

# **Democratic consolidation in Tonga**

*An examination of political party and civil society  
development.*

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## **DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY**

I, HELU Alice Roxane L.N, hereby declare that the contents of this thesis contain my original work.

Any contribution by others have been cited or acknowledged appropriately.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper looks closely at democratic consolidation in Tonga in the first stages of democratic transition through three factors of political party's, democratic transition and civil society maturity. It explains how the establishment of political party can help achieve democratic consolidation and the democratic transition towards a more democratic country and the changes occurring or will occur with the progress of democratic consolidation.

Democratic consolidation takes time and does not happen overnight or within a year. Democracy is fairly new in Tonga and the absence of political parties; the constitution arrangement and civil maturity are important factors that need to be addressed as a framework on determining the status of democracy in Tonga. Much research can be found about political parties, democratic transition and political culture transformation in different countries. There has not been concrete research written about these factors in Tonga so this is a first attempt.

In order for democratic consolidation in Tonga to proceed forward, there must be elements of democracy being used in the government and society to help democracy develop a more stable government.

## Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

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*"I like to think of democratic theory as if it were like a very large three-dimensional web. Much too large to take in at a single glance."*

*-Robert A. Dahl (1971)*

### **Background of the study**

Democracy has been heard throughout the years. Many have implemented or attempted to implement democracy or some form of democracy in one way or another in various countries. Democracy is a form of government in which the people rule. Democratic consolidation is not an easy achievement, it takes time and effort. Many countries have taken decades before reaching democratic consolidation while others had shorter time spans. Either way, democratic consolidation must begin with a nation believing that democracy "is the only game in town" (Dahl R. , 1989). Of course, many factors must be considered to successful democratic consolidation such as a strong civil society, popular legitimation, the diffusion of democratic values, the neutralization of anti-system actors, civilian supremacy over the military, the elimination of authoritarian enclaves, party building, the organization of functional interests, the stabilization of electoral rules, the decentralization of state power, the introduction of mechanisms of direct democracy, judicial reform, the alleviation of poverty, and economic stabilization (Linz & Stepan, 1996).

Democratic consolidation can be achieved in various ways, however, in the case of democratic consolidation in Tonga three points must be addressed which is the absence of political parties, constitution arrangement and civil society maturity. The early stages of democratic transition in Tonga is underway so the establishment of political parties, various contributions of civil society and the constitution

arrangement towards democratic transition will help in the accomplishment of democratic consolidation in Tonga. Tonga is an interesting case because after being a monarch for over 100 years, the first stages of democratic transition is crucial in the direction democracy is heading towards in Tonga or the future of democracy in Tonga. The arguments I shall make in this thesis has three aspects: (1) democracy is imperfect but possible in Tonga and it can thrive if the key democratic components like good governance, transparency and fair distribution are practiced.

(2) Political parties must be established in Tonga in order to provide politicians with opportunities to pursue goals- whether those goals are advancing their particular policy priorities, enjoying the rewards of the office, or increasing their influence within the party. (3) Civil society in Tonga should be encouraged in order for the citizens to be active participants in the democratic transition. The encouragement of a civil society will further promote democracy and its concepts in Tonga.

Robert Dahl (1989) defines the most widely accepted criteria for identifying a country as democratic is civil and political rights plus fair, competitive, and inclusive elections. There is no perfect democracy and no perfect way or set way for democratic consolidation but participants in democratic transition must keep in mind that it takes time and effort from everyone.

Many countries differ from each other in culture and tradition, political beliefs, religious backgrounds, economic development, scientific advancement etc. but when it comes to democratic transition from any type of regime, countries want to change for the better with good governance, transparency, political freedom and less or no turmoil of any kind. Countries are either identified as authoritarianism, electoral democracy, liberal democracy or advanced democracy. Democratic consolidation tends to refer to the goal of completing a pending (i.e. incomplete) transition to

democracy (Sorensen, Democracy and Democratization, 1993). In graphical terms, there should be less focus on the dangers of authoritarian regression, but more focus on the promises of democratic progress. Democratic consolidation articulates the challenging institutionalization of semidemocratic rule with notions such as democratic "freezing" or "sclerosis", when expectations of democratic progress do not occur.(Dahl R. , 1989).

Like other countries, Tonga is a country in the transition from authoritarian to democracy that began with the general elections in November 2010. Tonga is at the first phase of democratic transition with only 4 years of democratic experience. King George Tupou V gave full consent to the change of government due to various incidents but mainly to the sit down strike by civil servants in 2005 and the horrific riot of 2006 that destroyed the business district of the capital of Nuku'alofa. Originally, the Legislative Assembly consists of 26 members. Before the elections in 2010, only 9 seats were reserved for people's representatives but after the consent of the king to the change of government that number increased to 17 seats, leaving 9 seats reserved for nobles who are elected by the king. Tonga wants to leave behind many things authoritarian and progress with the promises of democratic consolidation. Democratic movements have taken the role of educating the Tongan people about democracy since its establishment in the 1970s.

### **Research problem**

The earlier stages of democratic transition almost always bring instability. The Legislative Assembly is in the process of making assignments delegated to the appropriate parliamentarian. There are no legal political parties in Tonga with little focus on political party establishment. There are democratic movements that hope to establish political parties but that has not been accomplished. However, there are



several reasons for the establishment of political parties, which provides opportunities to politicians to pursue goals- whether those goals are advancing their particular policy priorities, enjoying the rewards of the office, or increasing their influence within the party. If and when political parties are established, campaigning will play a crucial role in exposing political parties and their goals. The vote of confidence that took place this year shows how divided the government was; thus, the establishment of political parties can provide a certain structure for parliamentarians within the government. Democratic transition is slowly progressing. With no established political parties, the civil society organizations must contribute to the evolving government change. The encouragement of participants in a civil society can support how a strong civil society can ensure democracy and how democracy can ensure a strong civil society. The contribution of a strong civil society can help advance democracy. Civil society must be present for economic success. Civil society must welcome the idea of democracy and thus entertain the thought of democratization. At present, the king is electing nobles. This signifies a state that is not democratic.

### **Research Questions/ Objectives**

In order to address the possibility of democratic consolidation, a research question has been formulated. The main research question posed is articulated as:

*What is the current state of democratic transition in Tonga?*

In order to arrive at a conclusion for this main research question a number of supporting sub-questions have been posed:

- Why should political parties be established?
- How can political parties help in democratic consolidation?
- Who are the actors to help solidify democracy?

- How can civil society transform democracy?
- Why is stability in political culture feasible for democratic consolidation?
- What factors of political culture can affect democratic consolidation?

The answers will show the important factors necessary at this time during the first stages of democratic transition in Tonga in order for democratic consolidation to take place. Other factors might also be crucial but my research will only cover these factors.

### **Significance of the Research**

Tonga is the only country in the Pacific to remain a monarchy for over 100 years and finally ended its monarchical reign with the consent of the Late King George Tupou V to democratize the nation. Even with the consent of the king, there still remains those who are loyal to the royal family and its values and defy the laws of democratization. The country is split in whom their loyalties lay.

As the first stages of democratic transition takes place, the establishment of political parties can help achieve a clear line of what policies people want implemented through politicians. Institutions must be accountable of its influence towards democratic consolidation, in providing a civil society that can embrace democracy and its ideas. Lastly, political culture is definitely changing. Tonga is very unique in how it implements the changes in political change to democratic consolidation.

Throughout the years, there has been research about democracy in Tonga in relation to media like the research paper presented by Josephine Latu, *Political Reform and the Media*. Latu discusses about the impact of the media in encouraging political reform at a time when democracy was a very foreign concept in Tonga (Latu, 2010). At present, no research has been done in regards to

the establishment of political parties in Tonga, the status of civil society in Tonga and its contributions to the democratic transition and the impact of democracy in Tonga. This is a first attempt to address these factors in Tonga. This research provides originality to the area of political science in Tonga, the South Pacific and the world.

### **Scope and limitation of the Research**

Tonga is a very small island nation and written information is limited, so the use of the other countries, as examples was needed. Any form of information about the theoretical analysis of Tongan politics was limited which led to conducting a field study as an opportunity to gather information. My research is the first empirical case analysis about Tonga, thus the need to borrow analytical frameworks from Western theories.

A field study was conducted with interviews in Tonga, however, a number of parliamentarians were unavailable, thus limiting the collected information and limiting the opinion and point of view needed. I wanted to interview all 26 parliamentarians but only interviewed three. Most parliamentarians were on vacation as it was the seasonal break for the Legislative Assembly during the time that I conducted interviews in Tonga. I was able to secure three interviews with the Speaker of the House, Lord Lasike, Tongatapu peoples representative, Sitiveni Halapua and pro-democracy representative, ‘Akilisi Pohiva.

### **Structure of the Research**

I reviewed four different groups of literatures, which are democracy, civil society, democratization, and political parties. The inter-related yet diverse theoretical views expressed in these parts of literature do not neatly conform to discussion

within a single section. Therefore, I will deviate from the norm of having a single section on literature review in my thesis. This thesis is organized into six (6) chapters. Throughout chapters 2 to 5 contains discussions about theories that provides a theoretical framework that will help me examine my observation about Tonga and the factors of democratic transition.

Chapter 2 is a historical background of Tonga. This chapter will provide a background of the constitution arrangement and democratic movements in Tonga. It gives an account of the historical riot in 2006 that most parliamentarians consider as the event that pushed Tonga towards becoming a democratic regime.

Chapter 3 is about democratic transition. It will provide the definition about democracy, the process of democratic consolidation and determining democracy.

Chapter 4 will discuss about political parties, its origins, functions and two-party systems versus multiparty systems.

Chapter 5 will shed light on civil society, the definition, how strong civil society ensures democracy or how democracy ensures a strong civil society.

Chapter 6 contains the conclusion and recommendations about my thesis.

This thesis focuses on democratic consolidation and how the establishments of political parties, the constitution arrangement and transformation of political culture can bring about democratic consolidation at this time and in the nearer future in Tonga. The purpose of democratic consolidation is to provide more integration between the people and the government.

## **Methodology**

The approach taken in this study is solely qualitative in which only one case study is applied to describing democratic consolidation with the three factors of political party, civil society and democratic transition. Studies from other countries were

reviewed for the purpose of borrowing their analytical framework or “theories”. The researcher was able to collect primary data through field study in March 2012 and open-ended interviews were conducted in Tonga with former and current parliamentarians. The research method used is elite interview with no random sampling. Elite interview was ideal due to the low cost and the researchers familiarity with Tonga. Tonga is a small country so it was easy to identify the key actors. The researcher chose open-ended interviews because it left room for further discussion and more connection between the researcher and the interviewee. This research is categorized as explanatory-descriptive which translates to, firstly, the researcher will become familiar with specific research problems. Secondly, the researcher intends to discuss the achievement of democratic consolidation through political party, democratic transition and civil society. The researcher had a few months to grasp the chosen topic; the researcher is familiar with Tonga and has access to relevant information pertaining to this thesis.

