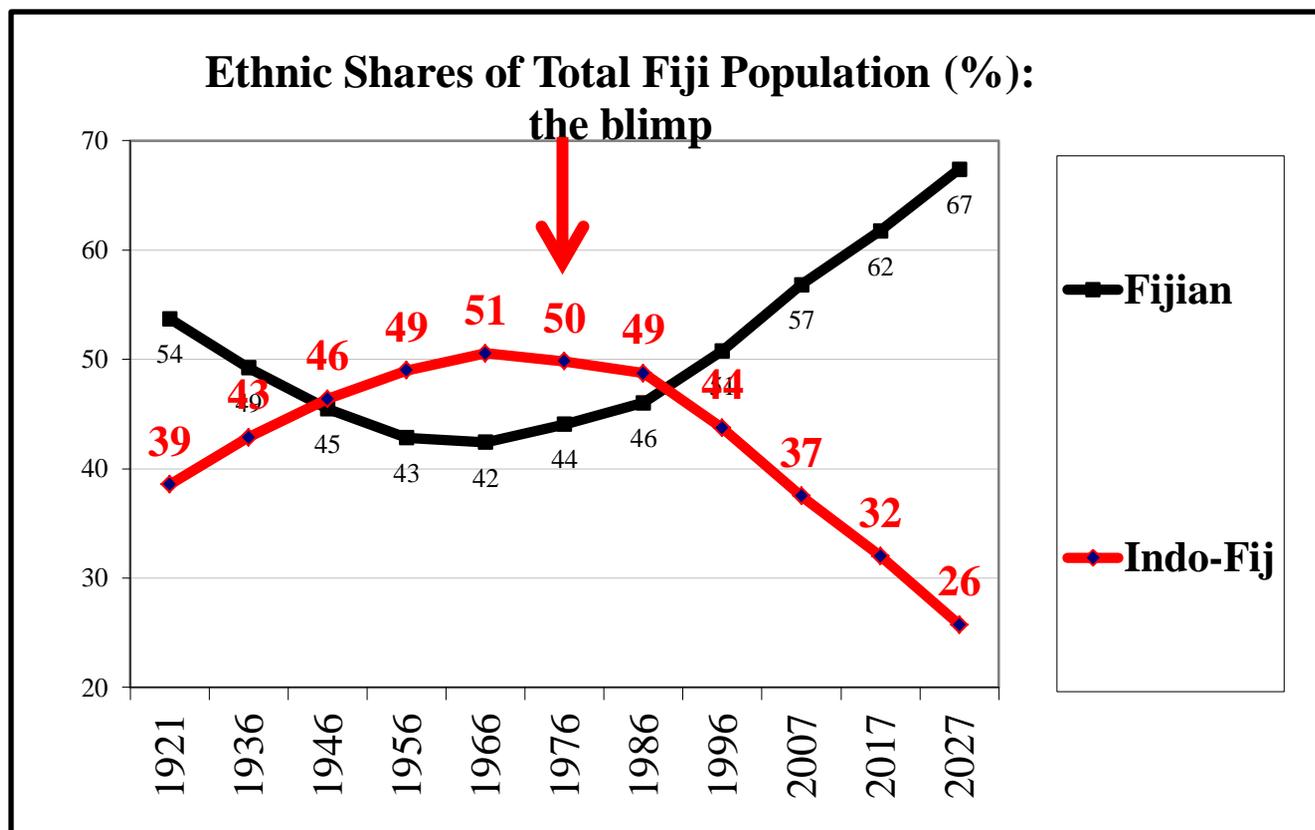
With all political parties drawing support from ethnic blocks of voters, these changes in 7 ethnic population proportions have had profound political implications for politics in Fiji.

The most powerful graph on Fiji's ethnic politics and history: a century of population changes

A century of changes in the ethnic components of Fiji's population: what all Fijian politicians and parties saw with great fear:

Indo-Fijians rising from mere 10% in 1881, becoming higher than Fijians in 1946, and 51% in 1966 (% of voters even higher because of past age structures)

Post independence fear that any electoral system based on "equal suffrage" would tend to give political control to Indo-Fijian parties



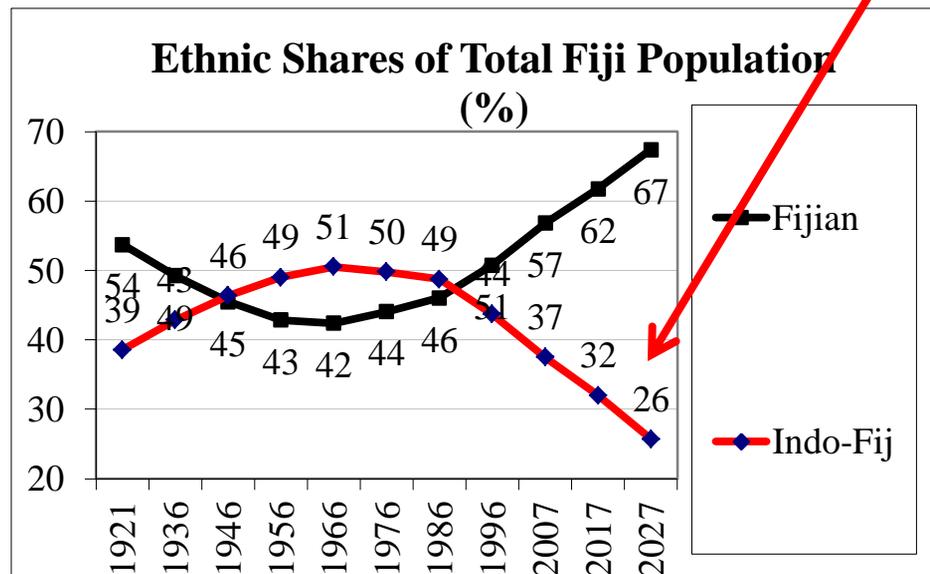
Currently: the proportion of Indo-Fijians rapidly declining

From 1966 the Indo-Fijian share began to decline (because of lower fertility) AND accelerated by massive emigration of Indo-Fijians after every coup: 1987, 2000, 2006

Indo-Fijians already about 35% now, and will be **26% by 2027 or lower**.

Ethnic political tensions will become less and less of a problem over time: these last three decades: are a mere blimp in Fiji's long-term history; will never be replicated again

The Indo-Fijian minority who Bainimarama claims to want to protect and ensure equality for with the indigenous people, is increasingly becoming a smaller and smaller interest group.



Fijians and Indo-Fijians in the Fiji economy

At independence in 1970, economy controlled totally by Australian and NZ capital: sugar mills, banks, insurance companies, wholesaling and retailing giants, manufacturers.

Indigenous Fijians were largely out of the cash economy during 100 years of colonial period

- * owned 83% of the land, but most were leased to other ethnic groups
- * kept in the villages and discouraged by colonialists from capitalist sector
- * totally dominated the army and large proportion of the police
- * communal in nature, non-accumulative (a bit different today)
- * largely denied education during colonial ear.
- * dominated employment in government and statutory corporations, with Fijian political control.
- * now also the labour force in tourism, the real backbone of Fiji economy now.

Indo-Fijians at middle level: small enterprises; still large proportion of cane farmers; entrepreneurial, frugal, accumulative, forced to set up their own schools.

With independence and arrival of banks from India and US, Indo-Fijian and Chinese business community grew rapidly and have become retailing and manufacturing giants: what you see today throughout Fiji in all the urban areas.

So currently, the only real gap between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians is **AT THE TOP 5%**.

Exception: one major indigenous Fijian company **Fijian Holdings Limited** which bought out key Australian monopolies, with shares owned by Fijian elite and Fijian Provincial Councils (on going saga): but note FHL only represents Fijian ownership; very little Fijian entrepreneurship.

Ethnic groups socially compartmentalized

Very few inter-marriages in colonial times: Indo-Fijians discouraged from living in Fijian villages; more nowadays

Very self-contained and independent ethnic societies

Indigenous Fijian society extremely strong, own language(s); mostly Christian (rivalry between Methodist and Catholic, and recently new Churches making inroads); strong links to political parties and coups; culturally solid based on chiefly system (even if Great Council of Chiefs has been allegedly abolished).

Strong Fijian army with powerful connections to the British Crown and British army, peace-keeping in the Middle East

Indo-Fijians also compartmentalised into different religions (Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs); Hindu sects (Sanatan Dharamm, Arya Samaj); also ethnically compartmentalised (Northern and Southern origins)

Fiji's education system managed by all these different religious authorities, very little by Government (although now largely financed by Government)

All religious bodies have strong political allegiances, critical in one coup or another: a great PhD/book to be written: "Religion and Politics in Fiji": new chapters post-2006..

Economy, language, religion, culture: encouraged parties based on ethnic groups

Alliance Party: 1970 to 1987: led by Ratu Mara, based on Fijian votes (and 20% of Indo-Fijian votes).

NFP and FLP both based on Indo-Fijian votes (minimal Fijian); sugar industry, unions

SVT: 1990 to 1999: led by Rabuka: based on Fijian votes, mostly rural villagers, but also urban civil servants

SDL: from 2001 (led by Qarase): Fijian voters, rural and urban (effec. SVT renamed)

Both SVT and SDL believed in Affirmative Action for indigenous Fijians in education, government grants and finance (seen by others as racial discrimination)

But 2006 Government was: SDL (led by Qarase) in partnership with FLP (BUT Chaudhry stayed out and tried to become Leader of the Opposition)

NFP not in Parliament because of weakness of Alternative Vote system (which destroys small parties)

2006: Bainimarama's Military Regime: included FLP for a year only; now, most Ministers are indigenous Fijians; with one Indo-Fijian (Khaiyum) always in limelight₁₂

Fiji's four sets of “constitutions/laws” governing elections

1874 to 1970: colony, ruled by British law;

1970 Constitution agreed to by all political parties and leaders in London.

1990 Constitution imposed by Rabuka Government: racially biased

1997 Constitution: unanimously passed by the nationally elected Parliament, with power-sharing Multi-party Government provision.

