

EDITORIAL

In many ways this issue of *Political Science* is an archetypal issue of the journal. While from the outset the journal has been outward looking, publishing articles and book reviews in all areas of the discipline of political science, inevitably the main focus of *Political Science* has been on New Zealand government, politics and public policy. As New Zealand's 'identity' has evolved over the years, so too has the journal's, with a focus on 'the Pacific' (and on New Zealand's relations with Pacific Island states and communities) coming to be listed explicitly from the mid-1970s as a 'priority' for manuscript submissions. As New Zealand moved towards membership and acceptance within the wider Asia-Pacific region, the journal also deliberately identified itself with that change in perspective.

With its blend of research-based articles focusing on New Zealand and Pacific themes, this issue of *Political Science* reflects these developments. The first article addresses a topic of long-standing interest in New Zealand political science, at least over the past 20 years or so. How a two-party dominant system came to be changed, peacefully, with the consent and indeed at the initiative of the two parties themselves, has attracted ongoing interest, both within New Zealand and from overseas. The lead article in this issue, by Alan Renwick, takes a new look at this question. Although first mooted by Labour, the referendums on the electoral system (in 1992 and 1993) took place as a result of promises made by the National party and legislation enacted under a National government. Renwick re-examines the outlook of key National participants in the decision to make electoral system change possible, using hitherto unexamined archival materials, shedding new light on the attitudes of senior National MPs. Renwick's study of politicians' motives leads towards a broader theme, namely, the implications for analytical accuracy of an unwillingness to see anything other than self-interest in the preferences and policy choices made by politicians.

A research note with a New Zealand focus looks at the largely unnoticed subject of a New Zealand 'diaspora'. That there is a very substantial overseas population of New Zealanders is undeniable. The level of emigration from New Zealand has remained high and is the reason that it has taken more than 30 years for the country's population numbers to grow from three to four million people. The observations by Mexican diplomat Julian Escutia arise in part from his own experience working on 'diaspora issues' for Mexico. Perhaps paradoxically, it has taken a Mexican diplomat to open up this topic for New Zealand, with an article offering an analysis and set of broad policy prescriptions intended to stimulate discussion and promote progressive policies sensitive to the potential for New Zealand of its overseas citizens.

New Zealand's interest in the Pacific has, in practice, been limited to only a few countries. Fiji has always been one of them. Like New Zealand, Fiji was a part of the British Empire, with the UK taking formal possession in each case via a treaty signed with indigenous tribal chiefs. While New Zealand has seen itself as taking on a regional leadership role, Fiji has also developed expectations of leadership, with significant regional institutions at times being situated in the country's capital city, Suva. Writing from a position on the staff of that city's regional university – the University of the South Pacific – New Zealand political scientist Rae Nicholl (a Victoria University graduate) also provides the journal with a research note in which she offers her own observations of the country's 2006 electoral process. Indeed, in part her commentary involves observations of the observers themselves, as Fiji's experience of

coup-driven electoral system change not surprisingly attracts interest of its own, on a par with, though motivated very differently from, the interest in electoral system change in New Zealand.

Another former New Zealand academic, Kevin Clements, previously of the University of Canterbury, likewise offers observations on developments in Pacific Islands governance. In doing so, with the assistance of his colleagues at the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies of the University of Queensland, Clements provides a dual critique, both of existing models of government found in the contemporary Pacific and of the literature developed to understand Pacific Islands governance. While perhaps for many New Zealanders the recurring coups in Fiji are the most obvious example of political system failure in the Pacific, the article by Clements and his colleagues ranges much more widely, with observations about the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, Bougainville, Timor Leste/East Timor, and Tonga suggesting the broader implications of his outlined research agenda.

Both Rae Nicholl and Kevin Clements represent a part of that New Zealand 'diaspora', a subset of academia 'dispersed' to other countries, pursuing new interests while retaining values and preoccupations shaped at least in part by their New Zealand experience. The fifth contributor to this issue, Scott Walker, is a more recent arrival (from the United States). His article, like that of Clements and his team, has a conceptual (or methodological) focus. Using statistical evidence, Walker considers the relationship between ethnic and religious pluralism and the likelihood of democracy, suggesting that democracy and its supporting values (such as tolerance) may not be at a disadvantage in societies characterised by considerable ethnic and religious diversity. This is a finding not without relevance to political developments in Fiji, in other Pacific Island polities, and in New Zealand itself.

As is usually the case, the issue is rounded off with a book review section. As elsewhere in this issue, so too among the book reviews there is a mix of commentaries on political themes in both New Zealand and the Pacific Islands. The books under review range from scholarly studies of political leadership and policy development through to memoirs from politicians and public servants. However, the lead book review – University of Waikato political scientist Priya Kurian's review of a book about climate change – draws attention to a subject that has become increasingly important within New Zealand (as elsewhere), with the New Zealand prime minister, Helen Clark, declaring in 2007 that her government was determined to see the country reduce its environmental 'footprint' so as to become 'carbon neutral' in the not-too-distant future.

Indeed, as an announcement on the page alongside this one points out, in the not-too-distant future, *Political Science* will itself be devoting significant attention to the question of climate change. In 2008, the first edition of the 60th anniversary volume will be a special 'theme' issue, organised by Bronwyn Hayward of the University of Canterbury, bringing together a collection of papers on climate change. This special issue will provide a scholarly New Zealand-based perspective on a global issue with potentially cataclysmic consequences for the country's Pacific Island neighbours as well as for New Zealand itself. In this issue New Zealand's 'membership' in a broader Asia-Pacific community of nations takes on a different meaning, as the country's shared destiny in the prospect of a possible global climate crisis can hardly be ignored. As editors we are grateful to Dr Hayward for taking the initiative in organising this special issue and we already look forward to publishing the insights of her team of colleagues next year.

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