

Chapter 5  
Identity Politics and Institutionalised  
Instability  
The political economy of nationalism

*Papua New Guineans must unite to create their own history.*  
*Papua New Guineans must speak to establish their own history.*  
*Papua New Guineans must write to establish their own history.*  
*Papua New Guineans must dare to create to make their own history.*

(Bernard Narokobi, 1980, *The Melanesian Way*, Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, Boroko, p. 27).

## **Introduction**

Some thirty years after independence, the prevailing perception is that Papua New Guinea is in crisis. On the positive side, the democratic system has prevailed, but corruption and instability are endemic. Insecurity problems have led to declining human development and widespread disillusion with the state. Society continues to be based on clan and tribal loyalties with the PNG state having little impact on most people's lives. The distribution of development funds at the sole discretion of individual MPs has become institutionalised, reinforcing the weakness of the state in contrast with the strength of local society, which in turn means the state has little legitimacy and authority. The perception of the Papua New Guinea population is that leaders are focused solely on the accumulation of personal power and privilege rather than being concerned with the promotion and protection of the rights of the people they represent. As resilient local communities continue to provide many citizens the basic sense of economic and personal security that the state is unable to provide, there is little concept of the wider public good and no strong sense of national identity and purpose.

This paper will examine the impact of Papua New Guinean segmentary politics on the state's ability to establish, build and maintain a state-society consensus and commitment to a fully integrated developmental plan. The developmental state thesis points to a predominant sense of nationalism and national unity that provides states with significant economic and political legitimacy. Development of the national economy as a whole is embodied as a normative objective of the interventionist power of the state, providing comparatively equitable human development, which then reinforces national social solidarity, and in turn promotes greater political legitimacy for the national developmental project (Kitching, 2001:143).

In contrast, the Papua New Guinea political economy of identity is integral to its parliamentary conventions. Identity is, in many instances, the critical factor in determining parliamentary representation, allocating resources, awarding contracts and appointment within the state. Popular participation in politics has strengthened the connection between politics and material benefits. Rather than a transformation of consciousness to bring about the imagined community of the nation of Papua New Guinea, primordial political traditions have penetrated the state. Successive governments have been unable to maintain sound economic policies and articulate or

develop long-term national objectives. This has impacted adversely on state capacity to deliver developmental benefits to the population, diminishing the perceived legitimacy of the state, and poses a serious threat to the continuation of the independent nation of Papua New Guinea.

With a view to contributing to a larger research project into how states can develop state-society consensus on a national identity and purpose, through an examination of existing scholarly dialogue on the Papua New Guinea state, this paper will analyse the important aspects of the nationalism thesis, specifically; the emergence of an early sense of Papua New Guinea nationalism at the time of Independence; the Papua New Guinea electoral and parliamentary conventions; government and bureaucratic corruption; and the ideas and institutions that seek to establish a Papua New Guinean way.

### **Emerging Nationalism**

According to Anderson (1983:65), it is not primordial cultural identity, economic interest or shared ideology that creates or shapes an imagined community. It is in fact anti-colonial sentiment, conceived and spread by locally born colonists or indigenous elites through the mass media. The need to combat imperialism provides national consensus and legitimacy for a program of economic development to ensure national survival.

In Papua New Guinea, however, the extent of colonial penetration was fairly limited, with much of the rural population experiencing little contact with the state apparatus. Although some resentment among the educated elite developed against the inequality and dependency of colonialism, this did not manifest into a hardened anti-colonial movement so that when independence was benignly granted in 1975, a certain paradox presented itself: “the new state was undeniably a product of colonial history, but this history had not provided any ready symbols for constructing a national identity”. Undoubtedly, political independence did not resonate a genuine national unity (Otto, 1997:55-59).