On the surface, all these constitutions and electoral systems might be expected to give indigenous Fijians effective control of Government

- through the kinds of constituencies: majority “communal” (fewer “open”)
- through the voting systems in place: at first the FPP system, later the AV system
- even though Indo-Fijian voters were in a slight majority for brief period.

Historical reality: Indo-Fijian parties did win now and then: but coup

Whenever that happened, there was a coup of some sort or other restoring the indigenous Fijian Party to control of Government

1977: the Governor did the coup (like Kerr and Whitlam) restoring Mara

1987: The RFMF (led by Rabuka) did the coup: Rabuka elected eventually

2000: RFMF elements did the coup (real story now emerging), bringing in Qarase who in 2001 got elected on his own merits.

BUT

The 2006 coup by Bainimarama and RFMF: was supposedly different, on the surface: removed a government controlled by the major Fijian party (SDL)

[The Bainimarama Regime never acknowledges that the deposed 2006 Government was led by SDL but in partnership with FLP (the main Indo-Fijian party).]

Bainimarama's justification for the 2006 coup: keeps changing

Bainimarama alleged that he removed Qarase's 2006 SDL/FLP Government because of its

1. Corruption
2. Electoral fraud against the Indo-Fijian FLP party
3. Racism against the minority Indo-Fijian people.

Fiji public and international community partly believed these arguments especially when Chaudhry and FLP joined the Regime straight after the 2006 coup; as well as other Indo-Fijian and Catholic religious organisations.

BUT Five years later, no evidence of major corruption or electoral fraud has been brought forward; nor of evidence of any significant racism against Indo-Fijians;

Today Bainimarama Regime alleges it wants to ensure racial equality, and will prevent the unfair domination of the Indo-Fijian minority by the indigenous Fijian majority,

(a) changing the electoral system to “universal suffrage” (each voter's vote has the same value “one person one vote” without any communal seats)

(b) there must be “proportionality” in the elections results: so that each party's number of seats in Parliament will be in proportion to the votes received.

(c) with all the recommendations of the “Charter” being implemented.

Briefly: earlier constitutions and electoral systems

Can read Brij Lal and Fraenkel.

Need to understand:

“communal constituencies”: ethnic candidates in ethnic constituencies (Fijian, Indo-Fijian, Generals) and only people of the same ethnicity could vote.

Original intention: to reassure indigenous Fijians of political control: which it did.

But they also designed to give the Europeans, Chinese, “Part-Europeans” disproportionate power in Parliament, usually wielded against the Indo-Fijians (corresponding also to the business rivalry between these ethnic groups).

But with the 1997 Constitution, came a large number (25) of “open seats” in which anyone could stand and every one could vote.

These “open” seats were virtually the “one person-one vote” system that Bainimarama claims to want for Fiji today. We will come back to this in a while.

Critical to understand the 1997 Constitution, passed by Fiji Parliament which Bainimarama has “purportedly abrogated”

It has an Alternative Vote electoral system of preferences for counting votes.

All voters had 2 votes: one for an “Open” seat, and one for “own Communal” seat

Out of a total of 71 parliamentary seats: yes: the majority were communal.

23 Communal Fijian seats (only Fijians could stand, and Fijians could vote)

19 Communal Indo-Fijian seats (likewise)

1 Communal Rotuman seat (likewise)

3 Communal General seats (for Europeans, Chinese and others). (likewise)

These communal seats reassured different ethnic parties that they would be represented in Parliament.

25 Open Seats: anyone could stand, all voters of all ethnic groups voted.

Fijian political parties and their allies should have been able to win majority of seats.

But history indicates that they did not, in 1999.

In 1999, the FLP won despite having minority of first preference votes

Largely because of crafty alliances and preference sharing with other parties, some of whom were extreme ethno-nationalist Fijian parties openly anti-Indian.

There were also a large number of small Fijian parties splitting the Fijian votes,

The AV system worked to eliminate the smaller parties, like NFP who could not win 50% of the votes in any one constituency.

Unwisely, however, FLP chose to leave the largest Fijian party SVT (led by Rabuka) out of the Multi-party Government. Rabuka was willing to server in the FLP Government.

There is a fascinating story behind this, yet to be told by historians, about the role of the Mara /Ganilau clan in ensuring the defeat of Rabuka a commoner who had the temerity to defeat Ratu Mara's wife (one of the big three High Chiefs) for the Presidency of the SVT.

Key members of the defeated SVT campaigned for the removal of the FLP Government (including Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, who is currently and strangely a member of the Bainimarama Regime, as well as another ethno-nationalist, Isikeli Matakaitoga)

One year later, came the 2000 coup by the Counter Revolutionary Warfare Unit (CRW was originally set up by Rabuka.) led by ex-SAS British Army soldier – Ligairi- revered by the CRW and in RFMF, and answerable only to Bainimarama.

The public clearly saw that the 2000 coup as was the 1987 coup

Supported by

- * all the Fijian political parties SVT, FAP, VLV, SDL, etc.
- * the Great Council of Chiefs and high chiefs of Fiji (many of whom tried to become Prime Ministers and Ministers)
- * the Methodist Church, the bastion of the Fijian political parties.
- * the majority of indigenous Fijian people and civil servants
- * even President Ratu Mara, whose own role came under threat, stated that Chaudhry could not come back as Prime Minister: ie the coup was going to be successful, whatever happened.

The 1987 and 2000 coups were opposed by the majority of

- Indo-Fijian people and the Indo-Fijian religious groups (Hindus, Muslims etc),
- and the Catholic Church (substantial minority of Fijian voters).

Major question: how correct is the popular perception that the “2000 George Speight coup” was opposed by Bainimarama ?

New facts have come out on the 2000 coup: Evans Board of Inquiry Report

A website maintained by Ratu Tevita Mara (former senior army officer and son of Ratu Kamisese Mara) who escaped from Bainimarama) <http://www.truthforfiji.com/>.

This website has the Report of the RFMF's own Evans Board of Inquiry into the 2000 coup (including detailed verbatim evidence of 2000 coup soldiers involved and others).

http://www.truthforfiji.com/uploads/8/4/2/3/8423704/20120305-1st_meridian_report_rfmf_opt2_small.pdf

The website also has many statements by senior army officers who tried to discourage Bainimarama from doing the coup against Qarase

[This is a correction to my earlier post: The Evans BOI Report on the website TruthforFiji did not include a 100 pages of the original Evans Report, including the evidence of key witnesses like George Speight and Silatolu: TruthforFiji have stated on the blog C4.5 26/3/2012) that the Evans Report given to them did not have these missing pages. This omission raises even further questions about what exactly is in the evidence of George Speight and Silatolu. See my article on "Fiji's cancerous conspiracies of silence"]

Nevertheless, the available pages of the Evans Report is extremely useful to help to fill in some of the missing jigsaw pieces of the 2000 coup. The missing jigsaw pieces will surface some day.

The Evans BOI substantiates the following 10 points (some already known):

1. Bainimara had personally and inexplicably brought out of retirement an ex-SAS soldier (Ligairi) who reported only to him, and who became the leader of the CRW soldiers in Parliament, holding the hostages:
2. Bainimarama was told by senior officers the exact date of the coup (but went off to Norway)
3. Bainimarama and named senior officers authorized the arms and ammunition to keep going into the Parliament to the CRW soldiers; as well as food; while salaries were continued.
4. Many Fijian politicians and high chiefs (including Cokanauto and Epenisa Cakobau) knew about the 2000 coup weeks before; several chiefs tried to become Ministers in the Speight Government.
5. George Speight took over as leader only when the real coup plotters (unnamed) failed to surface
6. Speight's group not only named Ministers and a new President, but also a new Commander (Colonel Vatu) and a new Chief of Staff (Tarakinikini, who was in contact with the CRW soldiers early on the morning of the coup)
7. Only then did Bainimarama put down the coup, arrested and jailed Speight and CRW soldiers, many of whom he had already promised "forgiveness and amnesty".
8. Bainimarama asked his Commander in Chief, President (Ratu Kamiseses Mara) to "step aside"- ie Bainimarama effectively deposed the President; as also did some other senior RFMF officers.
9. Even in 2000, Bainimarama claimed to abrogate the Constitution and take "Executive Authority";²¹
10. Bainimarama was the only RFMF senior officer who refused to appear before the Evans Inquiry.

CRW mutiny in November 2000 and attempt to kill Bainimarama

Mutiny led by many of the same CRW group who did the earlier May 2000 coup, trying to kill Bainimarama: there was a clear sense of betrayal.

The CRW soldiers killed 3 innocent soldiers in the barracks and the RFMF put down the mutiny.

But the RFMF also took five CRW soldiers not directly involved in the mutiny, tortured them to find who was behind the mutiny: they ended up dead (horrific photos now coming out on the web: see <http://www.truthforfiji.com/>).

Some civilians, including high chiefs, were tried and jailed for taking false oaths during the 2000 coup, and for inciting the mutiny.

Bainimarama, after regaining control, did not restore Chaudhry as Prime Minister.

Bainimarama himself wanted to become Prime Minister: but was opposed by senior officers.

Only then did he appoint Qarase as Interim Prime Minister, and virtually all indigenous Fijian Ministers, thereby ensuring that indigenous Fijians were again in total control.

