

Chapter 7

CONCENTRATION OF POWER: FROM STRATEGY TO HEGEMONY - *THE HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTION PARTY*

Power politics in Samoa cannot be fully understood unless we have a good in-depth look into the party in power, the Human Rights Protection Party (HRPP), the first and longest ruling party in Samoa to date. This chapter will attempt to provide a comprehensive analysis of the party's history, organisation, policy development, leadership and the way it wields power. Every effort was made to present a fair description of people, policy, events and developments, considering the paucity of information on some aspects, the leadership for example. On the other hand, given the abundance of information on or about government policy and development, the aim for balance has dictated the choice of references and direction of this discussion. But the emphasis of this observation will be on the HRPP leadership, especially in the figures of a few individuals, who have been influential in its direction.

But first, the name. Arguably HRPP's political vision is entrenched in its name. It was a promise to protect the rights of the people as the cornerstone of its founding. So, when the name resonates in ordinary conversation or critical dialogue, there is a common understanding that it refers to the average Samoan in villages, the population at large, the citizen whose political rights need protection. The choice of name will take us back to its origins. The HRPP's founding members believed that the rights of the average Samoans have been compromised by the powers of the day (Malielegaoi, 2017). The experience of the Public Service strike, the fallout with the head of state on his part in the power tussle among the parties, impacted directly on the naming task. From HRPP's perspective it was authority versus the common people. State authority seemed to have been the monopoly of a few, the 'haves' who were concentrated in Apia. The way to rectify this was to appeal to the average citizens' economic sensibility. Alluding to equity and equality sounded somewhat revolutionary at the time, particularly in a society that is hierarchical, rural and people happily accept their lot. To equalize the score between Apia and backward Savaii (no offence at all) was a powerful vision in hope as much as it was good politics.

7.1 Organisation and ethos

Like the New Zealand model, the party has a president whose office is symbolic though active in the administration aspects. The party has a Secretary and Treasurer. Then there's the Leader and Deputy Leader. The caucus is made up of all voting members including its members of parliament and a cohort of officials. As government, the leader is the prime minister while the deputy leader is the deputy prime minister. The main offices are selected by a secret ballot. The leader of the party is also the leader of the government. As a political apparatus the office of the leader of the party is preeminent over the caucus. The leader as prime minister is also the main spokesperson on behalf of the government. The party is supported financially by its own members mainly through donations and fundraising activities. In terms of ideological orientation, it is described as conservative, in the centre right of the political spectrum. Hence its organisational ethos is a reflection of traditional *faamatai* in both theory and practice. By the same token, its leadership propagates the belief systems of conservative Christianity and a vocal support of social conservative policies. For example, its stance against abortion and same sex marriage (Samoa Observer, Issue September 2, 2017).

7.2 A brief history

The HRPP came into being as a result of power relations gone sour. It was a political response of a group to a situation of political disarray, a reaction by a defeated party to a very murky political dilemma. While the intent was to counter effectively, its long-term impact might not have been considered too much at that particular point in time. So'o (2008) elaborated on the birth and emergence of this party in much clearer terms, highlighting the complex nature of politics in which democracy and culture were interlocked into negotiations, by which the politics of personalities and political acumen were shown for what they were. With the benefit of hindsight, such a move to mobilising people on a grand scale is now considered politically prudent and forward-looking.

As alluded to earlier the politics of personalities revolved around a few individuals whose stature in society drew immediate attention naturally, and in the arena of politics were the easy pick in terms of leadership. Stature is defined by one's good standing in the *faaSamoa* for example, as in the case of Samoa's first prime minister, Fiame Faumuina Mulino II, who also bore the *tamaaiga* title Mata'afa while in office. Tupuola Efi, who by heritage was a *tamaaiga* himself, and rightly so when he was

bestowed the Tupua Tamasese title later on. Their claims to *tamaaiga* placed them above the rest and with leadership skills and experience to enhance made them the ideal candidates. Moreover, the constitution highly implicates the *tamaaiga* institutions and ideology. Its members are candidates to the office of head of state and members of the council of deputies in deference to Samoan custom. Thus if personalities are meant to be endowed as such then this particular group has the advantage. Since the birth of the new state, the leadership was the monopoly of the *tamaaiga* regime.