In the post-war independence period, Australian colonial economic policy, following the 1964 World Bank Report, concentrated efforts towards economic development in areas that would bring the greatest economic return. This resulted in regional inequalities and expatriate domination of the economy continued. Indigenous entrepreneurship was never developed as development activities focused on opening the market for exploitation by foreign, mainly Australian, interests (Samana, 1988:65). According to May (2004:15), the existence in the late 1960s of an articulate nationalist group was itself a reflection of the increasing pace of political and economic transition. United Nations missions to Papua New Guinea pressured Australia to instigate a swift decolonisation process. The Foot Mission of 1962, for example, called for the indigenisation of the bureaucracy and recommended education and training institutions be initiated as a matter of priority. The University of Papua New Guinea and an institution that was to become the PNG University of Technology were established in 1966, followed in 1967 by the Papua New Guinea Development Bank (Samana, 1988:66). The rapid expansion of secondary and tertiary education during the 1960s began to enlarge the participation of educated Papua New Guineans in the bureaucracy. This “inward, upward journey” to the centre brought together

potential indigenous leaders, from a diversity of village backgrounds, developing an indigenous fraternity and promoting a sense of colonial nationalism (Anderson, 1983:111). The Australian Government's decision in 1964 to end equal salaries and to create a dual salary structure in the public service, under which indigenous wages were set at some 30 to 50 per cent of Australian wages, rallied workers against the government. Initially they organised a discussion forum called the Bully Beef Club and came to be supported by students in secondary and tertiary education, who would be considered potential public servants (Gupta, 1992:29).

As part of its transition to independence, Papua New Guinea held its first national elections in 1964 and then its second, four years later in 1968, although these parliaments were significantly dominated expatriate bureaucrats and business interests. However, 1968 pre-ballot electioneering saw a nascent sense of national purpose and Papua New Guinea's first major political party, the Papua and New Guinea Union (PANGU Pati), was formed from the members of the Bully Beef Club, calling for increased Papua New Guinean participation in government and the economy and for early independence (May, 2004:15). Papua New Guinea's third national elections in 1972 brought to office the territory's first truly Papua New Guinean government, a coalition headed by Pangu Pati's Michael Somare. The following year Papua New Guinea became self-governing and, despite some opposition from leaders in the highlands, on 16 September 1975 the independent nation state of Papua New Guinea was declared (May, 2004:15).

Of all the rhetoric surrounding self-government in the early 1970s, development was held in high esteem. The ultimate goal was that development in its many facets was to promote self-reliance (Okole, 2003:61). The Faber Report, prepared by the University of East Anglia for the IBRD, resonated the predominant nationalist economic discourse of Papua New Guinea in the early 1970s. The approach was further endorsed in late 1972 by the announcement of the Somare government's eight-point 'Improvement Program'. The government's Eight Aims included increased indigenous control of the economy, more equitable distribution of wealth, rural development, indiginisation of business activity, self reliance and greater state intervention in order to achieve these priorities. The Eight Aims were subsequently incorporated in the *Constitution of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea* enacted in 1975 which contains in its preamble the National Goals and Directive Principles (May, 2004:15).

The independence constitution, which provided for a Westminster-style parliamentary system with a unicameral parliament, was drafted by a Papua New Guinean Constitutional Planning Commission (CPC) which looked primarily to African models, but also appealed to the notion of a 'Melanesian Way' characterized by egalitarian values and consensual decision making (May, 2003:3). The CPC, in its final report (1974:2/11), noted that economic and social or human development were intertwined. It recognised that people were seeking opportunities to become more involved in all forms of economic or *bisnis* activities and that an essential element of social and economic independence was greater self reliance. "This was the optimistic time of independence and it seemed hopeful that a uniquely Papua New Guinea mix of old and new, traditional and modern, local, provincial, national and foreign skills, knowledge and resources could be worked out" (O'Collins, 1993:73). In summary, the Goals are: integral human development, equality and participation,

national sovereignty and self reliance, protection of natural resources and the environment, and reliance on Papua New Guinean ways. Judged against the Eight Aims and the National Goals, however, Papua New Guinea's economic achievements have been modest. The legacy of colonial development planning meant that most innovations were on the fringes, or grew out of ad hoc political decisions unrelated to these well articulated national development priorities (O'Collins, 1993:73).