There has been no public inquiry into either the 2000 coup or the Mutiny. Why not?

Legal judgments: by Anthony Gates (2001), supported by Court of Appeal

Read Anne Twomey (“The Fijian coup cases”) and articles by Brij Lal and Fraenkel

Decisions: Constitution had not been, and could not be abrogated, even by the President;

President Iloilo made illegal decisions, including appointing Qarase as Acting PM

Nevertheless, when elections were held: Qarase and his newly formed SDL Party won the majority of the seats (as the population numbers predicted); but FLP claimed electoral fraud.

But Qarase in 2001, like Chaudhry in 1999, refused to respect the spirit of the Multi-Party provision in the Constitution, and excluded the Fiji Labour Party from Cabinet.

Net result: a Fijian party was again in total control of government.

President (Ratu Mara of Lau) was gone; and the balance of Fijian politics had shifted to the mainland Viti Levu, as was attempted during the 2000 coup.

FLP went into Opposition alleging electoral fraud etc.

2 Forces destabilised Fiji: the judiciary and Qarase/Bainimarama fallout

Bitter dispute began between the High Court judges (pro and anti Qarase), on issues , related to the treatment of coup offenders and other matters:

Chief Justice (Daniel Fatiaki) on one side (supporting Qarase), and Nazhat Shameem /Anthony Gates on the other (supporting Bainimarama). These stories yet to be written.

Qarase began to release key figures associated with the 2000 coups and the mutiny: and drafted legislation to grant amnesty to mutiny supporters; to the anger of Bainimarama

Qarase named replacement for Bainimarama as Commander of RFMF, but attempt failed;

Commissioner of Police (Australian Andrew Hughes) tried to prosecute Bainimarama on several charges (including sedition, and the murder of CRW soldiers in 2000): failed and escaped to Australia.

Around 2003, Bainimarama asked his officers to plan a coup; and sacked all senior officers who did not support his plans to remove Bainimarama.

Qarase planned legislation regarding Fijian *qoliqoli* rights (over marine resources) angering tourism resort owners- some suspected of supporting Bainimarama's 2006 coup.

In May 2006, Qarase again won the elections again: but formed a Multi-Party SDL/FLP Govt.

In December 2006, Bainimarama did the coup removing the SDL/FLP Government.

Critical in the 2006 coup by Bainimarama: coup by the judiciary (Nazhat Shameem, Tony Gates), a pliant Ratu Iloilo, and Ratu Epeli Nailatikau

Bainimarama suspended Daniel Fatiaki as Chief Justice

High Court judge Naz Shameem illegally chaired the Judicial Services Commission and appointed Tony Gates as Acting Chief Justice, who justified 2006 coup.

Bainimarama went through a charade of illegally removing the President (now Iloilo), appointing an Interim Prime Minister who calls for the elected parliament to be dissolved, then illegally reappointing Iloilo as President.

Iloilo then appointed Bainimarama as Acting Prime Minister, and other Ministers, and justifies everything that Bainimarama decrees.

Eventually, Gates and two others (Pathik and Byrne) hear the legal appeal against the 2006 coup and give an astonishing judgment in favour of Bainimarama and Iloilo (Pathik leading light of Arya Samaj and newly formed Fiji University which receives great support from Bainimarama Regime, including Minister of Education Filipe Bole, recently employed by Fiji University).

Iloilo eventually goes and is replaced by another Bainimarama appointment, Epeli Nailatikau (who earlier failed to get GCC nomination as Vice President, former Commander of RFMF and son-in-law of Kamisese Mara), who now signs all the Military Regime decrees.

Long list of 2006 coup supporters appear: from Fiji and abroad!

The Fiji Labour Party and Mahendra Chaudhry (as Minister of Finance) quickly join the Military Regime, giving it great legitimacy and support.

A number of Fiji organisations join the Bainimarama initiative for the “Charter” exercise:
The Head of the Catholic Church in Fiji (Mataca) and many prominent Catholics (Arms, Barr)
The Hindu and Muslim religious organisations and many prominent leaders

The Fiji Human Rights Commission (led by Shaista Shameem) issues a number of reports justifying the coup and vilifying the SDL Government (ignoring the FLP partners in it).

Prominent politicians (like Filipe Bole and Inoke Kubuabola) join the Military Regime including high chiefs like Epeli Ganilau, Epeli Nailatikau and others

Groups of influential businessmen and business organisations openly support Bainimarama

Prominent intellectuals (led by John Samy and other ADB functionaries) create a “Charter” and a Road-map that will supposedly guide Fiji forever into the future.

Charter supporters declare that all previous elections and governments were “non-democratic” and unfair to “minority ethnic groups” and join the NCBBF exercises.

First paragraph of the Charter claimed: The 1997 Constitution is supreme and the Charter will abide by it and strengthen it;

Charter allegedly approved by the vast majority of Fiji people: 400 thousand signatures.

Then the 2009 Court of Appeal rules 2006 coup illegal

The Gates/Pathik/Byrne judgment was declared incorrect and the Bainimarama Regime illegal.

Bainimarama resigns (for the night); but next day reverses, purporting to abrogate the Constitution (regardless of the Charter's first clause), and proceeded "Business as usual" till today.

John Samy, heads of all the supporting religious organizations and NGPs, make no statement or protest at the alleged abrogation of the 1997 Constitution, thereby supporting the fraud on the nation, with the Charter.

Bainimarama makes no further statements of electoral fraud or corruption by Qarase.

Fiji suspended by EU, Commonwealth Secretariat, Forum Secretariat, and continued principled opposition from Australia and NZ.

Regime's current propaganda is about establishing a "non-racial Fiji", a new "home grown" Constitution with a new "non-racial" electoral system with "one person one vote" and "proportionality".

Fiji's assisted by China and India, and receives support from the Melanesian Spearhead Group

Bainimarama has total control of all institutions and organizations

Appointment of selected judiciary (many from Sri Lanka)

Appointment of illegal President who issues decrees which may not be challenged in court on any issue, including erosion of fundamental human rights (private property, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of recourse to courts. etc)

Key appointments in Governments nearly all indigenous Fijians (a handful of Indo-Fijians)

Total control of police (also militarized) with increased powers of arrest and detention, with injuries to victims (person or property) not justiciable

Militarisation of senior civil service positions (all Fijian military officers) (RFMF still 99% indigenous Fijians).

Suspension of trade union rights.

Political parties and leaders stomped upon and now “demonized”.

Methodist Church stomped upon, with no protest from sister religious organisations.

Suspension and final abolition of Great Council of Chiefs

Total media censorship (directly for two years), now media into self-censorship mode, while 28 millions spent on propaganda through American lobbying firm Qorvis.

Bainimarama's government of last five years: is in total contradiction of all the Charter's principles

No Auditor General's Reports from 2006 till now.

Huge over-spending of Military Budget: hundreds of millions by now

Key militarization of many senior civil service posts

Thirty year back-pay to Bainimarama himself

Multiple salaries to a few ministers- paid through the company of Khaiyum's aunty

Massive contracts being given out- no public accountability

Hundreds of millions lost by Fiji National Provident Fund whose board is totally controlled by Regime (no reports released to the public)- pensions to be halved.

Nepotism rife: appointment of Bainimarama's family members (some over 55 years of age) to high positions while ordinary civil servants forced to resign at 55.

Release from prison of Military Regime's friends, some convicted of serious crimes.

All the time proclaiming that his government and all future governments will be guided by²⁹ the "Charter" Principles (just forget the first clause: supremacy of 1997 constitution)

Central to Bainimarama's propaganda on "constitutional reform" is allegation of "ethnic unfairness" in 1997 Constitution

Post 2006, there was massive propaganda mounted by Bainimarama supporters (including respectable clerics like David Arms and Kevin Barr, and John Samy)

That the 1997 Constitution's electoral system was "undemocratic" and "unfair to ethnic groups" because it did not give equal values to all votes.

That Military Regime would for the first time introduce "universal suffrage" and "one person one vote" system which would not be biased against any ethnic group, especially the Indo-Fijian minority.

In the face of this barrage of publicity even the international community stunned into silence: what can they argue?

Of course, the AV system of preferences determining the outcome in each constituency, whether communal or open, required the winner to have 50% of the final votes.

Hence it was the small parties that lost out, while the large parties invariably gained.

The Alternative Votes system was unfair, but not to ethnic groups.

FIRST PROOF: An Indo-Fijian dominated party (FLP) with less than 50% of votes, was able to win control of Government in 1999 under the very same system.

Compare 2006 Election results, and voting in the 25 “Open” constituencies

These “Open” constituencies are exactly what “one person-one vote” “universal suffrage” requires- with any candidate of any ethnicity standing, and all voters voting with one person one vote: the Bainimarama objective

If you use “proportionality” of the votes given in these open constituencies to estimate what numbers of seats would have gone to Fijian parties in total (several of them) and Indo-Fijian parties in total (just 2 of them) and compare with what they actually received:

	Fijian parties	Indo-Fijian	Others	Total
Total seats <u>actually won</u>	36	31	4	71
Seats <u>by proportionality</u>	35	32	4	71
Difference:	+1	-1	0	

Ethnically, there was no great unfairness, in either 2006, 2001 or 1999.

Disproportionality is far worse in US, UK Australia, India all democratic countries

Yes, large parties (Qarase's SDL and Chaudhry's FLP) did benefit

Qarase's SDL was entitled to 31 but got 36

But it was the smaller Fijian parties that lost out

Chaudhry's Fiji Labour Party was entitled to 28 but got 31

It was the smaller Indo-Fijian Party (NFP) lost out: should have got 4 but got 0 in 2006.