Political acumen marked the emergence and development of the new party in terms of its leadership. First, the vision. The idea of a formal establishment of a party by creating roles, structures, organisation and most of all membership, was a novel undertaking. In fact it was a bold step away from the norm; the loose politics of consensus and traditional gentlemanly manoeuvring (So'o, 2008). This has been the politics of personalities and customary reciprocity by which *tamaaiga* ruled supreme since Independence.

In their 1979 defeat the HRPP leadership have learnt of the power of the collective will to counter (Malielegaoi, 2017). This they did successfully. As representatives of their constituencies, they knew how best to tap into the hopes of a rural populace. This required human effort and resources. And a strong message too, about equity and equality and upholding everyone's rights under the constitution. So when they called for the country to rally behind the cause, people responded. In the 1985 election the HRPP won by a landslide. In the election that followed it was against the power of a coalition, but they still managed to slip through by a one vote majority (ibid.).

With the gradual disintegration of the opposition by its own differences, not least the voters indifference, the HRPP again won the 1991 elections comfortably. And again in 1996. All these under the leadership of Tofilau Eti Alesana. He introduced universal suffrage, bridged a loophole in the law that put a stop to party hopping, passed the Parliamentary under-Secretaries Act 1988, and changed the law in order to appoint heads of government departments on a contract basis. Other changes that followed, under the leadership of his successor, Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, would only consolidate the HRPP's grip on power. Of the major political developments that HRPP pushed through, the one that stood out was that which put a stop to party-hopping. Such practice had almost destabilized the state and posed a direct threat to democracy. Since Tofilau's

watch, some of the major amendments have been made on the constitution under HRPP. Some of these were vehemently opposed by the opposition and the independent media. Yet overall support for the government still remained strong at grassroots level. Samoa has been under the HRPP rule for more than three decades. It is technically a one party state and with the absence of a strong opposition, it is hard to imagine a dramatic shift in fortunes for those who wish for a change.

Tupuola Efi, later addressed Tupua, a formidable opponent of the HRPP from its inception, charismatic as he was though, did not see the merits of forming a party according to one source; or he might have possibly done but for some unknown reasons sidestepped the challenge (So'o, 2008). Would it have made a difference to his political fortune though? It is arguable, though he did form a party and was a leader of opposition under a coalition government. But the political taint that lingered long in his career, in the mishandling of the public servants strike by his government would prove costly for power relations; otherwise fortunate as far as the HRPP was concerned, and which ultimately served to propel a new party to the front.

One source blamed the lack of sound advice on the part of his senior ministers and confidants. His entourage were mainly urban based, the elite of Apia in business and urban politics and more attuned to a European lifestyle than the harsh realities of rural living (ibid). For some of them, their claim to power was more through their wealth than the *mana* of their cultural heritage and association. Tupuola Efi may have been the tie that bound the whole but this could not stand against a united front by means of robust organisation, together with grassroots support of kin-based networks and communities. It can be argued favourably that the HRPP's success with power is attributed largely to its collective ability to mobilise the voters, something that other parties failed to achieve.

7.3 Activating power: a new style of leadership

The leaders of the new party were ordinary matai, though a number of them bore titles of significance in their villages and districts. Most of them were self-made and have tested their mettle in the bustle of Samoa's daily grind. The *faaSamoa* called it *tautua* (service). Every aspiring leader needs to build a reputation first through service to his/ her family and community. Their active participation as members of their respective communities meant that many of them were much closer to their grassroots

support. They will have these credentials to be counted deserving of their family's blessing, by bestowing them a matai title as a reward for their service. The village will lend its support of their candidacy when they decide to run for parliament.

The first leader of the HRPP was a high village chief, dignified by the salutation of *aloalii* (prince) though not equated with the *tamaaiga* (sacred sons) status. He was a government teacher having taught in one of its reputable colleges before he took up farming. Another contemporary of his served his family through commerce but it was his kinship connections with a church and a reputable family name that bolstered his entry and success as a politician. By the time both men entered politics each has made a name for himself already in their communities. They would soon emerge to become archetypes of a new model of leadership that favoured the new political environment.

Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi was the third leader of the Human Rights Protection Party; an understudy of his predecessor, Tofilau; who took over the rein when the latter resigned from prime ministership and leader of party due to ill-health. He was sworn into office in 1998 and has remained there since. He entered parliament in 1981 as member of parliament of *Lepa* constituency; and has been representing *Lepa Itupa i Lalo* for three decades to date. Born and bred in the village, his early education was with the village pastor's school in which he learnt his literacy by reading the Bible, and numeracy, and was noted early as a high-achieving student (Malielegaoi, 2017). His move to Apia to live with relatives changed his education fortunes with the Catholic education regime - and faith too; his success in its school system was rewarded with a scholarship to further studies in New Zealand. He was capped with a Masters degree in Commerce by the University of Auckland in 1969, the first to hold this degree for Samoans who've entered university. Tuilaepa returned home at the end of the same year to start a public service career as an Investigating Officer in Samoa's Treasury Department (Malielegaoi, 2017).

Tuilaepa's political career was borne out of a personal frustration with the political system; more exactly the political machinations by those in power that thwarted personal aspirations of senior public officials under their watch. In his book, *Palemia, a Memoir*, he was promised the leading role of Treasury by the then minister; this did not eventuate and given Samoa's political circumstances at the time; his belief that the industrial

dispute between government and the Public Service Association, in which Treasury should have been directly involved, can be averted; all served as a motivation to change career. Hence his decision to enter politics. Samoa's problem as he saw it then was lack of political vision – at least trust in those with the expertise (ibid.).

His timing coincided with events of magnanimous proportions in Samoa's democratic development; first, political instability due to divided loyalty of parliamentarians. Prior to his inception, Samoa had three prime ministers within a span of a year. Samoa's economy was in trouble. The public service was rocked by a dispute with government over wages that could have been handled a lot better, he believed. All of these influenced him deeply, as he related in his Memoir, and no doubt factored into his views and actions later as a leader and a career politician (Malielegaoi, 2017). Tuilaepa's leadership is still ongoing; described as a reformer and 'man of action' by the research participants in this study (See Chapter 9); his legacy is a consolidation of the HRPP control and positioning the party as a formidable force in Samoan politics (See Malielegaoi, 2017). Next, we shall look a bit more closely at the leadership of its second leader, whose actions put the HRPP on Samoa's political landscape.

7.4 Tofilau Eti Alesana

By Samoan standards, Tofilau Eti entered politics early, first as a village high chief, at 24; later as member of parliament at 34; a 10-year stint in service to his family and village as a matai. He represented his constituency of Faasaleleaga under his other matai title, Luamanuvae, and quickly got involved in national politics when appointed minister of health only a year after arrival. He was successful again in the 1965-67 elections and reawarded the ministerial portfolio of health; and again in the 1970 election under his Tofilau title. While he continued his service for the next two parliamentary assemblies it was as a backbencher, though it must be noted that he was very much involved in the assembly committees with years of solid in-house experience. The lull in ministerial involvement at this latter period is attributed to a change of guard in leadership. Mata'afa's successors would have own people to choose from; until the 1982 election when he took over the prime ministership and formed his first administration. By then he was 58 years mature and less arguably the most experienced of his peers to start in the office (World Biographical Encyclopaedia Incorporated).

Like many Samoan statesmen, not much is recorded about his early years. He was born in the village of Vaitogi in American Samoa. A son of a Congregational minister and wife of good standing in the Samoan community. He was educated locally in the pastor's school and Poyers School in the territory which continued on at Maluafou, an LMS mission school in Western Samoa, when his father was posted for work at Malua Theological College in Western Samoa. He joined Samoa's work force early culminating in a managerial role at one of Carruther's commercial branches. At one stage an attempt was made to join his father's pastoral career but this would not eventuate (ibid.).

Apart from his immediate family, only close friends and a few parliamentary colleagues knew him well as a person and more importantly as a leader. Such scant information means there's a blur when describing a personality or even commenting on somebody's leadership qualities. Anecdotal evidence abound. Witnesses speak about a family-oriented man, a leader who has a way with people of all classes and walks of life; approachable and comfortable with everyone and with himself. This rapport with the public and ordinary people helped him negotiate the terms of a dispute between government and the Public Service Association over wages, when government appointed him chairman of a commission to sort out the problem. This skill was displayed well during the Pule and Tumua strike,⁵⁷ the first major challenge on his administration, when he was able to quell the unrest, given the complex nature of traditional politics involved, his own safety, and in the end still held the key instigators to account under the rule of law (Malielegaoi, 2017).