As independence was granted fairly amicably, Australia never being faced with a mass movement for self-determination, the independent state of Papua New Guinea was largely a colonial product appropriated by an indigenous elite as their own project. Much power remained in the hands of the few who controlled land or services – mainly expatriates – or who had gained positions of influence in the government bureaucracy. Consequently, power gravitated very quickly towards a newly educated elite which felt no pressure from the people and had no inclination to really consult them. According to Momis (1987:78), one of the most influential members of the CPC and long-standing member of parliament, if the educated elite of Papua New Guinea has been in any way committed to equality of participation, this has come from abstract theories rather than practical contact with the grassroots people. Nationalism is the principle of homogenous cultural units as the foundations of political life, and of the obligatory cultural unity of rulers and ruled (Gellner, 1983:125). Both Anderson and Gellner emphasise the modern, constructed character of national identity, its civic rather than ethnic side. The nation-state is paramount as it is the formal institutional expression and facilitator of the drive to collective affirmation.

### **Political Conventions**

The Papua New Guinean nation-state, however, has been plagued by increasing political instability, caused, in part, by fragmentation of its electoral process. Whilst democratic principles prevail, its political institutions have become increasingly vulnerable to non-democratic pressures. According to May (2003:2), the Papua New Guinea system of government is best described as a 'disorderly democracy'. It is difficult to reconcile Papua New Guinea leadership assertions of effectively functioning democracy with political outcomes marked by limited representation, insecurity of office, and consequent developmental failure. People are as passionately committed as ever to the goal of 'development', they now seem to be fixed much more exclusively on winning a stake in government (*gabman*) as the way to achieve it (Rumsey, 1999:309).

As part of the Westminster style parliamentary system, it was envisaged that ideological or social movement based political parties would develop in Papua New Guinea, providing a basis for a developing sense of national identity. While prominent parties have continued as a significant force for three decades now, they have not developed a substantive mass, nation-wide base and have not been sharply differentiated ideologically. Party discipline has been weak, parliamentary membership fluid and strong regional bias the foremost basis of support. This institutionalised instability has led to development policy inertia, state incapacity and has undermined the perceived legitimacy of the state. There has been a direct contradiction between the institutions of government maintained by the state, the

entrenched element of society within the political system and the fundamental objectives of the Constitution; equality of opportunity to participate in development activities and self reliance. As May points out, there is, in part, a direct causal link between Papua New Guinea's poorly developed sense of nationhood and the political salience of parochialism, regionalism and separatism (May, 2004:15) – which have become mutually reinforcing tendencies.

As political parties have demonstrated limited capacity to mobilise voters in Papua New Guinea's diverse and fractured societal groupings, and in absence of any major social or class divisions, the impact of pre-contact ideational heritage has meant electors tend to vote very largely along clan or village lines. Scholars have often stressed the importance of traditional segmentary boundaries in electoral politics as a determinant of voting patterns and of the disputes that arise over electoral outcomes. Saffu (1996:40) referred to this concept as the 'traditional community vote thesis', that "politics at all levels ... are organised along traditional structural lines". This entails that people's voting behaviour will be determined by their identification in terms of such traditional segmentary categories. It can be seen as one aspect of a more general understanding of postcolonial politics in Papua New Guinea as a process of what Gordon and Meggitt (1985:181) called 'upward colonisation' "[whereby] (f)ar from being displaced or neutralised by the downward thrust of central authority, local political traditions have proved remarkably resilient and in many cases have successfully penetrated the state". To a large degree, elections allow clan and village groupings to compete for prestige and wealth in supporting their candidate. In these circumstances, the expectations of supporters that politicians will return material benefits to their communities are reinforced. Consequently, Papua New Guinea politicians actively seek to become distributors of 'development' – that is the opportunity to dispense public funds to their region for infrastructure, services and to provide income. There is little concept of the wider public good, with most supporters expecting that, if successful, their candidate will fund activities in their area and not favour any others (Woolner, 1995:6).