So the electoral system in the 1997 Constitution was unfair to small political parties,

But not to ethnic groups as the Bainimarama supporters claimed.

Having a proportional system (whether combined with a List element or not) will help the smaller parties definitely.

It will have ensure ethnic proportionality, but that was there already.

What of Bainimarama fighting to restore “democracy” as he claims?

Usual meaning of “democracy”:

government of the people
for the people
by the people

Before 1997 Constitution, it was “winner takes all”:

As in US, UK, Australia, and India: nobody calls them “undemocratic”.

In Fiji, “winner takes all” “worked: when the winner was a Fijian party, but resulted in a coup when it was an Indo-Fijian party

But the 1997 Constitution brought in one element which for the first time in the history of Fiji, brought in a really genuine democratic element of government by the people: The power-sharing multi-party government provision.

If only the politicians had appreciated it right from the beginning.

The 1997 Constitution mandated a “Multi-Party” Cabinet”: genuine power-sharing

In the 1997 Constitution: any party with 10% of the seats in Parliament (only 8 seats out of 71) must be invited into Cabinet: genuine democracy

It was a powerful mechanism to ensure that significant minority interests were part of the government running the country.

But in 1999, the entitled Fijian SVT party was kept out of Cabinet (result: coup)

In 2001, Qarase’s SDL kept out the entitled FLP (political conflict continued)

BUT in 2006, Qarase’s SDL gave the Indo-Fijian FLP 8 good portfolios.

But strangely, Chaudhry decided to stay out (and tried to even become the Leader of the Opposition)

The system was finally working as intended, in 2006. But 6 months later Bainimarama did the coup in December 2006: and quickly joined by Chaudhry (FLP President had earlier publicly stated that it would be good if Bainimarama did the coup)

Popularly forgotten: Bainimarama’s 2006 coup **did not just remove Qarase and his Fijian SDL Party**, but also the Indo-Fijian Fiji Labour Party Ministers (like Dutt, Gounder and others) who were doing a good job as Ministers.

Future: what comes if Bainimarama's stated objectives are followed: with proportional "one-person one-vote" system AND Charter?

Given my population projections of those aged 18 and over :

By 2014, the proportions of voters by ethnicity AND the proportion of seats in parliament will be as follows: elected by

Fijians	56%
Indo-Fijians	39%
Others	5%
	100%

i.e. whoever the Fijian voters want to vote for (whether Fijians, Indo-Fijians or Others) will comprise 56% of seats in Parliament, and if they all gang together, will be in a position to form Government.

But what about the 39% of the parliamentarians elected by Indo-Fijians?

But what about the 5% of the parliamentarians elected by "Others"?

"Tough luck" according to what is in Bainimarama/Mataca/Samy's Charter.

Bainimarama's Charter (p.12) very unwisely calls for the abolition of the Multi-Party Government provision

Which means that if ethnic block voting persists,

Given the demographic changes taking place, and the fact that the indigenous Fijian proportion will keep rising in the future to way above the 60% currently

The indigenous majority, under a proportional “one person-one vote” system, without the Multi-party power sharing requirement, will tend to form government.

Other ethnic groups, will be the perpetual opposition, with no guarantee of a place in Cabinet and Government.

According to Bainimarama's current proposals for an electoral system TOGETHER with the elimination of the Multi-Party provision will: **We will be back to the “Winner takes all” situation:**

Of course, political could become genuinely become multi-racial, by a wave of some strange magic wand.

Unfortunately, Bainimarama is only waving guns and military decrees around.

Neither are going to change the ethnic biases of the politicians or voters or soldiers.

Is there any need for “Affirmative Action” for any ethnic group?

Bainimarama’s propaganda, so readily believed by Indo-Fijians abroad, has been that he wants to stop the kinds of racist policies being followed by Qarase’s government in favour of indigenous Fijians through his “Affirmative Action” strategies.

Bainimarama alleges that he is fairer to Indo-Fijians.

Important to ask:

Q1. Is there any need for any affirmative action for any ethnic group?

Q2. How have the ethnic groups fared under Bainimarama’s government of the last five years- longer than the life of a normal parliament in Fiji?

Has Bainimarama been beneficial for Indo-Fijians?

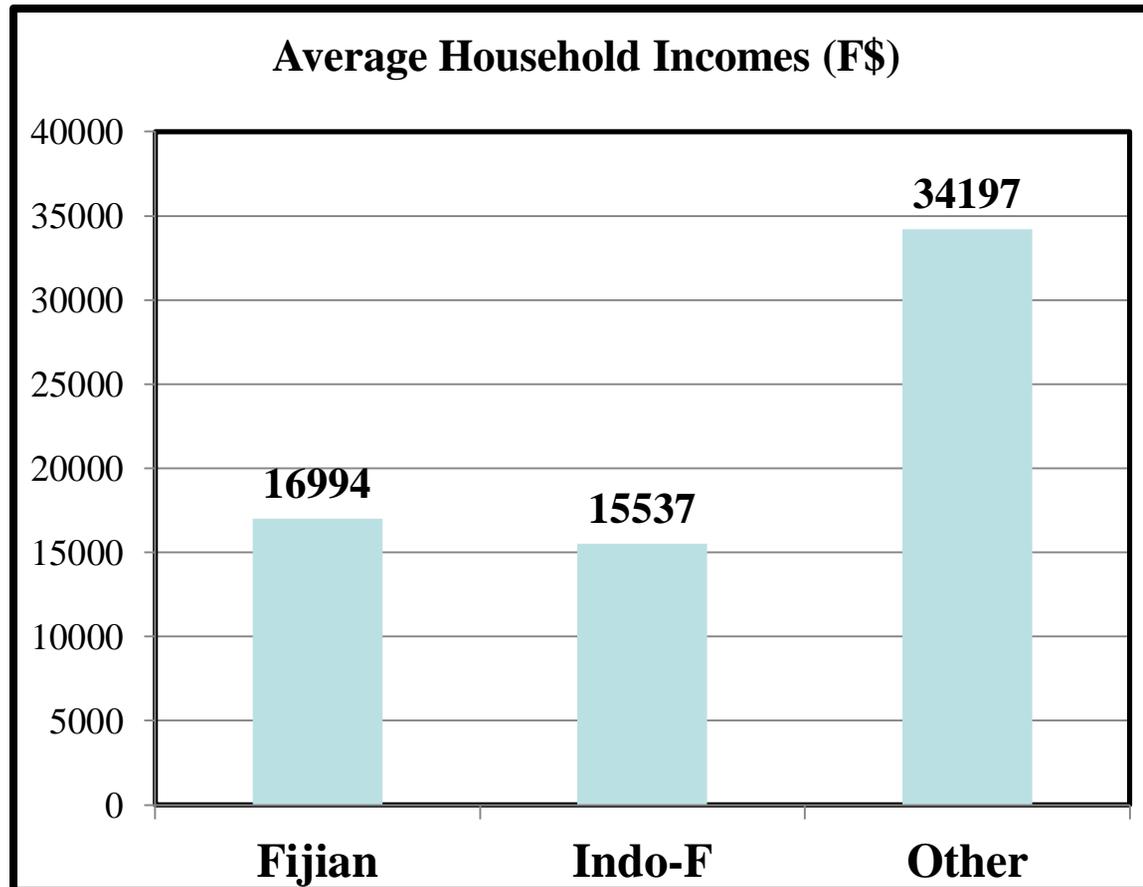
How have indigenous Fijians fared under Bainimarama?

Look at some facts from the Income and Expenditure Surveys run by the Fiji Bureau of Statistics (headed by Timoci Bainimarama): look at major items that go towards determining our people’s “standard of living”.

Average Household Incomes throughout Fiji

No great difference: Fijians slightly higher than Indo-Fijians (partly because of higher consumption of food by rural Fijians)

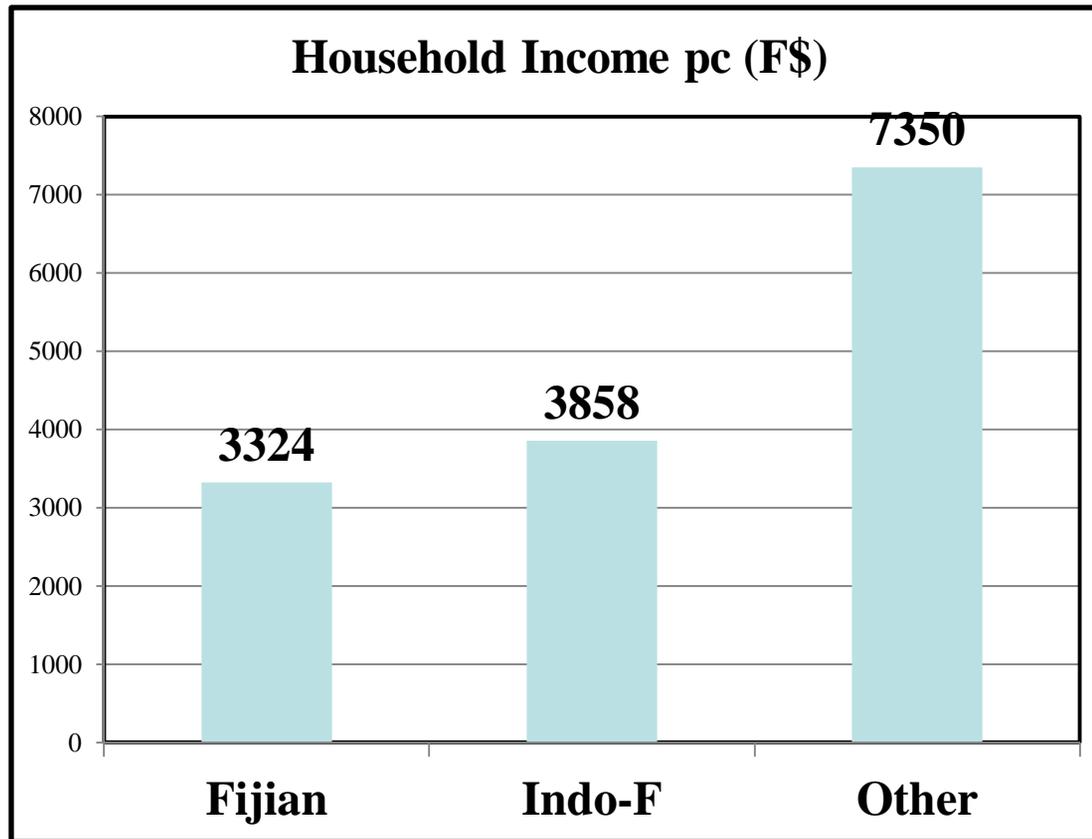
Others: Europeans, Chinese, Mixed Race, Rotumans, well ahead.