Such shrewdness in politics was shown earlier. Once he stood in for Vaai, to sign the Protocol, an unpopular move at the time for the country and even in his own party; made him a popular figure in New Zealand politics nonetheless, with not too much of a fuss perhaps with the Samoan voters who would blame Vaai. This boded well for him when he became prime minister; during his administration the New Zealand government responded in kind to its many and various requests; the former New Zealand prime minister, Jenny Shipley, at his funeral, spoke of a colleague who's not easy to say no to. Saying no to the Privy Council's decision may have been the wise choice for the

⁵⁷ A peaceful demonstration that involved traditional powerbrokers of the Samoan hierarchy, against VAGST taxation.

perpetuity of the two country's treaty of friendship. Tofilau might have discerned that though it was a political risk on his part according to Tuilaepa. In retrospect, Samoa, by offering a political favour, has gained enormously from the relationship as a result. But when New Zealand and Australia attempted to discourage Samoa from reaching out to China, Tofilau was adamant. Supporting Communist China politically in its one China policy has seen Samoa reaping the benefits in the development of its infrastructure and economy as a whole.

The international row over the one China policy accentuated Samoa's own autonomy and independence in its foreign affairs. It sent a message to its traditional allies – New Zealand and Australia in particular - that Samoa's foreign policy has shifted with the new geopolitics of the Pacific, most notably the entry of the Chinese Communist government into the space. To prove, he was the first Samoan prime minister to visit mainland China. Such assertion of authority by Samoa was considered bold at the time, soon other Pacific neighbours followed (Malielegaoi, 2017). Tofilau and the HRPP no doubt had played a role in that repositioning of a new post-colonial Pacific in global politics.

The case of China would have exposed him as a modern opportunist who snubbed Samoa's traditional allies. At one time when New Zealand decided to ban nuclear weapons from its ports, Samoa proposed to Washington that Apia is available for its ships to berth at (ibid.). It proved at this point Samoa's right to make own decisions and paved the way to forging a foreign policy that picks and chooses whoever and however it sees beneficial to its national development. Tofilau was a pragmatist who could only see new opportunities with own pair of eyes. The opening of the first Samoan Embassy in Washington is attributed to this early courting of Washington by Tofilau (Malielegaoi, 2017, p. 134).

A leader's capacity can only be tested. Tofilau no doubt went through a very tumultuous period in Samoa's political history, first a test from within his own party and secondly from without, in the form of a very strong opposition. So'o remarked on this period of the party's early formation in finer details. The leader would soon realise that a structure is made up of people of different temperaments and own personal aspirations. It takes an able leader to pull it all together, politically speaking. In his Memoir, Tuilaepa

remarked on his predecessor's political shrewdness, an experienced tactician who had the ability to manoeuvre for the sake of unity at whatever the cost. Under his watch, some of the best 'minds' in their respective fields, who have entered politics, converged on the new party. They thought that they have what it takes to demand a ministerial portfolio in the government. It caused for alertness on the leader's part, particularly when signs of factionalism emerged and which, at one point, led to the defection of others to form new alliances. Tofilau was no 'procrastinator.' His ultimate solution was to add the number of cabinet ministers and promote thirteen backbenchers to the designation of Under Secretaries. It caused an uproar in parliament. Tofilau pressed on.

Equally testing was the phenomenon of 'kingmaker' that emerged in Samoan politics at the time. Tofilau successfully dealt with such on two occasions; first, directly with one such member who in the final hour, defected from the opposition camp to join the HRPP's own (Malielegaoi, 2017). The member's constituency got involved, entering the HRPP camp the next morning and demanded that the member left with them. They said they have some unfinished business to discuss. Tofilau, reading the situation clearly, intervened. He appealed to the supreme court of the *faaSamoa*; seated in the conscience of the people who value their genealogical connections most highly. At the end, the visiting party had no choice but to leave the member as he chose. After all, he is as much a family to Tofilau as with the opposition leader (ibid.).