This segmentary political economy of identity has been further compounded by Papua New Guinea's simple plurality election system where the candidate with the most votes wins. The traditional community voting pattern in this first-past-the-post system has resulted in much stronger local polarisation. As explained by former Papua New Guinea Minister Sir Anthony Siaguru:

[People] consider themselves to be bound by social and family obligations to cast their first vote for their relative or person from their own clan, house line or language group. It might not be that that person is the best candidate in the judgement of the voter! But he or she is obliged because of social traditions to vote for him (Siaguru, quoted in Dorney, 1999:78-79).

This local polarisation has led to an increasing tendency for successful candidates to gain election with an exceptionally small proportion of the overall vote. In 1987, more than one third of winning candidates were elected with less than twenty per cent of the vote in their constituency. This figure has grown so that more than half won with this limited vote ten years later. In addition, 16 candidates were elected with less than ten per cent of the vote in 1997, leading the Electoral Commissioner to comment

that “the representativeness or otherwise of many MPs could be called into question by their own electors” (quoted in May, 2003:7). Throughout the nation the average winning vote was just twenty-two per cent. In round terms, therefore, four out of every five voters in Papua New Guinea backed losers (Dorney, 1999:8). This means that, under the traditional political economic system of identity, these segmentary groupings are essentially unrepresented and will generally not have access to, or participate in, state development projects. The requisite necessity to have one’s own representative in government has also led to an increase in the number of candidates standing in each electorate. In 1977, the first election after independence, 879 candidates contested the 109 seats, growing to 2875 in 2002, an average of 28 contenders per constituency (May, 2003:7). The traditional community voting patterns, coupled with the increasing number of candidates, has produced a situation of significant insecurity of office. In general, 50-55 per cent of sitting members fail to gain re-election. Consequently, in many parts of the country, candidates in national elections seek to safeguard their support base so that this interface between electoral politics and traditional forms of segmentary social organisation has led to instances of substantial electoral fraud, intimidation, bribery and violence.

The tenuous nature of a member's hold on his (or in very limited cases, her) seat contributes much to the way the Parliament operates. Appealing to *kastam* in contemporary constructions of political organisation, Papua New Guinea's former Prime Minister, Sir Julius Chan, claimed that the bewildering nature of politics in Papua New Guinea becomes logical if this lack of security is taken into account. “Our politics [is] still regionalistic and tribally based,” Chan said. “Each Member has a strong commitment to directly benefit his immediate electorate - much more so than in, say, Australia, where only a minority of seats are considered 'marginal’” (quoted in Dorney, 1999:8). The institution of political representation has also been heavily penetrated by customary leadership practices. In many ways, the state is personified as a ‘*bigman*’ who is bound by the morality of reciprocity to look after and redistribute resources to his followers. The *bigman* is identified with, and to an extent is, the clan or political grouping; the state, then, is viewed as a political entity to which people belong as members of a kind of super tribe. Membership of the state then becomes problematic in Western terms if, for instance people are followers of the state and not citizens of it (Clark, 1997:81). *Bigmanship* relates not only to the ability to distribute wealth through ceremonial feasts and exchanges. The distributional aspect of traditional *bigmanship* is one in which everyone, regardless of social status, enjoys the benefits (Samana, 1988:62). In the Papua New Guinea state, this link has become institutionalised in the Electoral Development Fund (EDF) allocated to each member of the national parliament, and operated by them for the direct provision of services and infrastructure in their electorate. By transferring the development activities of the state through the hands of individual MPs, the EDF both reflects and reinforces the weakness of the state in comparison with the strength of local society. The people, therefore, have low expectations of the state and grant it little legitimacy or authority (Woolner, 1995:7).