Household Incomes per capita: no great difference

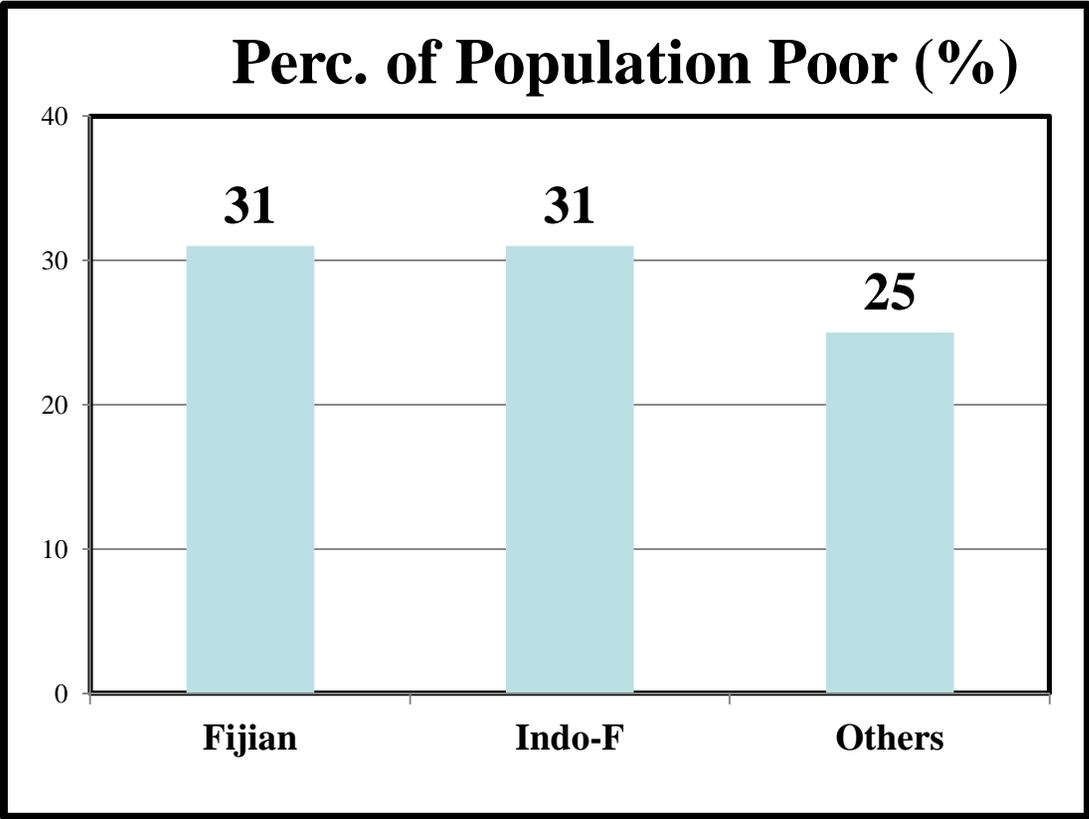
Indo-Fijians slightly higher than Fijians (so more disposable income in Indo-Fijian households: because of fewer people to support)

But only because Fijian households are larger on average.



Percent. of Ethnic groups who are “Poor” (2008-09): no difference.

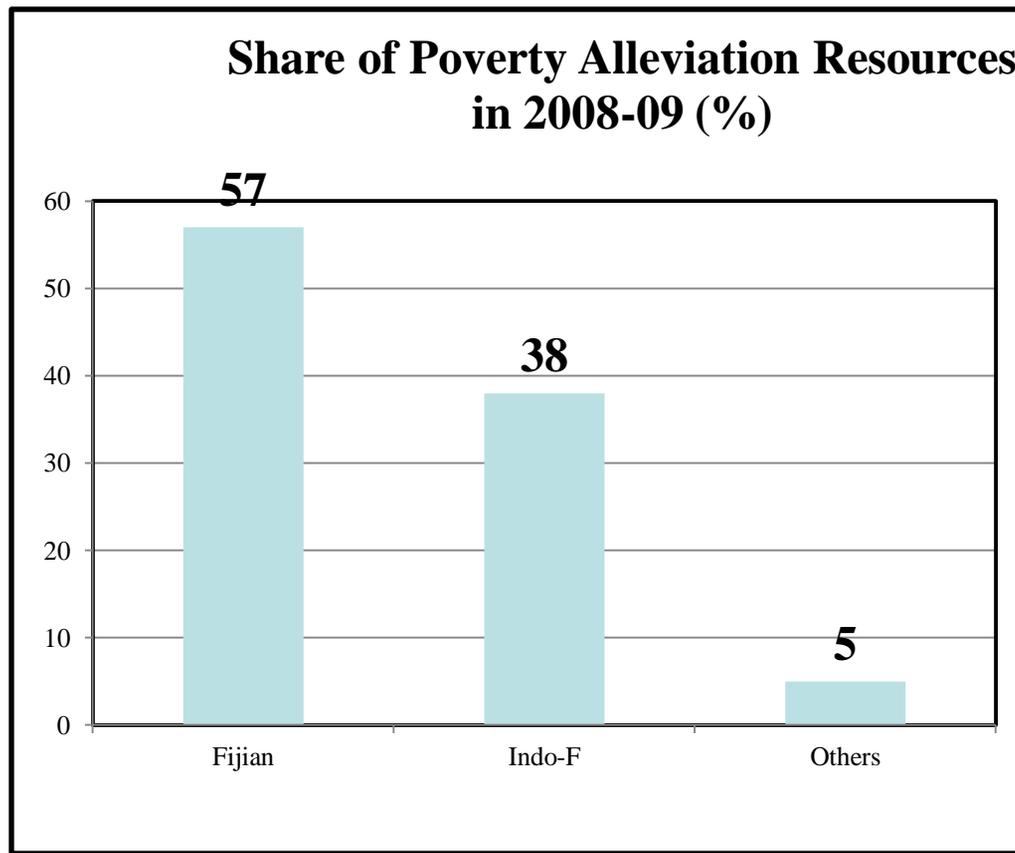
Exactly the same: 31% of both ethnic groups are poor.



Guideline on share of Poverty Alleviation Resources (2008-09)

Exactly the same shares as the population shares.

There is absolutely no need for ethnic bias.



Sadly: No political leader wants to know that last fact:

Both Qarase's SDL party and Chaudhry's FLP campaigned vigorously that their ethnic groups deserved more special treatment through affirmative action.

I gave several presentations on these findings to their cabinets and workshops.

My article in ANU's *Pacific Economic Bulletin*. "The incidence of poverty and the poverty gap in Fiji: unpalatable facts for ethno-centric political parties"

BUT there are some ethnic gaps which do need addressing:

Highest poverty is amongst rural Indo-Fijians: because of collapse of sugar industry

Rural Indo-Fijian farmers do need secure agricultural leases- cane farming or other agricultural activities.

Indo-Fijians are a relatively larger proportion of the Casual Wage Earners who have really suffered over the last ten years.