The second scenario was an extension of the first, and involved a political impasse. Samoa's political power was hung in the balance with two sides of parliament commanding 23 members each. Tofilau, prime minister at the time, was on his way to the head of state requesting for a dissolution of parliament and a call for new elections. The leader of opposition was there already; beating him to the head of state's attention; and it seemed that the head of state has made up his mind already. Tupuola Efi, leader of opposition will be prime minister and he Tofilau will be deputy in a grand coalition. Again it was family kinship that made a difference. Tofilau would appeal to his cultural connection with the head of state; he Tofilau is the ninth family of the Malietoa clan by Samoan tradition. The head of state, as much as he is related to Tupuola through *tamaaiga* connections, also must defer to his family and mustn't be seen by Samoa as partisan. In this case, while it was the head of state who played the role of kingmaker, again the credit belonged to Tofilau's prowess in turning an impasse in his favour (ibid.).

Such an ability to adapt to a situation or even reconfigure a whole situation to serve politics was indicative of Tofilau's own style of leadership. This was clearly shown in the party's next move, amending the constitution to make way for Samoa's first full adult suffrage. As it turned out, the 1991 elections was the party's first clear majority, 27 out of 47 seats. It must be noted that prior to the passing of legislation, such a move away from the traditional base of Samoan authority, the matai system, was hotly contested both in parliament and across the country. The plebiscite outcome came out in favour by a modest margin; which was enough for Tofilau to usher in a new start in Samoa's electoral history.

The rationale behind the change couldn't be made more clearer; this will put a stop to the abuse of family titles to feed the electoral roll (matai franchise). With the inclusion of non-matai sectors, the pressure on candidates to secure votes has lessened, and so government justifiably has sorted half of the problem. A participant of this research talked about Tofilau's tact and wisdom by way of such response to a very serious issue. It was also a calculating move, he believed, which in smart politicking, turned out in favour of the HRPP. With the benefit of reflection it can be argued that the move for change, and the benefits for Samoa's democracy as a result, speak for his leadership's keen sense of understanding local politics and societal group behaviour. Otherwise, a risktaker who was confident with own ability and the trust of his loyal supporters.

The leadership of the party has always been a contentious issue from its beginning. Between him and his contemporary, Vaai Kolone, the choice revolved; the latter became its first leader then replaced by Tofilau later on for reasons to do with the electoral system infringements. Vaai's choice to leave the party caused for its serious split and end of Tofilau's second administration. The transition from his predecessor was not much of a problem given his experience and high level of support in the caucus. No one can argue against his capability to lead, particularly when he was physically fit and healthy but once illness caught up with him, a few colleagues in the party vied for the role. Tuilaepa recalled a number of such incidents when plotters worked behind the scene, with a plan, in case the ailing leader wouldn't make it to the next day (Tuilaepa, 2017).

As mentioned earlier, vying for the top positions – prime ministership and ministerial roles – marked this period, and Tofilau sought for a pragmatic solution, in the form of a larger cabinet and 13 undersecretaries (now called Associate Ministers). His ability to win over a disgruntled individual or a dissenting faction, appease a contender or colleague who has missed out on a ministerial position, and lend trust to those who matter to his survival all have made a difference to his perpetuity as leader.

Secondly, Tofilau was faced with an arduous task of containing a formidable opposition, aptly understood in the context of Samoa's current political situation and uncertain future. Tuilaepa described the nature of government's operation as under a survival mode. In parliament, the opposition party, with Tupua as leader, was an equal match for government. The lineup of government ministers and their opponents on the other side of the house were a blend of talents, skills and experience. Both Tofilau and Tupua, with years of experience in government, and possessing the best oratorical skills Samoan could offer proved a perfect match in the debating floor. Debates revolved around the two, and was a spectacle to observe. Sometimes emotions can hardly be contained so that the line between a good and bad debate was often blurred; the Speaker had to always intervene. At best childish banterings at worst, character assassinations. Bad blood is spilled to personal innuendos; one calling the other names or dishing out the common labels, the result, protocols of *va tending* and *tua'oi* were breached many times over.

The opposition's tenacity in parliament was amplified outside through a newspaper, the Samoa Observer, representing the independent media. The Samoa Observer was established in 1979 and quickly made a name for itself by being critical of government policy and leaders. So when government passed the law called The Printers and Publishers Act 1992, the newspaper was faced with a challenge of a different kind; its sources now can be disclosed in court, a move which the newspaper vehemently opposed as undemocratic and a way of undermining media freedom (Malifa, 1999).