## **Chapter 2: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF TONGA**

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*“...democracy has an inbuilt dynamic: It develops and grows to incorporate new aspects and dimensions when the societal context- or the analyst’s perception of it-changes.”*

*-Georg Sorensen (1998)*

### **Constitution arrangement**

Tonga has been a monarchy for over 150 years and has recently held its second election. The constitutional government in Tonga began in 1875 with the Monarch as the head of government and also the head of state. However, with the current reforms the Monarch is still the traditional leader or in Tongan, *hau*. With the 1875 constitutional position, the Monarch in the Privy Council of Tonga held the supreme executive body. In the Privy Council, the Monarch was able to receive advice and his opinions predominated. The members in the Privy Council consisted of the prime minister and appointed Cabinet ministers as appointed by the Monarch in order to take responsibility in any of the ministries. The Monarch chose the ministers and those who will hold positions in the Legislative Assembly. The Monarch chose the prime minister who usually was a close relative to the Monarch, and those who were in the Legislative assembly but not related to the Monarch were bestowed to have noble status. Before the government change in 2010, the two Privy Councilors, who were also members of the Assembly, were two administrative heads status of governor from the islands of Ha’apai and Vava’u. The Monarch appointed the Privy Councilors with approval from the Cabinet. With the Constitutional government, laws were established and instigated by the Cabinet and then were introduced into the Legislative Assembly which consisted of the Privy Councilors who from 1990 were

12 to 14 members and were elected every three years by the people's representatives and the nobles representatives. In time, the numbers of the nobles in the House rose to 33 from the original 20 members and then decreased in 1914 with nobles and people's representatives being equally represented by seven. In 1962, that changed again due to the more noble titles being bestowed by the Monarch. Therefore, the number rose from seven to nine for both the noble's representatives and the people's representatives.

The 30 representatives who held noble titles elected the nine noble's representatives. The people through a wider electorate elected the nine people's representatives. The Assembly chose which bills to pass but it was not law until it was approved and signed by the Monarch. In a way, the Cabinet and the Prime minister were obligated to the Monarch for their status and office. On the other hand, the people's representative had no hope in officiating in government (Powles, 2014).

The first approach for reform occurred in 1975 when then deputy Prime minister and Minister of Education, Latu Kavaliku, submitted to the Privy Council a proposal requesting His Majesty to set up a review commission to review the constitution as to allow the people to have a say in running the government. That was the first proposal ever raised in parliament. The proposal was put down to Cabinet by His Majesty to be discussed but after discussing it for ten times, the Cabinet eventually dropped it. At this time, most of the Ministers considered the proposal irrelevant and trivial. The proposal was kept confidential to those outside of Cabinet, however by accident the proposal went into the hands of a small group of people in the University of the South Pacific in Fiji. The group consisted of Akilisi Pohiva and other Tongan students. The group decided to implement the proposal and execute its ideas. In order to do that, the group decided to set up a radio program that expressed ideas for political reform.

Since Akilisi Pohiva was the first to graduate from the university and return to Tonga, he was in charge of the radio program. He had a full time teaching position at the Teacher's Training College and would run the radio program after work. The purpose of the program was mainly to share or to provide alternative information to members of the public because the media censored their information in regards to the daily dealings within the government and the Monarch. Since the radio program exposed government information from the various discussion panels, it provided the push for the people to think about political reform and be more aware of its benefits. This is one of the numerous events that occurred in order for change to happen (Pohiva A. , 2012).

In 2004, change began towards the later reigning years of King Tupou IV when it was made official that four of the elected people's representatives would be chosen by the Monarch to be a part of the Cabinet and hold positions as ministers and they would no longer hold seats as members of the Legislative Assembly. The Legislative Assembly is the body government that consists of the nobles representatives, cabinet and the peoples representatives. The first commoner prime minister, Dr. Feleti Sevele was officiated into Cabinet through this procedure in March 2006. In September 2006, King Tupou V, the son of King Tupou IV succeeded the throne and he wished to devolve all his executive powers and withdraw slowly from active decision-making. King Tupou V did intervene when necessary in aspects of the reform and lived to witness the new laws set into place, but suddenly passed away in March 2012.

Currently, King Tupou V's younger brother, King Tupou VI, plays no role in Cabinet decision-making. During King Tupou V's reign, he was able to witness the recommendations from the Constitutional and Electoral Commission (CEC) (which is discussed later on in this chapter) that were considered by Cabinet and passed by the



Assembly in legislative form. The CEC recommended that the King and the Privy Council should not participate and play any role in the Executive Government of Tonga. The Executive Government will work with the Cabinet who is under the Legislative Assembly (Powles, 2014, p. 3)

The Sevele Cabinet and the Assembly took into consideration the recommendations and with the approval of King Tupou V, made changes to the Constitution to turn Tonga into a Constitutional Monarchy replacing the Constitutional Government ‘under His Majesty King George Tupou V and his successors’ (Commission, Constitutional and Electoral, 2008). The changes included that the Cabinet replaces the King and Privy Council. The Constitution of Tonga, clause 3, states that the Government is divided into 3 bodies – 1. The Cabinet; 2. The Legislative Assembly; 3. The Judiciary. The constitutional amendments included in clause 51:

The executive authority of the Kingdom shall vest in Cabinet, which shall be collectively responsible to the Legislative Assembly for the executive functions of Government.

These amendments, clause 50, eliminated the Privy Council from being part of Cabinet. The Privy Council resided in the Legislative Assembly as an advisory body. The constitution amendments in 2010 issued that a regular election will be held every four years. The constitutional amendments changed the size of the Cabinet which allows nine nobles to be elected by the 30 nobles who hold titles in Tonga, nine life peers (honorary nobles) and four law lords. Also, from the regular elections that takes place every four years 17 representatives can be elected into the Cabinet (Powles, 2014, p. 5).

In a required secret ballot on December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2010, the new Assembly chose Lord Tu’ivakano as the new Prime Minister, who won 14 votes out of the 26 members. ‘Akilisi Pohiva from the pro-democracy movement, gathered 12 votes. Lord

Tu'ivakano appointed a Cabinet with 11 ministers including 2 nobles and one member from the pro-democracy people's representative and one member from the independent. Lord Tu'ivakano was permitted to choose up to 4 ministers from outside the Legislative Assembly. He chose two. One was Dr. Ana Taufe'ulungaki as Minister of Education and another an experienced politician and lawyer.

The second election occurred in 2014 with 9 nobles appointed by the Monarch and 17 representatives from the election. Pro-Democracy veteran, 'Akilisi Pohiva was appointed the new Prime Minister with 15 votes out of the 26 members. Today, Tonga is governed by the elected Prime Minister and ministers, alongside with the Monarch in the application of his listed powers. The constitution reserves the rights of the Monarch in regards to the succession to the throne, relationship with the Legislative Assembly, right to a hearing suspended, international affairs, hereditary estates, honours and distinctions, naturalization and entrenched protections. Executive power does not solely rest on the Monarch that is shared, which is the main insertion of the reforms.

There are many things to focus in the government like transparency, good governance and liability but as Tonga is pushing towards a more democratic government, there has been a debate that all members of the Cabinet should be elected including the nobles instead of being appointed by the Monarch. Should the nobles be elected, if not by the people then within the nobility circle? We must consider Tonga's past as to why Tongans have accepted these circumstances within Cabinet and nobles being elected by the Monarch.

Throughout the centuries, Tongans were accustomed to serving the Monarch and nobility. The Monarch and nobility were the centralized system of government and people recognized the Monarch and nobility as having authority over others and

superior and that the Monarch and nobility were derived authority from heaven. They also were in charge of the welfare of their people and would engage in warfare and also distribute land and food to those under their authority. In summary, anthropologist Kerry James witnesses:

The strength of the social system lies less strictly in the imposition of chiefly values than in their dissemination throughout society so that each segment of kin and household organization essentially replicated the internal organization of aristocratic structures of kindred. What appear to have been solely '*eiki* (*superior*) customs of kinship rank are now followed by an emancipated population and have come to represent Tongan culture and tradition. (James, 1997, p. 50)

The above means the organization of the Monarch and the nobility have been implemented into the Tongan family structure. Tongans are family oriented and family is very important so the Monarch and nobility have set an example for Tongan society to follow.

However, it is the 21<sup>st</sup> century and many are demanding a more 'democratic' country and in order for democracy to thrive, all members in Cabinet should be elected especially the nobles. Traditional authorities lost its appeal as more Tongans were leaving the country to further education abroad or seek employment. Tongans would return from abroad with "Western" ideology and introduce these ideologies among family and friends.

### **Democratic movements**

There are various issues that need to be dealt with in the government like good governance, transparency and Cabinet stability but with the completion of the second annual elections, Tonga should push towards establishing political parties as another goal towards becoming a more democratic country. Political parties are needed as the mediator between the government and the people. A political party provides a

platform for open discussions among membership and society about the welfare of democracy.

Democratic consolidation takes time and the process can be vigorous and straining.

Juan Linz (1996, p. 15) states that consolidated democracy:

is one in which none of the major political actors, parties, or organized interests, forces, or institutions consider that there is any alternative to democratic processes to gain power, and that no political institution or group has a claim that there are no minorities ready to challenge and question the legitimacy of the democratic process by nondemocratic means. It means, however, that the major actors do not turn to them and they remain politically isolated. To put it simply, democracy must be seen as the “only game in town.”

As Tongans begin to acknowledge that democracy is the “only game in town” establishment of political parties may provide stability in the government. Political parties can be the link between citizen interests and government actions.

There are no official and registered political parties in Tonga at this time but the Cabinet is divided between those who are supporters of the pro-democracy movement and those that support the Monarch and the nobility. The Pro-Democracy Movement was founded in 1992, chaired by Catholic priest Father Seluini Akau’ola. Members included Ilaisa Futa Helu, Akilisi Pohiva, Uili Fukofuka, Bishop Petelesio and Teisina Fuko. The Pro-Democracy Movement was created to provide awareness about democracy and educate the people about democracy. The Pro-Democracy Movement held open discussions, conventions, radio programs and meetings in various villages as a way to spread its influence and attract supporters. The Monarch and nobility and their supporters were not interested in those issues about democracy so Pohiva invited people from the government and the private sector for the panel discussion that were held every two weeks. Unfortunately, the government sent a warning to Pohiva not to touch critical issues about the government and its dealings or criticize the

government. Pohiva shared critical discussions in the program so the government did not want him to raise those discussions on the radio. Overall, the government wanted Pohiva to remain silent. In the first Cabinet meeting on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1984, the Cabinet decided to shut down the program and after a month, Pohiva received a dismissal letter from his job at the government owned Teacher's Training College. From these upsetting events, Pohiva and the Pro-Democracy Movement pushed through with their democratic ideas.

The Pro-Democracy Movement held its first convention in 1992 and the members of the Pro-Democracy movement mostly invited scholars, community leaders, professionals, and civil servants, mostly Tongans who were supporters of the democratic constitutional reform. Those who were invited discussed their views and opinions about a democratic country. Those who were invited were historian Sione Latukefu, academic and author Epeli Hau'ofa, philosopher Ilaisa Futa Helu, law specialist Guy Powles, Bishop Patelesio Finau and many others who participated in a week-long public affair that was attended by over 1,000 people (Pohiva A. , 2012).

Throughout the years, the Monarch continued to conduct government business but the civil servant strike in 2005 and the riot in the capital city of Nuku'alofa in 2006 initiated the change towards the end of the Monarch and their power in government.