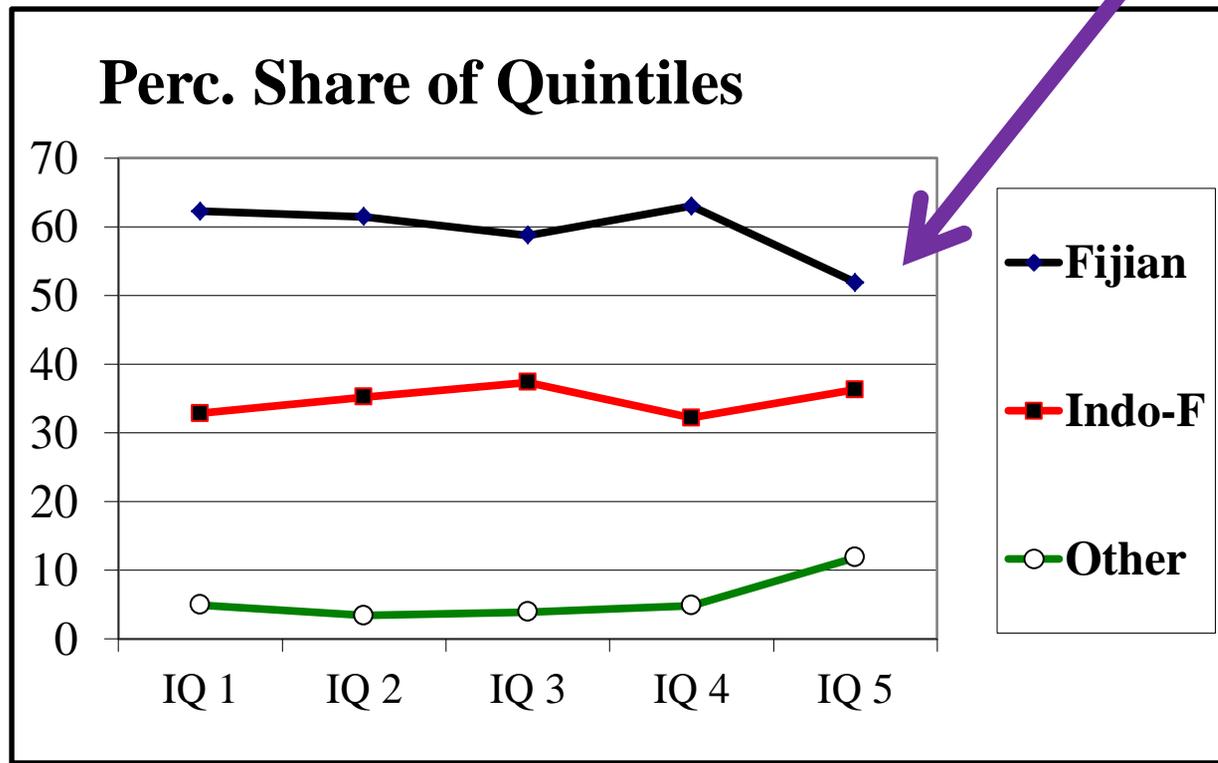
But indigenous Fijians also need special attention in the following:

Indigenous Fijians are relatively smaller proportion of the wealthy

All ethnic groups are equally represented at the low incomes (IQ1) rising to the fourth quintile (IQ4).

But at the Top 20% of the population (IQ5). Fijians very poorly represented in the entrepreneurial and business classes. Indo-Fijians/Others are understated because of under-reporting of incomes to HIES: i.e. genuine need for Affirmative Action for Fijians at the Top End: BUT that is where the ethnic gap really is and MUST be closed for future political stability. You need Fijian Punjas and Reddys.

But when Qarase tried to do that: he was accused by many that the SDL was all about making rich Fijians richer! He could not win.

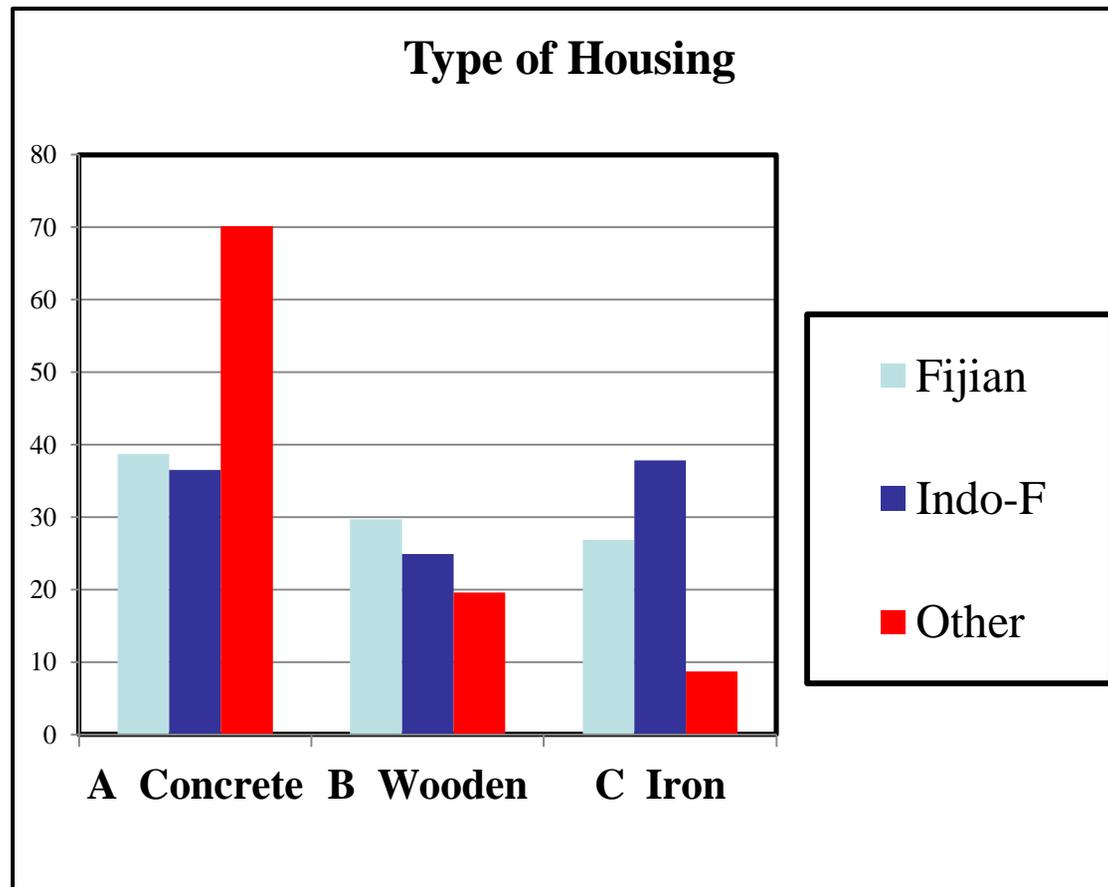


Fijians have reached parity in housing made of concrete and wood

A slightly higher proportion of Fijians live in concrete and wooden houses than Indo-Fijians: huge progress in last thirty years

But slightly higher proportions of Indo-Fijians living in iron-wall houses.

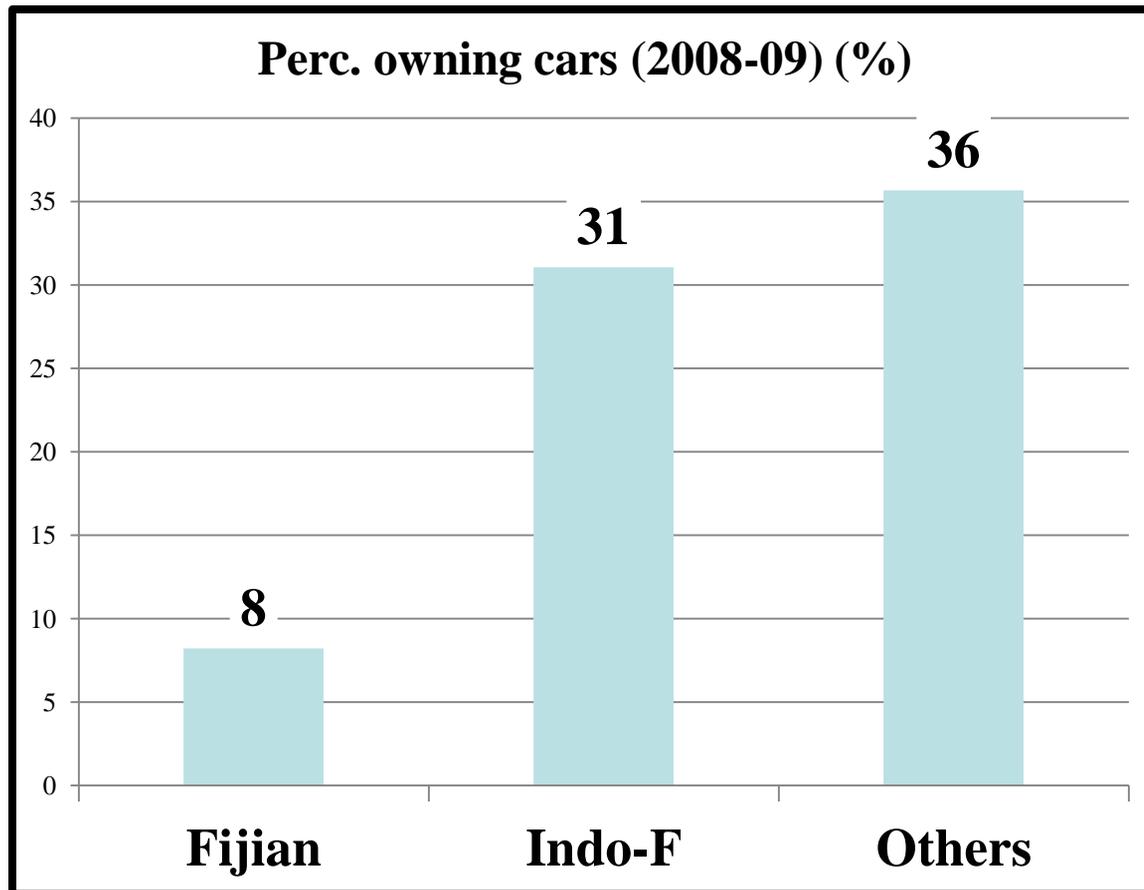
No great need for affirmative action here.