In addition, traditional leadership, generally speaking, is acquired through the demonstration of skill and manipulation, accumulation and distribution of wealth, prowess in warfare and benevolence. Decisions are made through the process of reaching consensus, where a leader, or *bigman* becomes the chief conciliator and arbitrator, one who demonstrates the art of bringing together opposing factions into a

consensus of opinion, generally for the good of the group and for the purposes of re-establishing social harmony (Samana, 1988:62). This personifies the Papua New Guinea parliamentary practice. Since the first Papua New Guinea government emerged from the elections in 1972, every government has been a coalition and both 'party hopping' and changes within coalitions have been fairly common. Of the ten changes of government which have occurred since 1972, half have been the result of votes of no confidence precipitated by coalition shifts (see table below). This has meant a rapid turnover of ministers and departmental secretaries, and the tendency to place short-term expediency and the demands of individual MPs above longer-term national objectives.

Moreover, each successive national election has seen an increasing tendency for a large number of candidates standing, and being elected, as independents in order to maximise the bargaining power of successful candidates in the post-election horse-trading that accompanies attempts to put together a winning coalition. In 1992 about 74 per cent of the 1655 candidates stood, at least nominally, as independents; in 1997 the figure was about 70 per cent of 2372 candidates (May, 2003:6). Not only does such parliamentary behaviour distract the parliament's attention from the more important tasks of debating and legislating policy, it also poses a serious constraint on the country's political leaders, who must continuously maintain the loyalty of their party members and the support of their coalition partners, or risk losing office (May, 2003:6). Taken in conjunction with the high turnover of MPs at election time, this has produced a system strongly inimical to rational long-term policy making and particularly prone to politicians seeking short-term advantage (May, 2004:15). In recognition of the inherent instability and lack of integrity in this most vital institution of state, Prime Minister Mekere Morauta set up a Constitutional Development Commission (CDC) which saw the *Organic Law on the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates* (OLIPPC) passed in 2001. This was intended to give some stability to political parties, and to discourage candidates from standing as independents in order to maximize their bargaining position if elected (May, 2003:11). While this had little impact on the electoral process in 2002, which was characterised by widespread violence, it has had an impact on stability of office with the elected Prime Minister, Michael Somare, remaining in office for the full five year term. The impact on the capacity of the state to mobilise a genuine consensus and commitment to an equitable national developmental program, however, remains to be seen.

In addition, the electoral system has been reformed, introducing Limited Preferential Voting (LPV), which requires voters to number their three most preferred candidates, to replace the volatile plurality system. Although such a system has been criticised as too complex for both the electoral staff and the scrutineers and candidates to effectively administer (Standish (1996:320), it has been used for the first time in the recently held election in July 2007. Assessment of this system previously in place prior to independence by Reilly (1996:61-62), found that it increases the chance of election of candidates with significantly broader support bases thus increasing legitimacy of the elected legislature. Whilst analysis of election results are awaiting publication, reports have indicated that election-related violence has been far less significant than in the previous election in 2002 (Post Courier, 13 July 2007). Again, assessment of the effects of LPV on legitimacy and stability of office remain pending, Sir Michael Somare retained the office of Prime Minister, providing a possible ten year mandate to overturn the development policy inertia that has plagued previous

governments. However, although he is currently enjoying the eighteen month grace period where no-confidence motions are not allowed, some concern over the cohesion of the coalition government. While the National Alliance controls the majority of the twenty-eight ministerial portfolios, the government is made up of a coalition of thirteen political parties, the complexities of which have presented a perennial obstacle to effective policy making in Papua New Guinea.