The interesting thing about the movement is the leader, Akilisi Pohiva, a kind of a leader by default. He led but didn't choose himself to lead. The selection of him was a natural process by a group of people. Over time different people worked with the movement and its members. New people came in, other people fell out. The movement started with a number of key people. One of them is Professor Futa Helu. Professor Futa Helu is a world known academic philosopher within and outside Tonga and has a very deep understanding of not only the Tongan society and the

political system but also the theory of democracy and its practice. He helped with keeping the movement's credibility within and outside Tonga because of his beliefs in democracy. Just as important, some key church leaders were there to support. The first bishop, head of the Catholic church, Bishop Finau was there in the beginning. He was very clever, very smart, very humble, very soft spoken leader. In addition, the head of the Wesleyan church, Dr. Amanaki Havea who was a very key figure because the biggest church in Tonga is the Wesleyan church. He was very conservative. The head of the Wesleyan church is the King and the Wesleyan church has supported the Monarch and the tradition. Within the movement, there are many other names like lawyer, Laki Niu, civil servant, Viliami Fukofuka. The supporters at the commencement of the movement are very important because it demonstrated that democracy unified religious and secular leaders in Tonga. The combination of two prominent church leaders, Dr. Havea and Bishop, a prominent academic, Prof. Futa Helu, a prominent lawyer, Laki Niu and a prominent political activist, Akilisi Pohiva gave hope that democracy was feasible in Tonga. The members of the Pro-Democracy movement also had a crowd of people in church, in school to promote the ideas of democracy. The members of the Pro-Democracy movement were a dream team because church leaders were present which is very important in Tonga particularly because to often democracy is accused as anti-religious political doctrine so the presence of church leaders gave the movement credibility from a religious point of view and from a political and academic point of view (Akauola, 2012).

The Late, Tu'i Pelehake formed a political reform committee which is significant because it was the first time in history that parliament gave recognition to the movement. The political reform committee was another reason for the push towards democracy (Halapua, 2012).

There are many sources and people between 2006-2010 that helped pursue and achieve political reform and will most likely be supportive of the establishment of political parties. Among these are five principle sources and forums:

- i. The National Committee for Political Reform (NCPR) which comprised of nine members, who were also members of the Assembly and experienced outsiders. The NCPR was appointed in 2005 by the Assembly to record public opinion and consult widely about political reform. The NCPR reported back to the King after their results from consultations that were conducted abroad and at home in October 2006. The main purpose of the NCPR was to consult which was very important but the Committee did not have a specific mission and therefore lacked credibility.
- ii. The government appointed the Assembly's Tripartite Committee for Political Reform to help guide the parliamentary discussions about political reform. The committee consisted of three peoples representatives, Clive Edwards, 'Akilisi Pohiva and 'Ulitu Uata.
- iii. The Constitutional and Electoral Commission (CEC) comprised of four Tongans and two of them were also members of the NCPR. The members were people from various careers. There was an educator, a legal practitioner, secretary of the Traditions Committee and an experienced academic. The CEC was chaired by a British judge who had served in Tonga and around the Pacific. The CEC was appointed in November 2009 under an Act of Parliament to publish a report that drew discussion.
- iv. The Cabinet which expressed the views and opinions of the Monarch, Prime Minister and ministers.
- v. The Assembly, which comprised of the Privy Council (Powles, 2014, pp. 10-

11).

### **The 2006 riots**

A crucial event that coagulated the agenda for political reform occurred on November 16, 2006. A riot occurred after supporters of the democratic reform who were holding a rally in the capital, Nuku'alofa, received that announcement that the King and the government at that time, decided to stall the first ever elections that was being scheduled for the following year and the approach towards democratic reform.

People who were attending the pro-democracy rally were heated with the announcement, and with the rage started to trash government buildings, business that were affiliated or owned by the Monarchy.

Kalifi Moala, a prominent news reporter in Tonga, describes the riots as a product of those who felt oppressed especially, the supporters of democracy. Instead of sustaining a non violent demonstration, rioters stripped away people's rights to safe and free expression. Moala accuses the pro-democracy movement leader, Pohiva and his supporters, for forcing its ideology on the supporters. Moala continues to state that the pro-democracy movement has deviated far from the original democratic ideals that it begun with in the 1990's and has focused on gaining self-interested power (Latu, 2010, p. 27).

On the other hand, Ana Taufē'ulungaki, the previous Minister of Education stated in 2007, that the blame rests on both the government and the pro democracy supporters (Latu, 2010). She stated that the government and the opposition did not take into consideration the urgency of the people for the reform and mishandling the process towards political reform. The opposition did not consider the burning of Nuku'alofa as an outcome of the pro-democracy rally.



## Chapter 3: DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION

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*“Democratic peoples are passionate about generic terms and abstract words because such expressions magnify thought and aid the work of the intelligence by allowing a large amount of material to be compressed into a small space.”*

*-Alexis de Tocqueville (1835)*

### **What is democracy?**

Democracy is a familiar word in the 21<sup>st</sup> century but it can still be an unfamiliar concept and how people may achieve it. Therefore, to determine if democracy is feasible or not, or whether it works or not and how it can be measured or not, democracy must be defined, experienced and studied to be applicable.

The beginning of democracy can be dated back to the Greek court in Athens.

Democracy, originates from the Greek word, “demos” or “people”, is basically defined as a government whose sole interest is vested for the people, by the people.

Democracy and freedom are usually used interchangeably, but the two are not tantamount because from a long, often tumultuous history, democracy is introduced and implemented with a set of principles and ideas about freedom in mind. Therefore, democracy institutes freedom. Thus, people desiring and existing in a democratic society should be the forerunners of their own freedom and should set a pathway toward democratic models set forth in the foreword to the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights: “Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world” (Library of Congress).

As mentioned above, the most popular definition of democracy is a government for the people, by the people with the belief of freedom and equality between people. (Cambridge International Dictionary of English, 1995, p. 364). However, the perception of democracy is defined differently from one scholar to another. Some scholars have defined democracy as follows:

Joseph Schumpeter (1976, p. 260) defined democracy as a political method, a machine for selecting political leadership. He further explains that in democracy, the citizens are given a choice among political leaders who compete for their votes. Between elections, the politicians make decisions. At the next election, citizens can vote for replacements for their elected officials. Schumpeter explained that the ability for citizens to choose between leaders at election time is democracy. He continues to reiterate that democracy is a method for constitutional arrangement to making political decisions in which individuals are in a competitive state for power by attracting people's votes.

Robert Dahl (1989) defined democracy as a whole political citizen who is not separated from the government and the state counterparts. As a whole political citizen whose political life is only prolonged, and harmonious with, oneself.

The Compasito text, Manual of Human Rights education for children defines democracy based on two fundamental principles. First, the principle of 'individual autonomy': that others should not impose or force a government on others against their free will. Second, the principle of 'equality': that everyone has the equal opportunity to encourage and support decisions that will influence the society.

With the above two principles of individual autonomy and equality, other forms of government infringe the flow of democracy. Other forms of government such as *Authoritarianism* is a type of political regime characterized by state leaders who direct and regulate society without being acceptable to citizens. There are no competitive elections. Citizens are denied the right 'to criticize officials, the government, the regime, the socioeconomic order, the prevailing ideology'; citizens who express such political views run the risk of severe punishment by the security forces of the state.

*Partial democracy* is a mixture of a political regime in which the accountability of government to citizens is more or less qualified; military, traditional or other non-elected establishments within the state restrict the effect of elections and compromise the authority of elected government. Elections are held, but only certain candidates can be elected. There are opposition parties which make some impact but the electoral system is organized to ensure that normally they would neither win an election nor form a government. There are restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression and access to alternative information.

*Liberal democracy* is a type of political regime in which binding rules and policy decisions are made not by the entire community but by representatives accountable to the community. This accountability is secured primarily through free, fair and competitive elections in which virtually all adult men and women have the right to vote and stand for elective office. Citizens within a liberal democracy have the right: 'to express themselves without the danger of severe punishment on political matters broadly defined, including criticism of officials, the government, the regime, the socioeconomic order, the prevailing ideology' and 'to form relatively independent

associations of organizations including independent political parties and interest groups' (Dahl, 1989).

*Participatory democracy* advocates that the sphere of democratic accountability can be extended beyond government and the state to economic enterprises, the workplace, local communities and the household. On the other hand, forms of *direct democracy* have also been advocated. Direct democracy gives citizens high amount of participation in the legislative process. Local communities have control over and administer important affairs that directly affect their lives and elect representatives to larger units of administration and control. These representatives in turn elect representatives to national institutions; and a single political party could operate at all of these levels, linking them while representing the larger interests of society as a whole (Potter, 1997).

The most common form of democracy used today is *representative democracy*. Representative democracy is founded by elected officials representing a group. It is the opposite of direct democracy and has low participation from citizens. Representative democracy is relevant, whether for a society of 40,000 people or a country with a population of 4 million, in which people elect officials to make the political decisions, articulate laws, and administer programs for the good of the people.

Once a democratic government is established upon an understood group of values, practices and attitude, which is founded differently among various cultures and societies around the world. Thus, a democracy does not rest upon undeviating practices but upon fundamental characteristics. The core democratic characteristics consist but are not limited to the following.

## *Democratic characteristics*

### Constitutional arrangement

-Democracy is a government that exercises power and civic responsibility executed by all adult citizens, either through their freely elected representatives or directly.

-Democracy protects against superior centered governments and decentralizes government to local and regional levels, with an understanding that all parts of the government must be as comprehensible and responsive as possible, to the people.

### Civil society

-A democratic government should and must understand that one of its primary functions is to protect basic human rights such as freedom of religion and speech; the right to equal protection under law; and the prospect to fully participate and organize political, economic, and cultural life of society.

-A democratic government conducts regular fair and free elections that are open to people who are eligible to vote.

-Citizens of a democratic country have not only rights, but they are also responsible to participate in the political system, which in turns protects their rights and freedoms.

-A democratic society is devoted to the principles of cooperation, compromise and tolerance.

### Political party

-A democratic society freely establishes a political party system.

- Political party systems encourages and enhances democracy.

## *Rights and responsibilities*

A democratic society rests upon the belief that the government exists to assist the people. Therefore, the people are citizens of the democratic state, not its subjects.

With that in mind, the state protects its citizens and their rights, in turn, the citizens give the democratic state their loyalty. The citizens will dedicate their time, resources and efforts in maintaining a democratic state. In comparison, an authoritarian system demands loyalty and service from its subjects without any mutual obligation to secure their consent for its actions. Thomas Jefferson wrote in the U.S. Declaration of Independence in 1776 that emphasizes the relationship of citizen and state, which is fundamental to democracy.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed” (<http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/>).

To be specific, in a democratic society, these fundamental or absolute rights include freedom of speech and expression, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion and conscience, and the right to have equal protection before the law. This does not comprise an in-depth list of the rights that citizens of a democratic society enjoy but this is a set of intricate core rights that must be upheld by any worthy democratic society. In Jefferson’s view, these rights should not and cannot be legislated away, or be subject to the impulse of an electoral majority since they exist independently of government.

The lifeline of any democracy is freedom of speech and expression, especially about social and political issues. Most written and verbal speech are not controlled by democratic governments thus democracies are generally filled with many voices expressing different or contrary opinions and ideas. A democratic society tend to be noisy and rarely quiet. Democracy is dependent upon knowledgeable, literate citizenry who have access to information that enables it to contribute as fully as possible of the society’s public life and to criticize oppressive and unwise government

regulations and officials. There must be an understanding between citizens and their elected representatives that democracy is dependent also upon the broadest possible access to uncensored opinions, data and ideas. Importantly, in order for free people to govern for themselves, they must be free to express themselves- publicly, openly and repeatedly, either in writing or speech. “Negative right” is the so-called protection of free speech meaning government should abstain from limiting speech and the democratic authorities are uninvolved in any written content and verbal speech. A testing ground that is essential for any democracy can be served through protests, which are the right to peaceful get-together and plays a vital part in operating the use of free speech. A civil society permits vigorous debate among those in opposition over certain democratic issues. However, freedom of speech should be used to portray democracy and its idea in a harmless way, which is a fundamental right, but not absolute, and cannot be used as an excuse to initiate violence.