But: owning cars: Fijians lag way behind

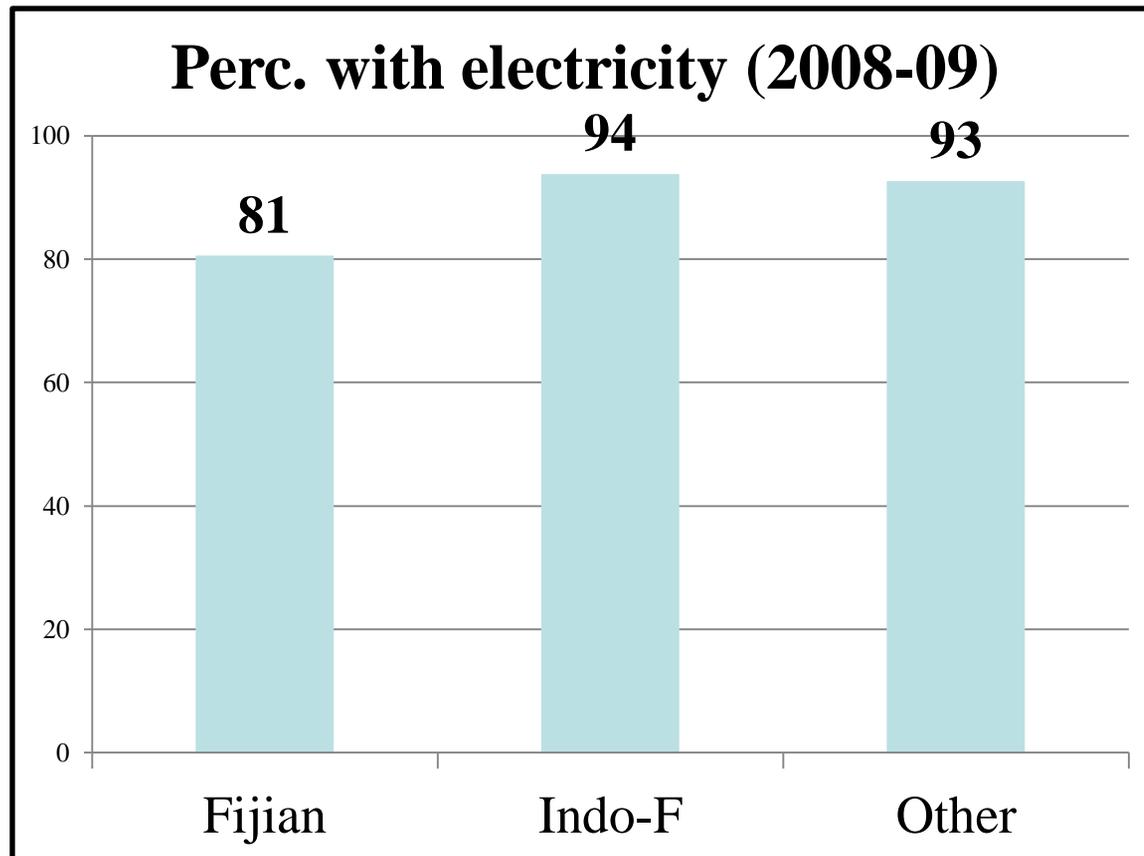
Only 8% of Fijian households have cars,

Compared to 31% of Indo-Fijians.



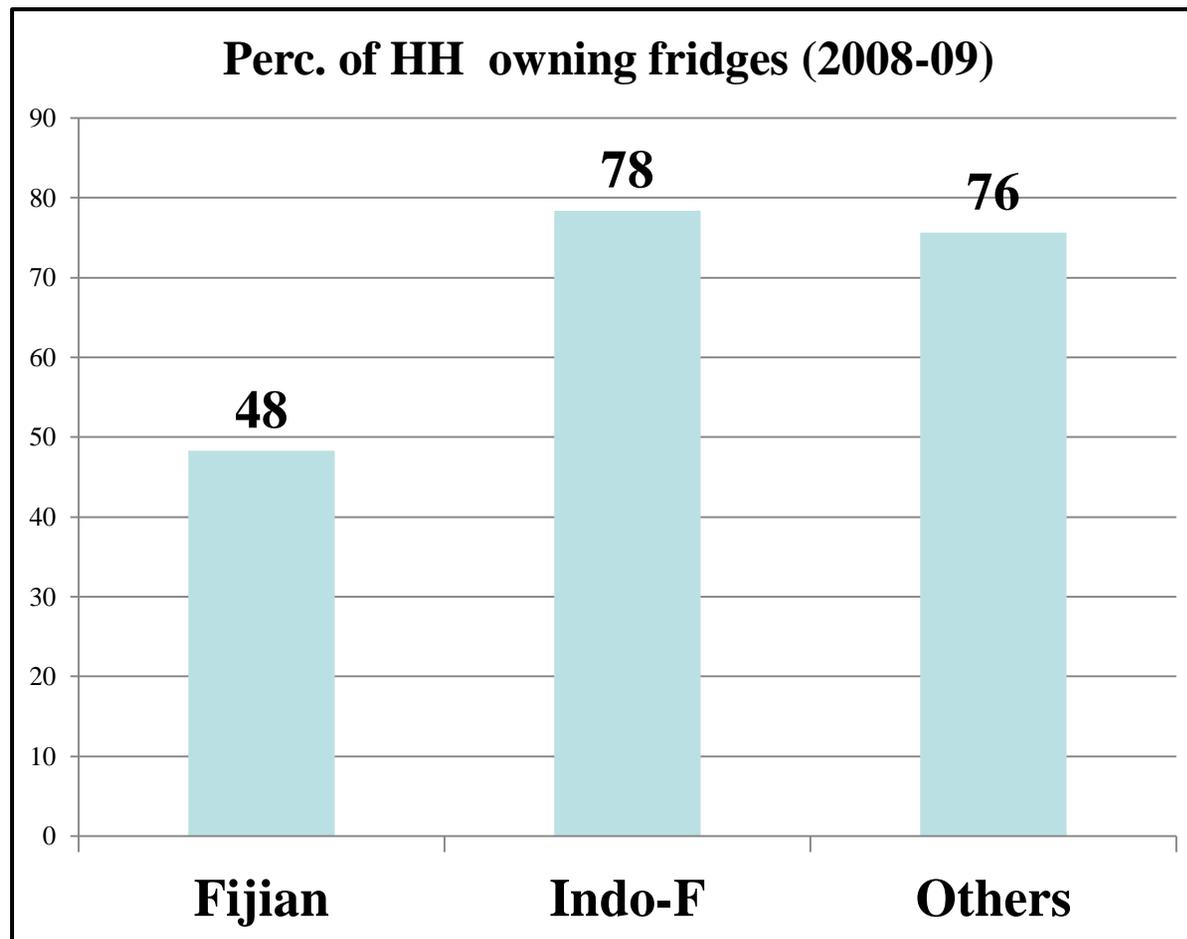
Percent with electricity in 2008-09

Fijians (81%) lagging behind slightly, but still a gap with Indo-Fijians (94%).



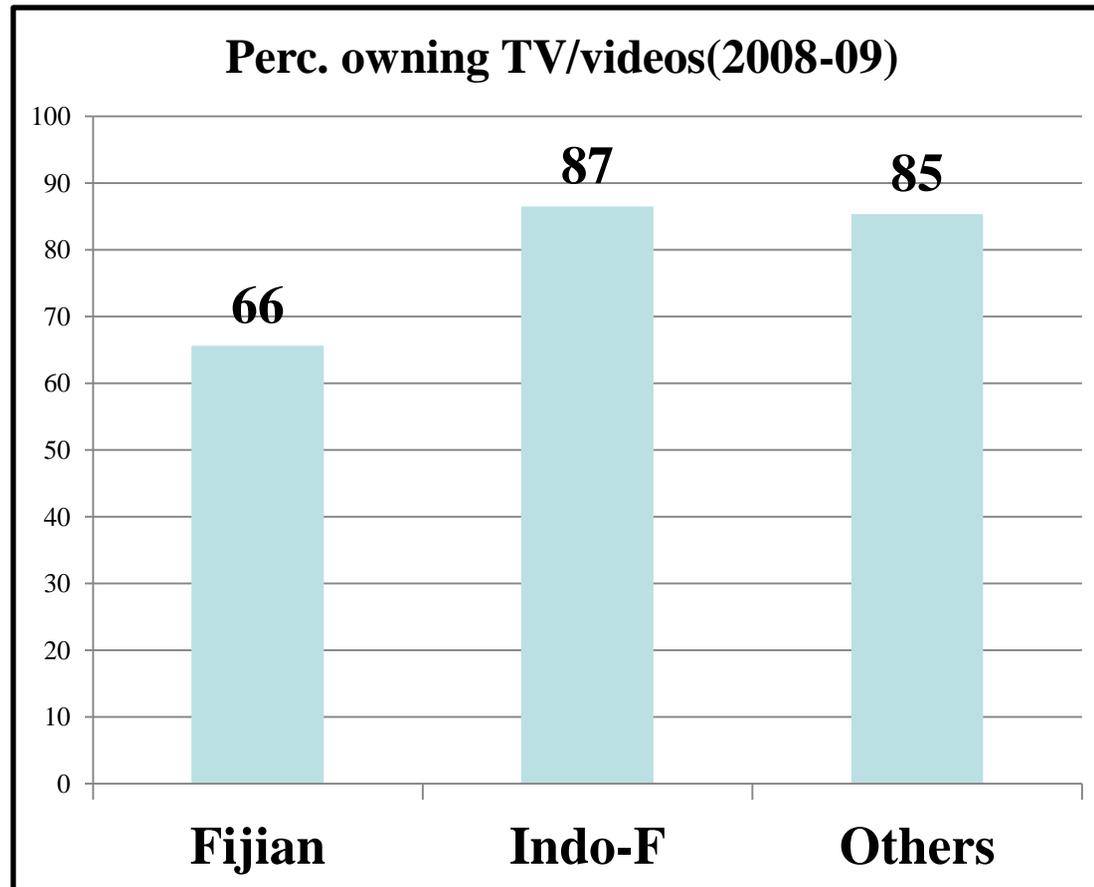
Percent of Households with fridges

Fijians lagging way behind.