A lawsuit by the prime minister followed, against the newspaper on the grounds that his name has been defamed by its reports. The lawsuit was upheld; two others followed; the rest of the story was told by the owner of the newspaper operation himself (Malifa, *ibid.*; So'o, 2008). According to the leader of opposition, the law was deemed a threat to press freedom; a breach of the people's constitutional rights to express freely, he

argued. Such a tenacious collective counterstrike propelled the issue to the fore of the world's attention and made a name for the newspaper internationally (Toleafoa, 2013). In this case, power may have been the means to achieve political ends, but it revealed Tofilau's own human foibles, particularly his rather unusual sensitivity to public criticisms. The appeal by the newspaper to remove the legislation may never eventuate; as a matter of fact, the current government has revamped the same law to counter similar opposition, now in a new form of the so-called online ghost writers, who have become ever more critical and ruthless by the day.

Tofilau's vision of Samoa is encompassed in his word, 'what is good for Apia is also good for Savaii.' It has become the party's slogan. It signifies equity and equality for all of Samoa. Under his watch he upgraded the infrastructure and modernised Samoa's economy to meet modern day demands. His early addresses to the country with an appeal to make sacrifices on behalf of Samoa echoed a famous US president's line. His vision is yet to materialise fully for Savaii and Samoa's outer districts. While his move to introduce universal suffrage could be interpreted as political, it was prudent and posed well for his political image as a mover and shaker. Last but not least, he was fortunate to have a few colleagues whose loyalty and expertise also made a real difference to his achievements.

Notwithstanding the achievements, his administration was tainted with many serious accusations. From the critic's viewpoint, the most serious pertains to its meddling with the country's constitution. As such, the keystone of transparent democracy has been jeopardised, they said. Seriously, the changes wrought in the constitution have made allowance for a state that is devoid of its proper checks and balances. While this can be viewed as Tofilau's last resort in a political situation that seriously threatened Samoa's democracy, it comes in the way of other issues, the critics pointed out. Some of these other issues are still in the limelight of Samoa's ongoing political discussion.

As noted, the long strides taken came at a cost of a reputation severely tarnished by violence. Power relations within the party hit an abysmal low when a minister of the state was gunned down, and two of its own fellow cabinet ministers were implicated, trialled and found guilty of masterminding the murder. Tuilaepa, prime minister and eye-witness, had this to say: "The assassination was a major trauma for Samoa. Political

debates had always been robust, but political violence was something else altogether. I think Samoa lost its political innocence the night Luagalau was shot” (Malielegaoi, 2017, p. 164). The incident, given its profound impact on the Samoan state’s reputation and politics, did little to influence the voters trust in the HRPP’s leadership regardless. Politically, such a high profile incident could only serve to prove the power of the Samoans own traditional peacemaking principles to mending any type of ruptured relations.

Some of the so-called controversial legislations pushed through by government and enacted by parliament were initiated during Tofilau’s tenure. These included amendments of the constitution which the opposition viewed as a violation of the people’s rights by means of neutralizing the powers which served as other checks and balances within the state. For example, the independent role of Controller and Chief Auditor, as well as of the public service. On the other hand, some of the popular legislations from an outsider’s perspective proved a positive to the HRPP’s reputation as a promoter of democratic values and institutions. These included the change from matai only suffrage to universal.

A participant of this study strongly stated that Tofilau was the chief architect of the present status quo, who lay the foundation so that his successor has taken over with a lot more ease. In sum, Tofilau can be judged as an astute political leader, and should be known as the instigator of modern Samoan political manoeuvring, in which a political party takes a central role in Samoa’s affairs seriously for the first time. To him, political unity is primary and preeminent, the rest is secondary, can sum up his legacy.

Tofilau the churchman has not been visited though it was very much part of his story. Steeped in EFKS tradition, his parents were village pastors as noted earlier. The church, especially the EFKS, has been very supportive of the HRPP right from its early days of inception, according to a source very close to Tofilau.⁵⁸ Naturally so when its leadership comprised some notable personalities in the EFKS fold. There was Va’ai Kolone, and Tofilau himself, Laulu Fetauimalemau, widow of former prime minister Mata’afa who had been a proactive member of the church when he was alive; Le Mamea Mualia, current member of the Council of Deputies, Polataivao Fosi, to name a few. The rupture

⁵⁸ A relation of former Tofilau Eti Alesana in a personal communication with the writer.

in power relations due to the public servants' strike proved yet again the delicate nature of the balance of Samoa's power relations. As long as politics and church intertwine, the spirit of old divisions could easily be evoked yet again when allegiance are drawn along such lines. Once a party or leader is identified with a certain faith it then has political repercussions. According to the source, Tofilau was very disappointed when he found out that certain members of the church leadership backed the Tumua ma Pule⁵⁹ demonstration in 1994. The experience caused him to align more with the 'new faith',⁶⁰ perhaps a personal reprisal against such treatment by the mainline churches, strictly speaking.