The citizens of a democratic society should be free to follow their conscience in regards to their religious faith which includes the right to worship with others or alone, in private or public, or not to worship at all, and to participate in religious practice, observance and teaching deprived of fear of persecution from other groups of society or the government. Citizens have the right to worship or congregate in association with a belief or a religion, and to maintain and establish places for those purposes. Religious freedom, like other fundamental human rights, is not granted or created by the state, but all democracies should protect it. Democracies that protect religious freedom for all their citizens are more likely to protect other rights that are necessary for religious freedom, for example free speech and assembly.

Citizens for any democratic society are required to participate, be civil, and have patience in rights as well as in responsibilities. Political scientist Benjamin Barber

(1984) stated, “Democracy is often understood as the rule of the majority, and rights are understood more and more as the private possessions of individuals. ...But this is to misunderstand both rights and democracy”. For any democracy to thrive in this world, citizens must not be passive, but active, because they know that the failure or success of the government is their responsibility, and no one else’s. A democratic government that is accountable to its citizens, who elect their government, should protect individual rights so that citizens in a democracy can commence their civic responsibilities and obligations, which strengthens the society as a whole. At a minimum, citizens should have access to educational materials that will educate themselves about the crucial issues confronting their society, if only so that they can vote logically. The core of democratic action is the active, peaceful, freely chosen participation of its citizens in the public life of their nation and various communities. Diane Ravitch (2010) said, “Democracy is a process, a way of living and working together. It is the evolutionary, not static. It requires cooperation, compromise, and tolerance among all citizens. Making it work is hard, not easy. Freedom means responsibility, not freedom from responsibility.” To achieve this responsibility, there must be active engagement in organizations or the pursuit of specific community goals; overall, fulfilling a democratic society involves an undeniable attitude and a willingness to believe and acceptance that people are different from you but have similar rights.

### **Democratic consolidation**

There has been an increasing amount of countries during the past century that has transformed from authoritarian rule to some kind of democratic regime. With changes



like these, political scientists and political actors have been increasingly focusing on what has come to be called “democratic consolidation.”

The term “democratic consolidation”, according to Andreas Schedler (1998), originally was meant to describe the challenge of making new democracies secure, of extending their life expectancy beyond the short term, of making them immune against the threat of authoritarian regression, of building dams against eventual “reverse waves.” Many students of political science are using the term in any way they like, however, it should be noted that democratic consolidation is used for the conditions of divergent items such as popular legitimation, the diffusion of democratic values, the neutralization of anti system actors, civilian supremacy over the military, the elimination of authoritarian enclaves, party building, the organization of functional interests, the stabilizations of electoral rules, the reutilization of politics, the decentralization of state power, the introduction of mechanisms of direct democracy, judicial reform, the alleviation of poverty, and economic stabilization. Schedler continues to state that democratic consolidation has no time to rest. Once a transition is made in a country from authoritarian rule to democracy, where (more or less) free, fair, and competitive elections are held, democratic actors usually should not relax and enjoy democratic rule that might be uncertain. Democratic actors should utilize democratic transition to establish democracy’s core institutions to securing what has been achieved thus far in the democratic transition. By contrast, the misuses of democratic consolidation invoke the necessity of moving beyond democratic fragility, instability, uncertainty, vulnerability, reversibility, or the threat of breakdown. No matter, the vocabulary of democratic consolidation is straightforward: It is pre-occupied with keeping democracy alive, with preventing its sudden death.

It can be said, tentatively, that people who are concerned with democratic stability and try to avoid regressions to either nondemocratic or semi-democratic regimes, support notions of negativity towards democratic consolidation. These people will do anything in their power to stop democracy. People who are concerned with democratic advances and try to attain progress toward either liberal or high-quality democracy have positive notions towards democratic consolidation. These people will do anything to establish democracy.

### **Determining democracy**

Democracy has many definitions and countries have interpreted and implemented democracy in different ways. There are many ideas and opinions about the pre-conditions for democracy and democratization. Olle Tornquist (1999, p. 123) stated that the content of democracy depends upon the actors and their intentions for democratization and democracy. He asked what kind of democracy the democratizers intend to implement and how they will use it. Robert A. Dahl (Sorensen, 1998, p. 12) stated that in order to understand democracy, it must be viewed as a political system that is responsive to the preferences of its citizens. The political system, therefore, creates political equals among the citizens, which is a key characteristic for democracy. The requirements for responsiveness that citizens must have prospects to (1) verbalize their preferences, (2) indicate their preferences to their fellow citizens and the government either through individual or collective actions, and (3) the preferences indicated by the citizens, be weighed equally in the conduct of the government. Dahl cited in (Sorensen, 1998) continues to explain that the above three opportunities are dependent upon the following institutional guarantees:

1. Freedom of expression
2. Right to vote
3. Freedom to form and join organizations
4. Right of political leaders to compete for support and for votes
5. Eligibility for public office
6. Free and fair elections
7. Alternative sources of information
8. Institutions that make government policies dependent on votes and other expressions of preferences.

When the above conditions are met, then it is a political democracy. Dahl (1989) continues to explain that the above eight conditions cover three dimensions of political democracy, which are, competition, participation and political parties. Against this background of three dimensions, political democracy can be viewed as a system of government that meets the following:

- Purposeful and all-embracing competition excluding use of force among organized groups, especially political parties and individuals for all operating positions of government power, at regular intervals.
- A highly comprehensive level of political participation with selecting policies and leaders, at least through the form of fair and regular elections and no major adult social group is discounted.
- A level of civil and political liberties, such as freedom of expression, freedom of press, and freedom to form and join organizations suffices to warrant the integrity of political participation and competition.

Georg Sorensen (1998, p. 12) explains that to attempt to determine whether a specific country is democratic is to look at the presence of the all-embracing competition, comprehensive level of political participation and civil and political liberties, not just on a formal level but in real practice. The task is difficult because countries meet the specified conditions by the three dimensions in various degrees. For example, Mexico in the postwar period was more democratic than Chile had been under the Pinochet dictatorship. Mexico in the postwar period had political instability but had some form of political participation with selecting leaders and the formation of organized groups. On the other hand, Chile under the Pinochet dictatorship was supposed to be more democratic but did not meet any of the three dimensions. There are no competition present, no political participation and no level of civil and political liberties as Pinochet dictated with a fist arm (Sorensen, 1998, p. 13).

Unfortunately, most scholars have not agreed about which of the three dimensions are most important in determining the presence of democracy or specific minimal values that should be applied for examining each of the three dimensions. Therefore, trying to analyze any of the three dimensions for the presence of democracy can be frustrating. For example, do opposition parties receive equal opportunities to compete? Are elections rigged? Factors like these make it difficult to analyze the three dimensions of democratic politics.

When a country defines democracy in terms of the three dimensions, competition, participation and liberties, it is clear that the process of democratization, the form of government changes from nondemocratic toward more democratic, can take place in different ways. Dahl (1989) identified two routes that a political system can take toward democracy: one route is a focus on competition and the other route focuses on participation. When a government increases participation or inclusiveness the

proportion of citizens enjoying political rights and liberties will increase. Nondemocratic regimes may disregard a large portion of the population from participation. In democratic regimes the entire adult population enjoy full range of rights and liberties. Competition or liberalization entails that the rights and liberties are available to at least some of the members of the political system. When liberalization is increasing it means that there's an increase in political competition and opposition in government. I will use the four examples, Dahl used four examples in his 1971 book, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. He chose four countries that differed in the dimensions of democratization. The examples are Denmark, the USSR, South Africa and Chile in the years 1973 to 1988. Denmark was a great example of a democratic regime where the entire adult population enjoyed a full range of liberties and rights. In USSR, elections were held regularly and all adults had all rights on the paper and were able to vote, but opposition to the ruling Communist was close to none. Simply, the USSR had a high degree of participation, however the problem was the absence of political competition and real liberties, like freedom of expression, access to various sources of information and the right to organize and form organizations. Therefore, the USSR was not a democracy. The present process of democratization in former USSR republics is foremost a process of liberalization, meaning that the process of increased political competition is supported by real rights and liberties. South Africa is a different story. The white minority population enjoyed the political rights and liberties necessary for political competition, whereas the black majority of the population was excluded from participation. In this case, the process of democratization is primarily focused on inclusion of the black population in participation. The last example is the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet in Chile that demonstrated the absence of both competition and participation to any of the

population. Since 1988, Chile has attempted to undergo a process of democratization with increasing competition and participation among the adult population, but it has not yet made the full transition to democracy (Dahl R. , 1989, p. 7). David Held (1987, p. 2), a political scientist echoed and supported the two routes introduced by Dahl that a political system can take towards democracy. Held added that there should be further liberalization and more participation. In other words, when political democracy is attained, further democratization is still possible according to Held. Held states that additional liberalization means the formal political rights and liberties may be useless if the citizens are not given a more secure equal rights in a more extensive approach. He explains that without a welfare state that prevents severe material poverty and extreme socioeconomic inequalities, it is close to impossible for those who are poor to fully enjoy any form of political rights. The poor has no reason to enjoy political rights when they are trying to manage survival and meet their basic needs like food and shelter. Once poverty has been eradicated then the population can transform formally equal rights into substantially equal rights.

Once a form of democracy regime is established, there are factors that must be instigated in order for stable democratic rule. Robert A. Dahl (1989) lists five conditions that he feels are most constructive for the development of stable democracies. The five conditions are as follows:

- Political leaders do not engage the major instruments for violent oppression, particularly the military and the police, to gain and maintain their power;
- an organizationally pluralist, vigorous and modern society exists;
- any potential conflicts of subcultural pluralism are sustained at tolerable levels;

- among the population of any country, especially at a political level, a political culture and a system of beliefs that favor the idea of democracy and democratic institutions exist;
- the effects of foreign influence or control are either trivial or optimistically favorable.

Dahl continues to explain that with the last point being a possible exception, none of these conditions exist in the African countries. Even though, most of the African countries claim to be democratic, political leaders use violent oppression in order to maintain power, which results in conflict and strife in the country. For example, there is clearly no political instability in Nigeria. The political instability is due to the fact that political leaders view being in office as an opportunity to accumulate wealth. Those who seek power in Nigeria view politics as an opening for making money, or a guaranteed cheque to wealth. They also use their political status to control government resources, which are often transformed to personal use, and losing elections is to lose power and therefore to be denied the opportunity for embellishment. To maintain their political status and power, they use different ways and strategies to ensure that they win elections. There have been instances where elections involved rigging, thuggery, bribery of electoral officials and participating officials, and the elimination of opposition candidates and tampering of the ballot boxes (Ene, et al., 2013, p. 9).

The status of democracy in a country can be determined by the three dimensions: participation, competition, and civil and political liberties. After a democratic status is determined in a specific democracy, certain conditions must be present in order to maintain democratic credibility.

Democratic transition in Tonga is underway which began with the 2010 elections. No major changes have been seen from the Akilisi Pohiva government since it is still early to see any development since Pohiva has only been prime minister for 6 months. A democratic government exercises power and civic responsibility executed by all adult citizens, either through their freely elected representatives or directly. The presence of democracy in Tonga, thus far can be determined from the five conditions listed by Robert A. Dahl stated that help stabilize democracy by which some democratic regimes meet only few of the conditions.

Since the reform, political leaders have not engaged with the use of the military and the police, to gain and maintain power. Never in the history of Tonga has any political leader used the military and the police, to gain and maintain power. The Monarch commands the Tonga Defense Forces.