## **Corruption**

Among the other measures, mentioned above, to restore integrity to the nation's political institutions, in 2001, the Morauta government established a National Anti-Corruption Agency to coordinate the activities of the various government departments and agencies involved in addressing the problem of corruption (May, 2003:13). Morauta has been a relentless critic of corruption in Papua New Guinea, observing that it has become both systematic and systemic (Dorney, 1999:3). He has said, "... the most corrosive and intractable problem we face now is corruption ... (which has caused) the institutionalisation of short-term *ad hoc* decision-making and the catastrophic decline in the power, status, morale and productivity of the bureaucracy" (Morauta, 1996, quoted in May, 2004:15).

Most certainly, corruption has become entrenched in Papua New Guinea, notwithstanding the restraining influences of the Leadership Code and the Ombudsman Commission. Such corruption takes two forms: that in which individuals use their position within the state for personal gain; and that in which individuals use their position to transfer resources from the civic public to the primordial public, that is, from the state to their traditional segmentary groupings. Whilst the first of these is considered an outright act of corruption from any perspective, the second form, on the other hand – the transfer of resources from the civic to the primordial public realm – judged by a population with a different cultural tradition, is, with some exceptions, regarded as corruption only by those who are not beneficiaries. Like Armah's nationalist hero, so too do even the most principled of Papua New Guinea's leaders find themselves faced with an ethical dilemma. The dichotomy of interests between official duty to carry out functions fairly and honestly, demonstrating loyalty to the state, and the personal obligations and duty owed to his family, village, clan etc. (Kitching, 1987:161). As discussed previously, it is expected of politicians that they will reward their supporters, to fulfil their traditional community obligations of reciprocity and distribution of wealth. Where a sense of nationhood and of loyalty to the state is poorly developed, and expectations of political longevity are low, it is accepted that politicians will recoup relatively large election outlays and provide as much 'development' to their primordial affiliates as possible within their limited tenure.

Here, again, we see the state significantly penetrated by customary political practices. The introduced Westminster system of responsible government is significantly at odds with the traditional Papua New Guinea system of '*wantokism*'. *Wantok*, a *Tok Pisin* term, literally means 'one talk' and refers to a system of mutual obligation to people from the same area, ethnic or language group. This naturally runs counter to the ideals considered inherent in the Western sense of sound governance, such as impartiality, the best interests of the state and meritocratic appointments (Turner,

1990:142). In the absence of legitimacy of the state and nationalist sentiment, the *wantok* system has prevailed in Papua New Guinea as the chief means of determining the allocation of state resources. This is seen as either extended kinship or cronyism at its worst, depending on which group or individual benefits (Clark, 1997:74). As this paradigm has become established amongst politicians, and institutionalised through the Electoral Development Fund, these ideas and institutions have become embedded in other instruments of state, so that *wantok* systems are now seen to regulate employment opportunities and perpetuate favouritism and corruption in the bureaucracy and provincial government. Added to government inefficiency, incapacity and corruption, *wantokism* in particular is considered to be repressing development. Such factors largely explain the increasing competition for political office, noted above, and the increasing politicisation of decision-making (May, 2004:15). Whether the *wantok* system is considered corruption or not, its widespread influence on the state continually reinforces itself by increasing the importance of gaining political access to funds (Woolner, 1995:7).

For the majority of Papua New Guineans, capitalism has failed to deliver its promises. Most villagers have little access to development projects, and do not participate significantly in the cash economy. Gaining access to the resources of the state through winning a stake in government has come to be seen as the only way for development to come their way. In many instances *winmoni*, a *Tok Pisin* term that literally translates into ‘win money’ or windfall, and carries with it connotations of money acquired by luck or that simply ‘blows in’, is seen as the only way to gain meaningful access to the cash sector. The increasing desire for and dependency on *winmoni*, whether it is compensation, foreign aid, mining dividends or Electoral Development Funding, indicates a certain level of disillusionment with the capitalist system (Bainton, 2006:6). This sense of dependency began with the colonial administration and, with little work opportunity and land being their only valuable resource, expectations that the state should compensate for land used to develop a locality or to generate business opportunities for individuals have become entrenched. As all transactions must pass through local representatives in parliament and conduits within the public service, that corruption has become endemic and debilitating to good governance is hardly surprising (Okole, 2003:58).

