

Introduction

In June, the Centre for International and Regional Affairs and the Fiji Institute of Applied Studies hosted a 3-day workshop on ‘*Globalisation: Challenges to Fiji’s Diplomacy*’. The theme was chosen to enable experts to focus on some of the key issues facing Fiji’s foreign and trade policy interests in the competitive new globalised world.

Globalisation poses numerous challenges to the international community. Moreso, the challenges are of profound significance to the small island nations like Fiji. Some pertinent questions on globalisation, of which some are posed at *Globalisationguide.org*, are:

- Who are the main players in the process?
- Why is there global inequality, and why is it getting worse?
- What are the costs and benefits of trade?
- Is globalisation shifting power from nation states to undemocratic organisations?
- How does globalisation affect culture? Is it Americanisation?
- What are the environmental and social impacts of globalisation?
- Is globalisation result in third world industries undermining industries of the first world? Do the former have inferior labour standards?
- Is there any alternative to globalisation?
- What does globalisation mean to a country like Fiji?

Globalisation does not have any universally accepted definition. In 1998, for example, of the 2822 academic papers written on globalisation, each had its own definition, as did each of the 589 new books on the subject published in that year (*Globalisationguide.org*). Many see globalisation as primarily an economic phenomenon, involving the increasing interaction, or integration, of national economic systems through the growth in international trade, investment and capital flows.

However, one can also point to a rapid increase in cross-border social, cultural and technological exchange as part of the phenomenon of globalisation. The sociologist, Anthony Giddens, defines globalisation as a decoupling of space and time, emphasising that with instantaneous communications, knowledge and culture can be shared around the world simultaneously. Ruud Lubbers, a Dutch academic, defines globalisation

as a process in which geographic distance becomes a factor of diminishing importance in the establishment and maintenance of cross border economic, political and socio-cultural relations (<http://globalize.kub.nl/>).

Leftist critics of globalisation define the word quite differently, presenting it as a worldwide drive towards a globalised economic system dominated by supranational corporate trade and banking institutions that are not accountable to democratic processes or national governments.

Globalisation is an undeniably capitalist process. It has taken off as a concept in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union and of socialism as a viable alternate form of western economic organisation. One might define Globalisation as the rapid increase in cross-border economic, social, technological exchange under conditions of capitalism (*Globalisationguide.org*).

The CIRA/FIAS workshop aimed to generate discussion on globalisation, and its meanings to and impacts on small countries, and on Fiji in particular. In the Pacific, regionalism is an added process that needs to be examined by academics and policy makers. Does Pacific regionalism advance globalisation in the Pacific? What impact would this have on the welfare of the Pacific people? These matters are discussed in some of the papers presented at the Workshop. These papers, together with an additional paper on the geopolitics of Pacific regionalism, are contained in this volume of *Fijian Studies*.

The participants at the workshop agreed that the challenge for Fiji is to ensure that the new economy emanating from the globalised economy will not leave more and more people left out of the benefits of economic change. There is also the fear that a country, Fiji included, could loose its ownership of natural resources and industries. The challenge for Fiji will be to remain competitive. This will depend on it improving productivity levels, thus decreasing costs of production. In the globalised market, the most efficient producer survives.

It is hoped that these papers would lead to greater discussion of the impacts of globalization on Fiji. More specifically, it is hoped that the papers would provide some basis for greater discourse on the challenges globalization poses for policy making in the country, and to Fiji’s diplomacy in particular.

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