The approach towards democracy took a turn in 2005 when about 3,000 government workers went on strike. This was considered the largest and most successful strike in Tonga. Government workers went on strike in demand of a pay increase. The strike blossomed into a popular rebellion against the monarchy. Those who were on strike would gather daily in the capital city, Nuku'alofa, at the same time there were large protests around Tonga. Tongan communities in New Zealand organized protests in their community. The strike occurred because government workers felt that there should be a pay increase since the Monarch enjoyed the profits of other people's labors.

The strike lasted for 45 days and resulted in pay increases between 60-80%. The Public Services Association (PSA) was organized as a union for government workers. This first major strike in Tongan history was the beginning for the Tongan people in demonstrating opposition towards the Monarch. Tongans were expecting some



democratic reform under the reign of the new king, especially since the government had formed a committee for democratic reform, following the 2005 strike. The final working day of the parliament for the year on November 16, 2006 ended with no democratic reform. Thousands of people marched to the parliament house in Nuku'alofa. The people demanded to hold a vote on major democratic reforms before the parliament began for the year. However, the parliament adjourned for the year without fulfilling any of the promised democratic reforms. The unfulfilled promises of democratic reform caused anger and frustration, which the people took out on the capital and resulted in rioting. The riot destroyed the capital and other businesses that were owned by the Monarch or nobility. Rioters were of all ages from children, young adults and the elderly took part. A few women were seen rioting. The riot resulted in the government drawing a plan for democratic reform and elections for 2010 (Harman, 2008).

An organizationally pluralist, vigorous and modern society does somewhat exist in Tonga. The Monarch and nobility are respected by the people. The Monarch and nobility are cooperating in the development of democracy by holding only 9 seats in parliament. The Monarch and nobility may view the position in parliament as a privatizing political opportunity because most nobles earn income by being in parliament. Democratic values are slowly being diffused into society. Citizens have not established new organizations to encourage more participation in democratic consolidation yet. The state power has not been decentralized.

There are no potential conflicts of subcultural pluralism of any kind in Tonga. Immigration has increased in the past 10 years with Chinese migrating into Tonga. They do not have the same religious beliefs as Tongans but Tongans and Chinese are accustomed to co-existing in Tonga. Since the reign of King Tupou I, the first king of

Tonga, the main religion is Christianity. Other religions can be practiced freely in Tonga without prejudice and malice.

It is still early to determine the political level in Tonga. A political culture and a system of beliefs that favor the idea of democracy and democratic institutions somewhat exist in Tonga. Tongan political culture encourages, freedom of expression, right to vote, freedom to form and join organizations, right of political leaders to compete for support and for votes, eligibility for public office, free and fair elections, alternative sources of information and institutions that make government policies dependent on votes and other expressions of preferences. These factors are pivotal in order for democratic consolidation to be successful. The elections allow society to vote for whom they want to see in the parliament but not everyone is voted into the parliament. The King appoints the nobles. This does not demonstrate a democratic regime. Pooi Pohiva (2012) is very critical of the current government. Pohiva states that the appointed nobles show a nondemocratic nature of the government and favoritism because they have reserved seats in the parliament. Pohiva states that this way of the Monarch to divide the country. There are 9 seats reserved in parliament for the nobles. No seat should be reserved for them and if the law will not change the number of seats, at least have the nobles elected into the parliament instead of being appointed by the King.

Tonga has foreign influence from various countries like China, Japan, New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Foreign influence does not control democratic transition. Chinese and Chinese Tongan are the main ethnic minority group in Tonga. In the 1990s, the Tongan government controversially sold Tongan passports to residents in Hong Kong and Chinese nationals. The rioters in 2006 destroyed several Chinese owned stores around Tonga. The destruction was a

result from unemployed Tongans resenting the Chinese. This resulted in several hundred Chinese leaving Tonga. However, in the past 5 years, the Chinese population has increased and comprises 8% of the total Tonga population. China has a stronger presence from the other countries because there are several Chinese businesses currently operating in Tonga. China has given loans of about \$50 million pa'anga, equivalent to about \$24 million in U.S dollars to the Tongan government.

Democratic transition is underway in Tonga and democratic actors help establish democracy's core institutions especially with the new Pohiva government. The mismanagement of the government could result in government breakdown, instability and uncertainty in Tonga.

## Chapter 4: POLITICAL PARTIES

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*"Parties are the core institution of democratic politics."*

*-Lipset*

### **Origins of political parties**

Citizens cannot be required to participate in the political process, but without citizen participation and action, democracy may and will weaken. That citizens in a democratic society have the right to organize and associate themselves freely is fundamental to democracy.

Political parties campaign, recruit and nominate to elect public officials. Political parties draw up policy programs for the government if they are in the majority or offer alternative policies and criticism if they are in the opposition. Political parties summon support for policy commonalities among different interest groups, educate the public about public issues and provide rules and structure for political debate within the society.

Political parties commence with a group of people sharing the same interest and ideas in government policy making or how a government should be operated. Thus, the general method of this birth is simple. There is creation of parliamentary groups, which leads to the appearance of electoral committees, and the permanent connection between these two elements. However, in different situations, the order of formation of these two elements is insignificant which will be described in chapter 5.

The United States of America was the only known country in the world in 1850 to have known political parties in the modern sense of the word. However, the country's founders opposed parties. James Madison, in Federalist 10 (1787) did not draw

distinctions between parties and factions. He stated “a minority and majority united by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community.” Despite the many efforts of the founders, including the authors of the Federalist papers, to create and design institutions to control parties and factions, within a decade of the birth of the American state they had begun to organize the new nation’s political life (Stokes, 1999). “There were trends of opinion, popular clubs, philosophical societies, and parliamentary groups, but no real parties. In 1950 parties function in most civilized nations, and in others there is an attempt to imitate them” (Duverger, 1964). Maurice Duverger (1964, p. xxiii) questions in his book, *Political Parties*, how did the system of political parties of 1850 transform to that of 1950? The beginning of the political parties with representatives meeting in secret to make preparations for the defense of their local interests as parliamentary groups that became ideological groups. The Breton deputies unofficially known as the Breton club and most infamously known as the Jacobins in France began in a café and organized regular meetings among themselves. They then perceived that they not only shared certain ideas on regional matters, but also on national policies and its fundamental problems. With their efforts to recruit the deputies from other provinces who shared their views, members of the ‘Breton club’ formed an ideological group. This ideological group transformed itself into a more stable political party.

Political parties have many definitions. Unanimity exists on two key definitional issues: that they aim at capturing or gaining control of the government and political party is formally organized (Sorensen, 1998, p. 87).

Political parties are associations formally organized with the explicit and declared purpose of acquiring and or maintaining legal control, either single or in coalition

with other similar associations, over the personnel and the policy of the government of an actual or prospective state (Dowse & Hughes, 1972). Besides the objective of political parties of controlling governmental powers, there are specific features unique to political parties. First, the ideology of a political party is different from a mere lobby group and gives it a distinctive character from other political parties in the same country. An ideology is basically a philosophy or set of principles that underlies a political programme. It consists of the shared beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions that cause a certain group of people to join together and develop and advocate specific political programmes. Therefore, an ideology is a view of the world that produces consistent approaches to a range of specific political and social issues. Second, the party manifesto is produced from a political party's ideology that leads to a certain set of policies, which is often called the party "platform." The policies that are directed from the ideology are put down in writing in a party manifesto (action plan). The manifesto is a statement of the goals and principles the party promises to pursue if voted into power. Third, political parties are usually required by law to have certain organizational structures, such as a constitution, particular officers, and a network of local branches. However, every country differs in specific legal requirements and organizational structures within the law. The constitution of a political party defines the party's "basic law." It contains the principles and operating procedures of the party, specifies the rights and responsibilities of members and sets the foundation for the internal governance of the party. The ultimate goal of a party constitution is to provide a democratic structure and safeguard the observation of this practice. Finally, the membership base should be built on a large and broad-based scope as possible. Most likely, successful parties contain members that vary in age, gender, education, occupation, social class, and so on. The credibility of the party will enable it to be

successful during elections. It is important for a political party to recruit members who are committed to its ideology and principles that enable members to participate in party governance, policy formulation, and campaigning. The membership base of a political party determines participation in national politics. Members of a political party are much more politically aware and active than the average citizen. Members of a political party can shape the ideology and policies of their parties.

Political systems are often set up to operate political parties. General characteristics of the political system, can either enhance or degrade the freedom of a political party to function effectively. Several party systems exist including single-party system, one-dominant-party system, two-party system, and multi-party system. Single-party system consists of only one legal political party. Other parties are prohibited, and elections are held with choice candidates from the ruling party. This system could be considered democratic as long as there is free competition of ideas and policies within the ruling party (Schlesinger & Schlesinger, 2006, p. 59). One-dominant-party system falls between multi-party and single-party systems. Technically, this is a multi-party system but in practice only one ruling party stays dominant and restricts other parties from competition.

In a two-party system, two parties dominate, giving other parties no real opportunity to compete. However, independent political parties can participate. Such is the case in the United States. The Democratic and Republican parties operate at the national and state legislatures and at local politics in most states. In the British two-party system, the Labour and the Conservative parties operate on a parliamentary level. Other parties are free to compete in a two-party system environment, but they are rarely able to elect representatives even at the local levels. Multi-party system means the presence of three or more political parties in one country. At the level of multi-party

system, all parties have an opportunity to run in elections and free to compete against one another. Thus, the party that wins the most constituencies or the most votes forms and operates the government. Multi-party system could be favorable in promoting stable democracy because it enables minorities to participate in governing associations and to attain meaningful representation. Multi-party systems are difficult to sustain than two-party systems (Mainwaring, 1990, p. 1). The ultimate goal of political parties is to put their ideas into practice in government for the good of the nation. Parties field candidates in elections in order for the aspirations, principles, and policies of the party to be implemented through government programmes.

### **Two party system versus multi-party systems**

Political parties enter government to provide a range of opportunities for individual politicians to achieve their own goals. These goals can either be an opportunity to further their individual policy goals, enjoying the rewards of office, or maximizing their influence within the party. Of course, the government is a resource for the party that means that controlling the government gives access to the party to enact public policy and provides ways of strengthening the party itself.

Political parties must observe the basic principles of democracy- accountability, transparency, and good governance. Individuals form political parties with a set of goals and with similar policy ideas. The constitution of a political party should be in harmony with the interests of the members, ensuring the members that they are the ones who ultimately choose the party's leadership and policies. A political party should be more than a mechanism for the political ambitions of its leaders. A political party should be a mechanism for individuals sharing a similar political agenda in which the members, not the leaders, are the reason and basis for the existing party. A



political party is organized for various reasons. A political party is action-oriented: to cultivate policies, sell these policies to the electorate, and win the majority votes in elections. Therefore, an action-oriented political party must be efficient in terms of its day-to-day management and forward planning for the next election and the next party conference. Political parties must deal with its daily operations and at the same time, ensure that party leaders are aware of the views, needs and problems of not only party membership but the entire country. Most importantly, the political party is responsible to the whole country and not restricted to its members. A truly national political party is concerned for the welfare of everyone in the country and not only its members or supporters. Otherwise, it is another political party that wishes to advance the ambitions of its leaders and members whether or not the ambitions promote the common good. A political party is also a portal of communication, which promotes political policies, principals and ideals among society and its members (Ware, 1996, p. 349).