The failure of the state to legitimise itself and a sense of Papua New Guinea nationalism among its disparate social groupings is not merely a matter of the greater strength of local communities as opposed to the state. As discussed previously, the state, in many respects, legitimises itself and its programs by demonstrating its ability to deliver the widespread benefits of development. This, in turn, creates a greater sense of nationalism; they are mutually reinforcing demonstrations. While Gellner (1983:101) seems to oscillate between nationalism as a prerequisite for development or nationalism as a consequence of it, he makes the valid point that societies that have managed successful economic development were those whose developmental progress had the demonstration effect which directed their people towards a new paradigm that provided the good life, the good society that they had come to aspire to. For Anderson (1983:46), what in a positive sense made new communities imaginable was the interaction between capitalism, technological improvements in communications and the concomitant homogenisation of cultural diversity. The Papua New Guinea state’s inability to demonstrate widespread developmental success has made it impossible for it to engender any sense of a national identity and purpose

and *mutatis mutandis*, in an endless cycle of reciprocal amplification. As Gellner asserts, “the state’s concern with making its ethnic group into a balanced nation, and with developing its economy, become aspects of one and the same task” (1983:112).

### **A Papua New Guinean Way forward?**

Nation building should, therefore, be a political aim of highest priority. An important question, then, is what conditions need to be in existence for the re-emergence and propagation of a Papua New Guinean nationalism? What actions must the state take or what policies must the state implement in order to attain the close relationship between state and culture which Gellner (1983:101) asserts is the essence of nationalism? The focus here is on how states can develop state-society consensus on a national identity and purpose. It would be arrogant and almost certainly futile for outsiders to try to advocate solutions to such a perceived problem from afar. The attempts to define nationalism then falls on the selected and educated Papua New Guineans who respond more to a social political influence outside the village culture from which they began their journeys outward to secure a place in the nation (Winduo, 2003:xiii). Consideration of the home-grown philosophy of development advocated by the Constitutional Planning Committee in the Five Directive Principles and National Goals appears to provide some potential on which the state could build to help remove some of the obstacles of segmentary politics should a national development plan become a high priority.

In order for a state to build and maintain a state-society consensus and commitment to a fully integrated developmental plan, it is essential that the Papua New Guinea leadership form and develop an effective state system that is populated by “loyal and competent members of the total society whose occupancy of posts within it will not be hampered by factional loyalties to sub-groups” (Gellner, 1983:64). This involves the construction of a new kind of shared identity which transcends existing linguistic and ethnic divisions (Narokobi, 1980:78). For Anderson (1991), nationalism involves a radical transformation of consciousness in order for the imagined community of Papua New Guinea to come into existence and which, eventually, makes it seem, erroneously, a self-evident ideal valid for all times, thus turning it into an effective norm (Gellner, 1983:111). In order for this new, shared identity to establish legitimacy, it necessarily must be interlinked with the cultural diversity of primordial groupings it is intended to transcend. The ideology of Narokobi’s ‘Melanesian Way’, institutionalised in the National Goals and Directive Principles which advocate development using ‘Papua New Guinean Ways’, appears to provide a model for the development of affirmative patriotism on one side and a collective imagining on the other (Otto & Thomas, 1997:2). For Samana (1998), it is a verbal image of the good society and the chief means of constructing such a society.

Advocates of the Melanesian Way consider that it prepares the way for a political concept of citizenship. Thus the Melanesian identity can be seen as a step towards the establishment of the concept of the citizen as a free individual in an independent nation-state (Otto, 1997:58). It is also considered as a way to counter internal

divisiveness such as the wish of Papuans to secede from the state of Papua New Guinea. In addition, it contains strong criticism of the continuing substantive involvement of expatriates in the affairs of the country and a plea for indigenising the state and the economy. Thus it supports political efforts to strengthen national unity and self reliance (Otto, 1997:58).