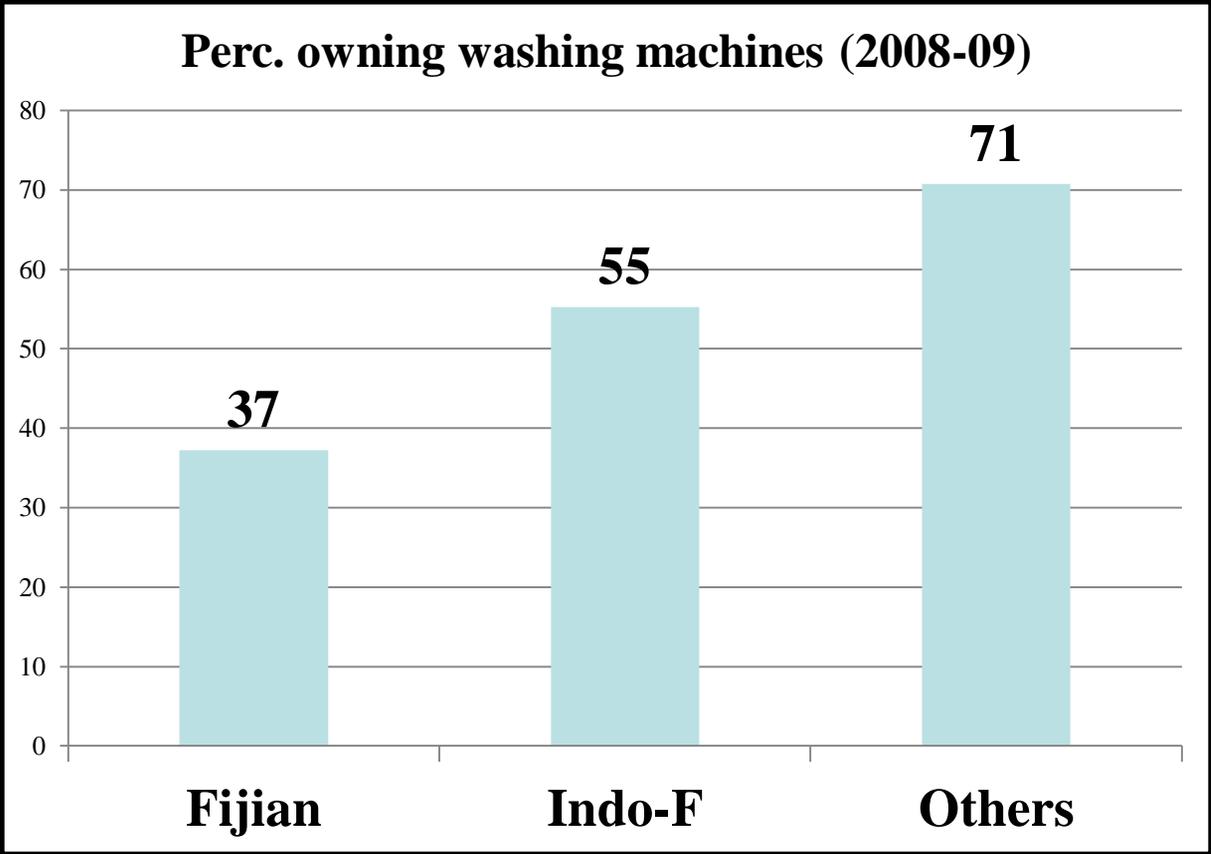
Percent. of households owning: videos/TVs

Fijians lagging a little behind.



Percent of households owning washing machines:

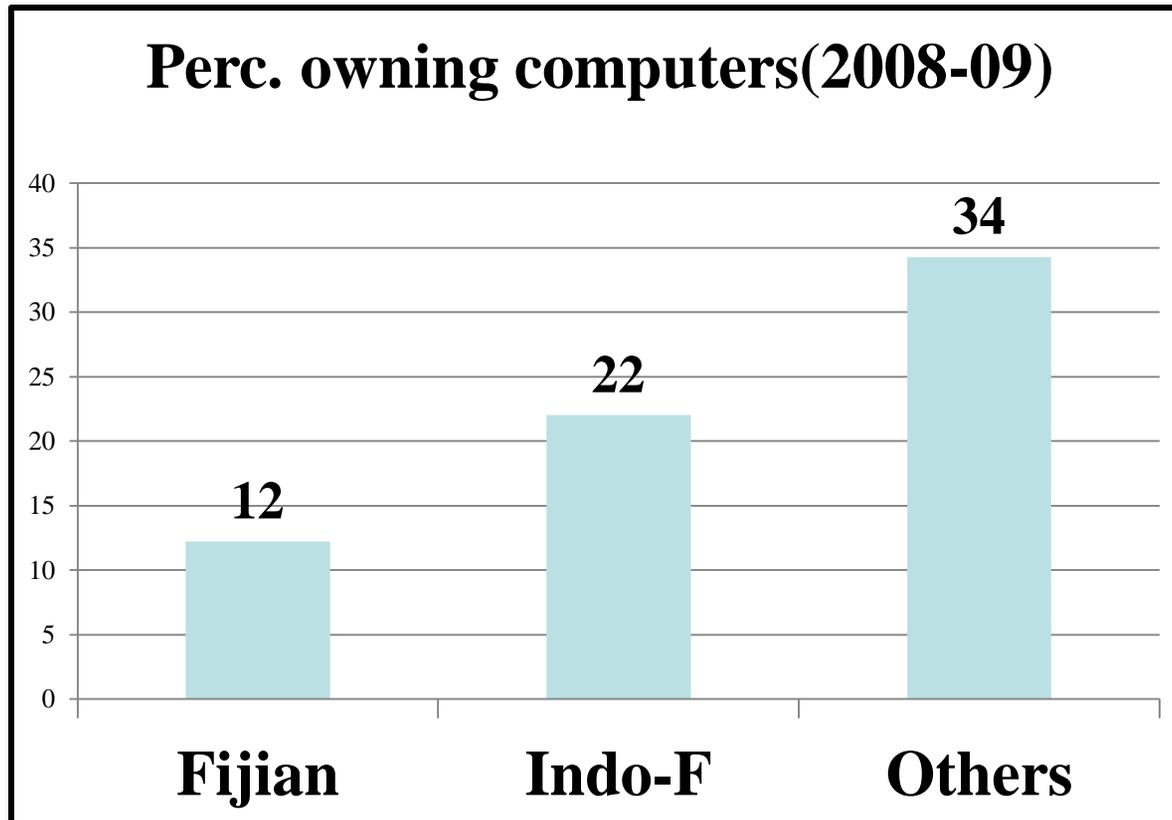
Fijians lagging way behind.



Percent. of households owning: computers

Fijians lagging behind.

But all ethnic groups show lack of interest in computers (way below TVs and videos)



Indigenous Fijians have made great progress over last thirty years and the gaps are almost gone for 95% of the population.

They have closed the gap in most areas which reflect the standard of living.

But still have a number of gaps which need special attention.

Indo-Fijians on the other hand, are becoming a smaller and smaller proportion of the population.

One would expect that future elections are going to be about the same issues the world over

Jobs, incomes, education, health, infrastructure etc: all nothing to do with ethnicity.

There is no need whatsoever for a military coup and an illegal government denying the population their basic human rights, allegedly to protect any ethnic group in Fiji-

whether it is the Indo-Fijian minority (rapidly becoming smaller by the day).

or the indigenous Fijian majority

Ironically: impact of Bainimarama coup on Indo-Fijians: largely negative

Yes, select Indo-Fijian businesses have obtained great benefits; corporate tax cut.

And by military decree, Indo-Fijians now can call themselves “Fijians” within Fiji.

But business in general, including the majority of Indo-Fijian businesses have lost: Fiji economy has not grown since 2006: loss of more than a billion dollars in income

Indo-Fijians are larger proportion of casual wage earners whose real incomes have declined, with stagnating nominal wages and high inflation;

Sugar economy on which rural Indo-Fijians depend has collapsed because EU withheld \$300 million intended to assist sugar industry, because Bainimarama refused to hold elections in 2009..

Property values have fallen dramatically while they were rising before 2006

Indo-Fijian emigrants have lost more than 25% of their savings because of the devaluation of the Fiji dollar due to the coup.

Few Indo-Fijians at higher levels in Civil Service, still largely indigenous Fijians 52

Bainimarama has not been particularly “bad” for indigenous Fijians

Bainimarama’s support-buying tours throughout Fiji have focused on electricity, roads, bridges, schools etc for indigenous Fijians: and there is little doubt that rural Fijians and ALL rural people, do need great improvements in these

But the Civil Service (army, police etc) still largely indigenous Fijians and most promotions have been of indigenous Fijians: look at the many indigenous Fijians in high civil service positions (non-army people) supporting Bainimarama actively.

RFMF totally indigenous Fijian, with great increases in salary and conditions under Bainimarama, at huge cost of increasing public debt, and reduced allocations to other ministries.

Bainimarama’s attacks have been on Fijian institutions like the GCC (whose suspension changed very little in Fiji) and the Methodist Church (who have been stopped from their annual fund-raising which many ordinary Fijians found burdensome and excessive; while the equalisation of lease money between chiefs and commoners have not been opposed by commoners.

BUT there have been many losses shared equally by indigenous Fijians, Indo-Fijians and Others: stagnation or decline in incomes for last five years, losses in the FNPF and future pensions, losses of the real values of savings, and foreign value of their remittances.

Conclusion: facts and fiction?

Bainimarama's current claims that his primary objectives are to protect the ethnic Indo-Fijian minority and restore real democracy, belong more to the world of fiction, than fact

He just has no other excuses left for the coup, or for hanging on to power.

Thank you.

Questions and comments.