Party systems are set up as the connection between citizen interests and government actions. Besides, prompting government to be receptive to its citizens, party systems are presumed to provide order among legislative regulations, minimize issue space that deals with multi-dimension problems and give alternatives for voters to stay interested. Most democratic regimes believe that legislative politics can be deemed unstable with the absence of parties. Therefore, legislators who feel the need to get something done create and form parties in order to have their desired policies triumph. Parties are an introduction to efficiency into democratic institutions (Stokes, 1999, p. 244). A democratic government that is transitioning from authoritarian rule and has not implemented any particular party system must decide a two-party system or a multi-party system.

A two-party system ensures stability in the government, clearly signifies where responsibility lies, and has an alleviating influence over the main political participants. A two-party system that is in a parliamentary system simplifies policies for voters, which is easier for them to understand. A two-party system is more democratic, in a sense because it provides voters with a chance to choose the government, in comparison to multi-party systems in which government is chosen from the post-election negotiations among party leaders. Two-party systems, on the other hand, puts limitations on representation and the choice of policies considered for depiction. In a two-party system, independent political parties can be established and have the same rights as the dominant political parties (Fesnic, 2008, p. 804).

There are different types of two-party systems; the British two-party system is very different from the American two-party system. The most crucial factor for the function of a two-party system in any government is the institutional context and its effects on policymaking. The key peculiarity between the British two-partyism and the American two-partyism is that the British is a parliamentary system and the American is a presidential system. Even though, the logic of two-party systems exists in both the British and American party systems, the presence of separation of powers unfastens possibilities for a split government. This can alleviate the winner-takes-all effect of the two-party system, which is normally the case in the United States, allowing one party take control of the White House and the other party take control of Congress. The British parliamentary system is a mixture of executive and legislative powers prevents an occurrence, where different parties take control of the government and country, like the United States. The British parliamentary regime enables the winning party from the two-party system have majority in the legislature and form the

government. The life expectancy of single-party governments is higher compared to multi-party governments.

Party discipline is different between two-party systems around the world, especially between the Great Britain and the United States. The difference between the British and the American are the different institutional motivations provided by presidentialism and parliamentarism. In Britain, the prime minister is also the leader of the dominating legislative, which means that in order to warrant the defiance of the rank-and-file members of parliament representing the majority party. As in other European countries, the ruling party selects the candidates for office. British parties are disciplined and centralized, and party representatives from the same party often vote as a bloc. Members in the party who follow the party line heighten their possibilities for being compensated in the future with a better job opportunity in the government, and party nonconformity is close to none.

Parties in America are opposite in comparison with the British party system. American parties are distributed and undisciplined, and party dissidence is very common. British parties are affected heavily by parliamentarism, which controls the integration of the two major parties; the American presidentialism has a different effect on the party system. The existing two-party systems in the United States offers an opportunity to win the majority votes for the most important office, but it weakens the two parties because it does not provide supplementary incentives for the merging between executive power and legislative. This demonstrates the reason why the British parties are so integrated and disciplined. In addition, candidates in the American two-party system are selected by primary elections instead of party organization like in Britain; this leads office holders to further their independence.

It is also important to mention that when a country is considering establishing a two-party system, the country's geography and population are important. Britain is much smaller than America in population and geography, and America is more diverse than Britain. The diversity in American legislators from the same party that represent constituencies makes more division within American parties than the British parties.

On the other hand, democratic regimes might consider a multi-party system for different reasons. A multi-party system is assisted by the existence of numerous social cleavages and by a liberal voting system. Arguably, multi-party systems are better than two-party systems because the former does a better job in representing the different interests in society. On the other hand, multi-party systems can cause instability in the government's coalition, which in turn is an interruption to rational policy-making. When a democratic regime has four or more relevant parties, it is genuinely considered as a multi-party system (Fesnic, 2008, p. 427).

A country that is a great example of a multi-party system is Germany. Germany became a multi-party system in the 1990s. The rise of the electoral support in the 1990s for the Green Party and the reformation of the former Communist Party of East Germany began the push for a multi-party system. The two major parties in Germany, the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats have won the majority of the seats from the past elections with 35 percent of seats; therefore have a similar share of seats in parliament. The rest of the votes are distributed among the smaller parties, which are the former Communists, the Free Democrats, and the Greens, with the seats in legislature assigned to representatives in these parties. This is a fair example of a government that is formed after elections with an open-ended approach of coalitions and governments in a multi-party system (Fesnic, 2008, p. 428). Multi-party systems can operate along relatively stable democratic governments and adequate policies.

Political parties are something that most parliamentarians wish to implement into the Tongan government in order to further competition and participation among parliamentarians and with the people. Political parties will be helpful in solidifying democracy in Tonga. There are no current legal or registered political parties in Tonga because the government has not considered the establishment of political parties as a political priority. The government has not officiated laws pertaining to the establishment of political parties in Tonga. Currently, there are a number of democratic movements, such as the Friendly Islands and Human Rights Democracy movement. The Friendly Islands and Human Rights Democracy movement is the only registered movement in Tonga. The president, Po'oi Pohiva did not take actions to transform the movement into a political party because he felt that it is open to the people to be a part of it. The Friendly Islands and Human Rights Democracy movement is worth mentioning because most political parties are created from movements. The Friendly Islands and Human Rights Democracy movement provides public education for the public on human rights issues, the components of democracy, pros and cons of democracy and the monarchial society. The Friendly Islands and Human Rights democracy movement played a crucial role in the formation of the Democratic Party of the Friendly Islands. The Democratic Party of the Friendly Islands was formed from the Friendly Islands and Human Rights Democracy movement. People who were interested in politics became members of the movement as an opportunity into politics, in hopes of tapping into parliament. The movement experienced problems with politically minded members and the solution to avoiding further problems was the creation of the Democratic Party of the Friendly Islands. Any political party in Tonga is unregistered and unknown. The Democratic Party of the Friendly Islands is the only unofficial, known party because it was created from

the movement (Pohiva P. , 2012). The membership base in the democratic movements and democratic party consists of mostly men that vary in age, gender, education background, occupation and social class. Most active members in the democratic movements and democratic party are men and women from ages 30 to 80 that are from middle class families. The current status of democratic movements in Tonga has been a mechanism for the political ambitions of its leaders. The democratic movement wanted a prime minister that is part of the reform and succeeded with Akilisi Pohiva being elected in December 2014.

The future of political parties in Tonga is unknown due to the government prioritizing economic stability, transparency and foreign policy.

Teisina Fuko, an ex-parliamentarian, stated in 2011 that political parties should be established where the ruling party would come out with a set of goals and set of ideas about how they will govern the government. Members of the parliament elected Tuivakano as the prime minister in 2012. Tuivakano then appointed people who supported him, taking from both nobles and peoples representative in the parliament. The trouble of choosing from both sides is that they did not have a pre-set goal. Tuivakano chose the members of the parliament into positions as ministers because they were noble and they were indifferent to Akilisi's pro-democracy movement ideals. Fuko continues to state that goals while being in the parliament, but there will be no comparison what they have preached and what they have declared achieved. And that's the reason why party systems should come into play (Fuko, 2012).

If political parties will be established in Tonga, parties must be prepared with a vision, mission and goals that will give citizens the opportunity to determine which parties to join. Like any democratic country, a constitutional design must be created to determine on a two-party system or a multi-party system in the country. A two-party

system has a higher life expectancy than multi-party systems, however multi-party systems do a better job in representing the different interests in society. Akilisi Pohiva was concerned that a multi-party system cannot be controlled. Pohiva was concerned that different interests will arise and cause problems when it should lessen problems. Pohiva was referring to problems caused from different views on goals, missions and visions for the country that might lead to another riot. Pohiva stated that a law can be made that clearly states the number of political parties that can be established in Tonga and laws that political parties should abide by (Pohiva A. , 2012). People who form political parties in Tonga have a deep understanding of the role of political parties to democratic consolidation and use their party influence to advocate democratic ideals (Akauola, 2012). Most of the parliamentarians that I had the opportunity to interview were unanimous in supporting the establishment of a two-party system in Tonga. However, independent political parties can be established in a two-party system. They encourage a two-party establishment to start with and if it does not reap satisfactory results, then a multi-party system can be established. Once the Tongan government has decided to establish a party system in the government, and then the government should form laws and require that political parties have certain organizational structures. However, at this time, no such law has been formed.

## Chapter 5: CIVIL SOCIETY

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*“Civil society is both an all-invasive sphere of human interactions and a distinctive domain.”*

*-Machiel Karskens (2002)*

### **What is a civil society?**

Civil society can be perceived as a “school of democracy” where people can feel what democracy actually means and learn how to act as civilians. This is not a new idea but was introduced by Alexis de Tocqueville who viewed civil society as an essential part of a democracy that promotes not only democratic concepts but also its values and actively integrates people into the participation process (Soares, 2009, p. 138). Civil society has been and is associated with various concepts and ideas especially with democracy, democratic consolidation and democratic transition due to the fact that civil society can give a voice to social groups and people that do not feel represented well in democracy or shed light on issues that the state does not seem to pay attention to. Some civil society organizations have proficient knowledge in areas of concern and may serve the government as a good counselor. Civil society organizations can even attempt to directly solve problems that the government does not seem to notice. Therefore, civil society can further improve some of the weaknesses of democracy itself and lower dissatisfaction. Citizens that participate in civil society can have a good experience that helps bind them to the democratic system. There are possibilities of active participation in different areas of democratic states and communities. This can help citizens to have a positive attitude, outlook and identification with the political system.

Tonga is a very family oriented country. Before the introduction of democracy in Tonga, Tongan families would *fakataha* or gather together to discuss current events in



the family and resolve family issues. The discussion is a forum for voices to be heard and ideas to be shared. These gatherings have led to solving family issues and encouraging and strengthening family bond. On a wider scale, Tongan communities would hold a *fono* or village meeting. The Monarch appoints a noble as an estate holder for various villages. The noble selects a district leader from the residents in the village. The district leader is responsible in scheduling and calling a village meeting. These meetings pertain to village concerns such as land disputes, upcoming events, fundraising incentives and land beautification projects. The village meetings have been very beneficial in creating an inclusive community within the village, allowing them a sense of control and participation.

Thomas Carothers (1999) defines civil society as a realm similar to but distinct from the state- a realm where citizens align themselves according to their own needs, wants and interests.

Philipp Soares (2009, p. 231) emphasizes how he defines civil society.

“Civil society refers to the arena of uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values.”

In theory, its institutional forms are distinctive from those of the family, market and state, however in practice, the borders between civil society, state, market and family are frequently complicated, vague and negotiated. Civil society generally comprises a mixture of actors, spaces and institutional forms, which varies in their degree of formality, autonomy and power. Civil societies are often occupied by organizations such as registered charities, self-help groups, non-governmental development organizations, community groups, professional associations, advocacy groups, women’s organizations, faith-based organizations, coalitions, social movements, and trades unions.

Jan Aart Scholte (2011, p. 6) states that civil society could be agreed as a political space that encourages and promotes voluntary associations that cautiously seek to shape the rules that governs traits of social life. He continues to state that civil society organizations focus on formal rules, which seek to change and/or inflict social concept or social orders.

The Centre for Civil Society at the Johns Hopkins University (1999, p.3) defined civil society organizations as:

Any organization whether formal or informal, that are not part of the apparatus of government, that do not distribute profits to their directors or operators, that are self-governing, and in which participation is a matter of free choice. Both organizations serving their members and serving the public are included.

Comprised within this definition, therefore, are cultural institutions, recreation organizations, religious bodies, unions, community-based organizations, professional associations, development agencies, anti-poverty groups, social service agencies, advocacy groups, schools, private, not-for-profit health providers and many more.