Nevertheless, Narokobi acknowledges that there is still a long way to go from clan or community consciousness, and, to a large extent, a sense of national pride and purpose still has to be developed, whereas the Melanesian Way has always been there (Otto & Thomas, 1997:8). The common denominator is not located in specific customs: it has to be sought in the holistic attitude to life itself. For Narokobi (1980:16), “We are a united people because of our common vision”. Cultural-linguistic diversity is only the surface phenomenon of a deeper underlying unity. The inclusiveness of this concept, particularly in absence of other fundamental primordial linkages, appears to make it suitable for ideological appropriation by the state in establishing and building an effective sense of a Papua New Guinea national identity.

A critical observation, however, in line with Gellner’s (1983:89) thesis, is that the wide and effective diffusion of nationalist sentiment presupposes a well-maintained and effective centralised system. As sub-groupings are eroded, the institutions of the nation-state become tremendously important in establishing and maintaining a shared, literary-dependent culture. For Anderson (1983:104), the nation-building policies of states must function effectively in instilling a nationalist ideology through the mass media, the education system, administrative regulations and so forth. Such a state apparatus certainly does not exist in Papua New Guinea and is an essential issue that will be discussed in greater detail in a further paper. A preliminary observation, however, particularly pertaining to the establishment of a sense of national identity, is that the education system is a very crucial part of the maintenance of the cultural-linguistic medium (Gellner, 1983:63). With 43% of the adult population remaining illiterate and just 41% of children enrolled in school (UNHDR, 2005:221, 228), the ability of the Papua New Guinea education system to contribute to mass socialisation into the prevailing values of any new nationalist discourse remain remote. This important aspect of the developmental state, in unifying society and providing a foundation of underlying societal support, is crucial if any national development program is to succeed in Papua New Guinea.

In addition, the failure to develop a standardised language of state (Anderson, 1983:48), with English being the main language of business and government, *Tok Pisin* and *Hiri Motu*, taught in many schools, being the languages of inter-tribal communication as well as an inordinate number of local languages remaining in every day usage, also contributes significantly to social segmentation and non-inclusiveness. For Narokobi (1983:75), *Hiri Motu* is attractive in that it is largely a Melanesian language’, whereas *Pisin* tends to be more English than Melanesian. Such a move is supported by Anderson’s work (1983:77), which indicates that it became easier to engender popular support for national goals with the print elevation of languages “the people had humbly spoken all along.” He also cites Nairn, who asserted that “The new middle-class intelligentsia of nationalism had to invite the masses into history; and the invitation-card had to be written in a language they understood” (quoted in Anderson, 1983:77). These ideas are brought out by Lee (1968:50), whose work on

post-colonial societies found this “a fitting cultural medium of self discovery on a large scale which is an essential part of the formation of national society”.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has shown that the penetration of the state by traditional segmentary political practices has proven inherently unstable for the continuing viability of the nation of Papua New Guinea. The corresponding institutions and practices have developed a dynamic that inexorably erodes the capacity of the state to articulate or develop long-term national objectives and maintain democratic accountability. The consequential motivation and legitimation problems have resulted in a very limited concept of the wider public good and no strong sense of national identity and purpose. The developmental state thesis holds this as a key component of successful national development. The perception of an underlying fusion of interests between government and society in a nationalist framework helps to sustain a relatively well developed policy network between the legislature and the people they represent. If a regime is to develop what Cheng (1994:159) calls ‘a virtuous cycle of support’ – use of governmental machinery to reward supporters, and the generation of further support – its policies should be in the long-term benefit of the national economy as a whole. For the state to gain long-term predominance and equilibrium, it must make continual efforts towards reinforcing itself. Essentially, the way in which the Papua New Guinea nation derives its philosophical direction from the past, charts a practical strategy of development and strives to meet future goals, depends primarily on the commitment of its political leadership to afford the nation-building process the highest national priority.

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