Though there is a shortage of consensus around a frequently understood definition of “civil society,” there are definite characteristics that are generally related with the term and what it means to be a civil society organization. These include, first, civil society is a part of society – which means, the world of intentional associations. Civil society signifies a type of society that was branded with certain ideals. The ideals may include the skills for living a democratic life cooperation, peaceful coexistence, political equality and tolerance. There is a problem with civil society representing a kind of society. The problem affects our political institutions, workplaces, colleges, families, schools, and houses of worship and universities that foster morals and principles in the places we learn and live are shaped. Second, civil society is good society – that is, it sets the contributions of voluntary associations in a proper context

and guards against the tendency to privilege one part of society over others on the basis of some perceived ideological grounds. However, good neighbors cannot replace good government, nonprofits should not be asked to replace business and substitute for functioning markets. Lastly, civil society is a part of the public sphere – that it embraces the common good and helps the public deliberate about the common good which is democratically central to civil society thinking. In its role as the public sphere, civil society becomes the arena for debating and negotiating alternative solutions to problems.

Successful civil societies consist of the following key features that were abstracted from different definitions. The features of a successful civil society are separated from state and the market. Also, founded by people who have common values, needs and interests like equality, cooperation, tolerance and inclusion; and development through a vitally independent and endogenous process which cannot be manipulated or controlled from the outside. (Ghaus-Pasha, 2004, p. 5)

A wide range of organizations highlights the key features of civil societies from informal local organizations to large registered formal bodies. These can include traditional organizations such as community-based organizations, non-commercial organizations, trade and professional associations, mass movements and action groups, religious organizations, modern groups and organizations. Civil society should not be limited only to non-government organizations (NGOs). NGOs are an important part of civil society because they sometimes have a leading role in activating citizen participation politics, socio-economic development and in shaping or influencing policy. However, civil society is a wider notion, which embodies all relations and establishments that subsist outside the market and state.

Civil society is considered one of the three important parts of society in democratization, along with government and business. Its weaknesses and strengths determine both the speed and depth of any democratic transition and in time help to maintain the democratic system itself (International IDEA, 2000). Civil society is established and thrives wherever and whenever voluntary associations purposely try to shape rules that govern society.

Strength from civil society can have a positive influence on the market and state. Civil society is also seen as a progressively essential vehicle for promoting good governance like accountability, effectiveness, transparency, openness, and responsiveness. Civil society can advance good governance in many ways. Civil society helps the advocacy and policy analysis in good governance. Civil society helps in monitoring and regulating of state performance and the behavior and action of public officials. Civil society allows citizens to enunciate and identify their beliefs, values, democratic practices and civic norms by building social capital. Civil society activates particular constituencies, especially the marginalized and vulnerable sections of masses, to engage or participate more fully in public affairs and politics. Civil society works to enhance or improve the well being of other communities and specially their own community (Ghaus-Pasha, 2004, p. 3).

The advocacy of civil society is also vital. This includes its role in identifying unaddressed problems and conveying them to the attention of the public, in protecting human rights and in providing voice to the vast range of social, environmental, political and community concerns and interests.

### **Does strong civil society ensure democracy?**

Civil society is thus beneficial in many ways. Thomas Carothers (1999) argues about the contribution of civil society in regards to ensuring democracy.

A vivacious, assorted civil society often does play a crucial role in helping advance democracy. It ensures control to the state and that citizens are taken seriously, and promote greater civic and political participation. Robert Putnam (1995) observed the obvious regression in U.S. community-oriented associations and argued that a weak civil society leads to a lack of “civic engagement” and “social trust.” On the other hand, Princeton professor Sheri Berman (1997) contradicts Putnam with a convincing example of Weimar Germany. Germany, in the 1920s and 1930s, was unusually rich in associational life, with many people participating and belonging to the kinds of professional and cultural organizations that were forefront in the thought of pro-democratic civil society. Berman continues her argument, that not only did Germany’s vibrant civil society fail to solidify democracy and liberal values, it disrupted them. Thus, weak political institutions were incapable in responding to the demands placed on them by the many citizen’s organizations, leading the latter to shift their allegiance to other groups, such as nationalist, populist groups and eventually to the Nazi Party. In the end, the density of these civil societies enabled the Nazi’s speedy creation of a dynamic political machine. Germany began with the intentions of creating a strong civil society but due to limited civic engagement and social trust. Civic engagement and social trust is needed in any civil society in order to solidify democracy and its values.

Established democracies with strong political institutions are not excluded. There are causes to doubt the simplistic idea that when it comes to civil society, “the more the better” because established democracies encourage and enforce a strong civil society. Dating back to the 1960s, some scholars forewarned that the increase of interest groups in mature democracies could congest the workings of representative institutions and systematically deform policy results in favor of the rich and well-

connected or, more simply, the upper-class and the better organized. In the 1990s, warnings about “demosclerosis” or the government’s progressive loss to adapt have intensified as advocacy and lobbying organizations continue to multiply (Rauch, 1995).

### **Does Democracy ensure a strong civil society?**

The example of Japan is much suited as an example. For half a century, Japan has been a steady democracy but continues to have a relatively fragile civil society, especially in terms of independent civic groups working on the kinds of issues that activists in the United States and Europe are passionate about, such as the environment, human rights, women’s issues and consumer protection. On the other hand, in France, one of the mother countries of Western liberal democracy, civil society is placed in the back seat to a powerful state. Spain is an example of a country relatively weak in associational life. To warrant a diversity of political choices, political parties and elections must take precedence in a country, and they can certainly function in a country with only lightly developed civic associations. Criticism by American political analysts towards Japan, France, Spain and other countries where civic participation is low argues that these states are at best stunted democracies because they lack what Americans believe is an optimal level of citizen engagement. Many Japanese, French and Spanish citizens contend that their systems better accord with their own traditions concerning the relationship of the individual to the state and allow their governments to make more rational, less fettered allocations of public goods. An obvious observation concludes the argument that a democracy is not a real democracy unless it has American-style civil society, is not only wrong but dangerous (Carothers, 1999). A strong belief in civil society should not fuel an intolerant attitude toward different kinds of democracies. However, Tonga should

focus on political party formation first and then interest groups later.

The formation of the Civil Society Forum of Tonga is to help provide a strong leadership to develop an effective civil society sector in Tonga. The Civil Society Forum of Tonga (CSFT) is committed to creating a conducive environment for all civil society organizations (CSO) development through equal participation, open dialogue, partnership, collective decision making and consensus building. CSFT continues to empower civil society organizations by providing opportunities for capacity building and leadership development. The CSFT values are equity and equality, responsiveness, transparency, community based, sensitivity, respect, resilience and safety, justice and fairness and empowerment, interaction, collaboration and consensus, goal orientation and perseverance. The CSFT goals are strengthening CSO sector, capacity building and institutional development, enhance communication and information sharing, strengthening key relations to advocate for common voice and development of legal framework (PIANGO, 2015). The CSFT is worth mentioning because in a geographical nation like Tonga, there can only be a few civil society forums, civil society organizations and NGOs. Even though the CSFT is great on paper, I have hardly heard the presence of the CSFT in society. The government in 2006 was reportedly missing about 1.2 million pa'anga or the equivalent of \$570,000 in U.S dollars in foreign aid. This shows the lack of good governance and the corruption in the government. In 2014, the Tongan government before Akilisi Pohiva became prime minister was struggling to put in place an anti-corruption mechanism. The Anti-Corruption Commissioner Act was formed to investigate and deal with complaints against the government. This was a great move in becoming a more democratic system. The Anti-Corruption Commissioner Act was never really implemented. But a year later, under a more democratically elected government of

Pohiva, a new bill to form, the new Good Governance Commission is proposed. The current prime minister, Akilisi Pohiva is putting efforts into having more transparency in the parliament and good governance (Ilolahia, 2012). The CSFT and Good Governance Commission are very important especially in this democratic transition phase. The CSFT and Good Governance Commission are examples that civil society helps further democracy in Tonga. Civil society is seen as a progressively essential vehicle for promoting good governance like accountability, effectiveness, transparency, openness, and responsiveness (Ghaus-Pasha, 2004, p. 5).

Civil society is established and thrives wherever and whenever voluntary associations purposely try to shape rules that govern society. Non-government organizations (NGOS) is a part of civil society and they sometimes have a leading role in activating citizen participation politics, socio- economic development and in shaping or influencing policy. The determinant of civil society in Tonga lays in NGOs. NGOs play a crucial part in Tonga especially NGOs that are advocacy for women's rights. Most NGOs in Tonga either support women and children's rights or help with the youth. NGOs in Tonga are *Ma fefine mo e famili*, (the woman and family), Human Rights and Democracy, Tonga Trust and the Civil Society Forum of Tonga or CSFT. These NGOs help each other but they individually have their own mandate. Most of these NGOs give awareness about women's rights and provide support with changes in society.

Civil society is beyond political and policy concerns, civil society also performs a wider communicative function, providing the medium through which spiritual, cultural, ethnic, social, occupational, artistic and recreational sentiments find as an outlet. They contribute to the social and cultural vivacity of community life and deepen human existence. Tonga has a very rich culture with strong traditions.



Democracy has not made a major impact on Tongan society yet. However, Tonga is moving towards becoming more democratically consolidated, its society still shows respect to the elders and it is still a family oriented environment. Thus, democracy does ensure a civil society. The government change has only changed the government structure but has not changed the attitudes of the people towards their fellow men and women.

## **Chapter 6: CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS**

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*"There is no "socialist democracy," there is only democracy."*

*-Robert Dahl (1989)*

To close my thesis, I will address my main and sub arguments one by one.

### **The status of democracy in Tonga**

Democracy is still a work in progress and still needs time to be infused into the Tongan culture. One of the reasons to democracy being slow is that there has to be more education among the people of their contributions and responsibilities in the democratic development. The majority adult population has a little understanding of what democracy represents but they are only interested in politics when campaign season is in full force. Citizens should be educated to follow up on their representatives and make sure that the policies that were spoken of during the campaign have been implemented. One recent signal of a more democratic nation took place in the latest election in December 2015. Akilisi Pohiva was appointed the first commoner prime minister by collecting the majority ballots among the parliamentarians. This is a good sign of the democratic transition, however, there is still a long way to go. The nobles are still appointed by the Monarch. Democratic consolidation recommends that the people through elections select all representatives in the government. The nobles being appointed by the King demonstrates that the Monarch still holds certain authority in the parliament. The democratic transition is successful with the presence of the freedom of expression, right to vote, freedom to form and join organizations, right of political leaders to compete for support and for votes, eligibility for public office, free and fair elections, alternative sources of information and institutions that make government policies dependent on votes and

other expressions of preferences. Democratic consolidation in Tonga allows the adult population right to vote on the parliamentarian of their choice without force or bribery. The citizens in the democratic regime in Tonga are free to form or join organizations of their choice as long as the organizations abide by the law. Political leaders can compete as constituencies campaign around election to win voters. Elections are fair and free. Elections are in a public place like the village office. Assigned officials monitor the ballot boxes to avoid tampering of ballot boxes.

Another issue is that there are very few female figures in the parliament. There should be more opportunities for women to be part of the government. There are women who work in the government but not in a leadership position like a minister. The previous Minister of Education (2012-2015), Dr. 'Ana Taufe'ulungaki was the first female minister in the history of Tonga. For a democratic government to be effective, I would support Sitiveni Halapua's (2012) idea of a government of national balance. The government of national balance is an idea of how members of the parliament can work together to achieve government goals and create a more democratic system. Tonga is a representative democracy. Representative democracy is ideal for Tonga since elected officials can represent their constituencies. However, representative democracy elects officials to make the political decisions, articulate laws and administer programs for the good of the people. Representative democracy is an easier form of government to manage at this time in Tonga. In comparison, participatory democracy will include unnecessary ideas and decisions since citizens have a high amount of participation.

### **Government of national balance**

The current government is set up to ensure that everybody competes against each other. A government of national balance is based on the idea that major interests must be balanced in the country. The government of national balance acknowledges the caste system in Tonga encompasses King, nobles and commoners. The caste system does not allow people to view themselves as equal in or out of the government. The current system makes people compete with each other with the mentality that the person who wins takes all and nothing for the rest. The government of national balance is formed after elections by those with majority votes from their constituencies and has a position in government. The winning parliamentarians will sit down and draw a framework for the government that they want to form. They must find a way to balance the interest that they represent. This might be difficult if they do not come to some agreement. They will have numerous discussions with no strict agenda about what would be the vision for the country for the next 3 years. The framework should be clear and can be easily articulated and explained to the people. Once an agreement has been established about the framework for the country for the next 3 years, and then the parliamentarians can vote amongst themselves to elect the prime minister.

### **Civil society needs more organizations**

Civil society groups exist because the civil society reflects the democratic freedom available. Tonga does not have many such organizations. The organizations that are known are women NGOs with little membership and church organizations. The church organizations rarely participate in politics in order to avoid mixing church and

politics and cause confusion and strife among the members. The lack of membership can be a factor of many things. Citizens in the democratic regime do not understand the importance of democracy and the contribution of civil society to democracy. The absence of organizations contributes to citizens not being educated and made aware about democracy. Organizations in Tonga need to register as confirmation and to draw interest. There must be a variety of organizations that are not female oriented. There should be organizations for the youth, male population and interest groups. More organizations in civil society will contribute to the social and cultural vivacity of community life and deepen human existence.

### **Two-party system**

Tonga does not have any official or registered political party. Political party is not on the top of the list for democratic transition at this moment, however it should be implemented once there is some kind of political stability. The current prime minister Akilisi Pohiva would like to implement a party system in Tonga. Pohiva is focusing on government transparency, good governance and a strong civil society. When the time arrives for a party system, I recommend that a two-party system be implemented. A two-party system ensures stability in the government and clearly signifies where responsibility lies, and has an alleviating influence over the main political participants. These points coincide with Pohiva's goal for the Tongan government. A two-party system should not restrict the establishment of independent political parties. Independent parties should have the same rights as the dominant parties in a two-party system. On the other hand, multi-party systems can operate along relatively stable democratic governments and adequate policies. In the case of Tonga, a multi-party system is not ideal because it is still in the process of establishing a stable democratic government and creating adequate policies. Multi-party systems will be challenging

for Tonga because it is a small island with a population of 103,000 and geographically small. Tonga should implement a two-party system which will be easier to manage and will hold voters interest. A two-party system is ideal to start in Tonga if the adult population feels that the two-party system is restricting then there is always space and time to implement a multi-party system. A two-party system that is in a parliamentary system like Tonga simplifies policies for voters, which is easier for them to understand. Whereas having a variety of policies under a multi-party system can confuse voters. Nobles can freely form an independent political party within the two-party system. With nobles having the opportunity to establish their own independent party, they can advocate for people's votes with their vision and mission for the government. Since there is a total of 33 noble titles in Tonga, this also provides an equal opportunity for all nobles to campaign during elections.

### **Further research**

This research is another door to hopefully more research being performed about democratic consolidation in Tonga. I was not able to discuss the relationship between religion and democracy in Tonga. This will be an interesting research in the future since religion plays a vital role in the Tongan community. In addition, I was not able to provide analysis about the impact of democracy to the economy. Analysis about the economy and democracy can be crucial in providing more insight about the democratic transition in Tonga. I hope that this research has shed light on a very new concept in Tonga that is democracy. Democracy has a bright future, which rests upon the entire society and how society will push the borders of democracy and its ideas in Tonga.

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## Appendix 1

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### **Facts about Tonga**

Geography: 20 00 S, 175 00 W, 747 sq.km, about 170 islands – 36 inhabited.

Government: Constitutional monarchy with unicameral Legislative Assembly (parliament); Head of State is King George Tupou VI. The voting population elects 17 representatives and the nobles elect 9 representatives to parliament. Out of this pool, members will elect a Prime Minister. The Prime Minister will then choose Cabinet ministers from the same pool, with the option of bringing in up to 4 others from outside the pool if necessary (for example, if no one with health expertise or legal expertise is voted in, the PM can bring other qualified people to run those respective ministries.)

Total Population (2006): 101,991 (51,772 males and 50,219 females), average annual rate growth of 0.4%.

Population on main island of Tongatapu: 72,045, with urban population of 23,658 (23.2% of the total population)

Population density: 157 people/sq. km

GDP per capita (constant prices): USD \$3042

GDP per capita (current prices): USD \$5258

Median age: 21 years old

Infant mortality rate (IMR): 19 (22 for males and 16 for females)

Life expectancies at birth: 67 years old for males and 73 years old for females.

Average age at marriage: 28 years old for males and 25.6 years old for females.

Annual net migration rate: -1,800

Dominant religions: Free Wesleyan Church 37%, Latter Day Saints 17%, Roman

Catholic Church with 16%, and Free Church of Tonga 11%.

Literacy rate for 15-25 years old: 98.5% Subsistence workers: 17% of males, 19% of females (growing or gathering produce or fishing to feed their families). Of this, 21% in outer islands, 9% in urban areas.

Unemployment rate: 1.1%, without counting subsistence workers. Counting subsistence workers, unemployment rate is 36%.

Tenure: 72% of all households owned their dwelling outright, 4% rented their dwelling, and another 23% resided in their dwelling rent-free.

***Source: Tonga Department of Statistics, 2011***

## Appendix 2

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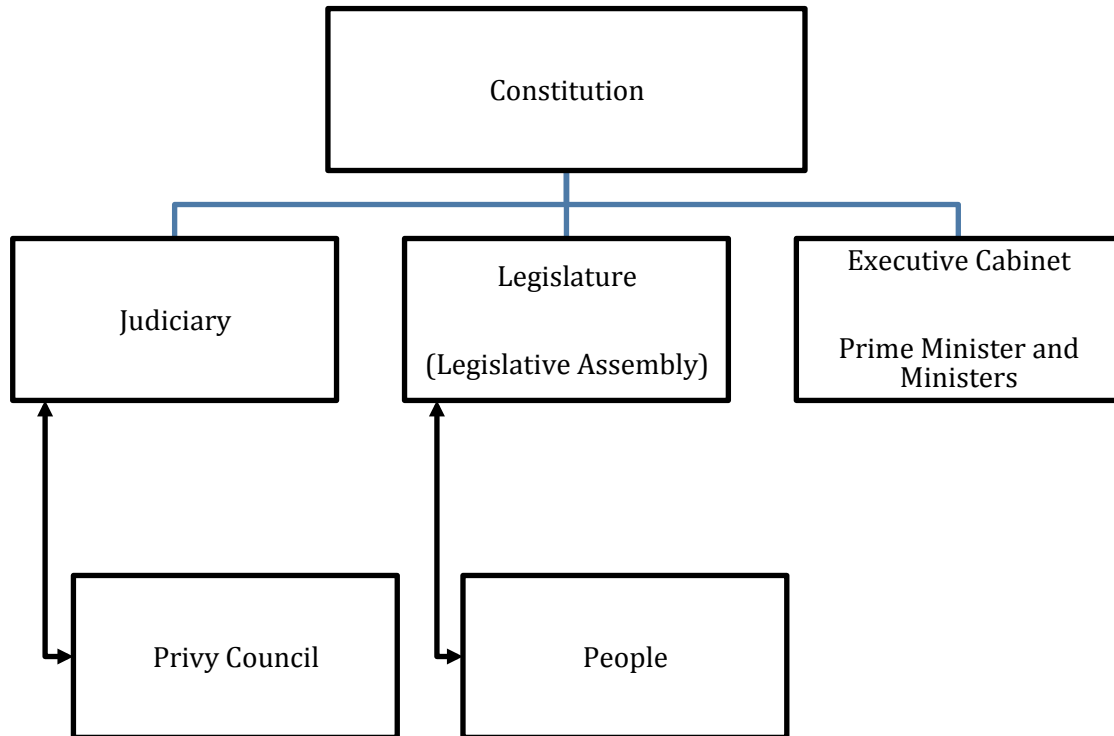
### Interview questions

1. In your own words, what is democracy?
2. A democratic movement is a political or non political party that advocates democracy, what is your own understanding of a democratic movement? Are you associated with a democratic movement?
3. Are all democratic movements important? Why?
4. Do you believe that democracy is “the only game in town”? Why?
5. What are your feelings towards democratic transition in Tonga, thus far?
6. What are the successes of democratic transition in Tonga?
7. What are the failures of democratic transition in Tonga?
8. What are your predictions for the future elections?
9. What is the impact of the democratic transition in Tongan society?
10. What are your suggestions for the future of democracy in Tonga?

## Appendix 3

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### Reformed political system



## Appendix 4

### Summary of General Elections, 2015

Summary of General Election, 2014											
Constituency	Registered Voters	No. of Votes	No. of Informal Votes	% of Voter Turn-out	No. of Voters who did not vote	% of Voters who did not vote	No. of Candidates	No. of Voters voted for the winning candidate	% of votes received by winning candidate	No. of voters voted for other candidates	% of voters voted for other candidates
TONGATAPU 1	3641	2769	13	76%	872	24%	8	1482	54%	1287	46%
TONGATAPU 2	3210	2265	9	71%	945	29%	4	1091	48%	1174	52%
TONGATAPU 3	3916	2969	6	76%	947	24%	7	999	34%	1970	66%
TONGATAPU 4	3206	2462	12	77%	744	23%	9	783	32%	1681	68%
TONGATAPU 5	3714	2898	10	78%	816	22%	4	1682	58%	1216	42%
TONGATAPU 6	3775	2909	7	77%	866	23%	4	1036	36%	1873	64%
TONGATAPU 7	3529	2678	5	76%	851	24%	8	822	31%	1856	69%
TONGATAPU 8	3364	2621	3	78%	743	22%	5	1016	39%	1605	61%
TONGATAPU 9	3470	2683	7	77%	787	23%	6	692	26%	1991	74%
TONGATAPU 10	3811	3035	6	80%	776	20%	5	1402	46%	1633	54%
	<b>35636</b>	<b>27289</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>8347</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>11005</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>16286</b>	<b>60%</b>
'EUA 11	<b>2597</b>	<b>2159</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>760</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>1399</b>	<b>65%</b>
HA'APAI 12	2046	1709	1	84%	337	16%	6	535	31%	1174	69%
HA'APAI 13	2004	1665	1	83%	339	17%	5	823	49%	842	51%
	<b>4050</b>	<b>3374</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>676</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1358</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>60%</b>
VAVA'U 14	2817	2447	4	87%	370	13%	7	1232	50%	1215	50%
VAVA'U 15	2596	2224	4	86%	372	14%	12	747	34%	1477	66%
VAVA'U 16	2666	2285	5	86%	381	14%	7	767	34%	1518	66%
	<b>8079</b>	<b>6956</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>1123</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>2746</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>4210</b>	<b>61%</b>
ONGO NIUA 17	<b>1085</b>	<b>949</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>519</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>45%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>51447</b>	<b>40727</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>10720</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>16388</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>24341</b>	<b>60%</b>