At a personal level, counting his blessings on divine intervention would have been part of his plan. The government's 'New Year' prayer meeting was his initiative. Faith in God can be applied as noted in the establishment of the national university, allocating \$5 in the budget for the foundation work. As well, the pension for the elderlies, Samoa's first taste of state welfarism. A couple of sources who related to me their personal stories very early during my fieldwork; one of them went to Tofilau's office seeking his help. He needed his money from a government fund for his late father's funeral. By law the fund authority wouldn't let him have his share. Tofilau was able to change that on his behalf. This shows his human side, which the critics will no doubt use to reaffirm their views about his credentials as a lawmaker. The source has own interpretation. He held Tofilau's memory in high regard. But perhaps the most notable accolade came from an unlikely source, the Samoa Observer, Tofilau's most outspoken critic, reported on his passing.

A front page title, 'History will remember Tofilau well', the newspaper commented that his achievements outshone his weaknesses. In reference to his pragmatic leadership, "He was a doer, not a procrastinator. Access to electricity, piped water supply and tar sealed roads are now nationwide, while multi-storey government buildings now add prestige to the capital; previously an ad hoc collection of wooden structures mostly from the last century mostly" (The Sunday Samoan, Issue March 21, 1999).

⁵⁹ The Tumua ma Pule strike in 1994 was a protest against the enactment of the VAGST (tax) legislation.

⁶⁰ Commonly referred to new churches originated mainly from the United States.

7.5 Consolidating power through policy imposition

After almost forty years in power, it is almost assumed that the ruling party's national policy or policies, is the secret behind its success and perpetuity in government. What can be assumed for sure is the durability of the slogan by which the HRPP Party has adhered itself to in its policy direction and economic management. 'What is good for Apia is also good for Savaii' is proudly tagged on its website homepage. Two revised versions were found, first under page HRPP history of the same website, which says, 'Works speak louder than words and what is good for Apia resident is also good for those in the rural areas.' Second, under Vision and Values, 'What's good in town is also good in the rural villages'; in total are variations of the same theme. As mentioned, the original analogy in its rather limited interpretation has taken on a much broader sense, on the side of good politics, the appeal to a political economy of equity and equality has become so entrenched that it is almost regarded as truth (Foucaultian) and common sense (Gramscian) to any adherent of both. Truth for the party is in the evidence of works, stressed in the slogan's longer version.

7.5.1 Economic strategy

In this and the next section, an attempt is made to describe HRPP policy from the standpoint of two traditional instruments of government, economics, and politics. The aim is to highlight the main issues involved and to make critical comments. First, the HRPP government's economic policy has always been at the forefront of its broad development strategies and national appeal. The HRPP has made a point of this from the outset. In their own words "in the worst possible situation since Samoa became independent.'

When the first HRPP government came into power in 1982, it first addressed the Government's poor financial position as well as its foreign reserves to enable the purchase of various goods from overseas. These difficulties were quickly remedied with an improved flow of Government's regular revenues and with the assistance from the International Monetary Fund and the Asian Development Bank. These difficulties no longer exist today (Quoted from The HRPP official website).

Hence the backdrop and urgency of the situation the party faced in its initial policy launching. Firstly, policy in terms of initiating structural reforms became the first priority. Such reforms no doubt motivated by the experience as described but driven mostly by the political will. The rallying call by the leader on the country to sacrifice

echoed solemnly at the time. Systems of control were put in place on the public sector spending costs for example, while the work of restructuring took on a new mindset. The urgency of the need for change was related by the Minister of Finance at the time, the strategy was to quietly fend off the old, planned economy, state-led approach for a more sustainable responsive choice (Malielegaoi, 2017). Diversification was then encouraged to reduce reliance on the agricultural sector, with development in tourism, fisheries and light industry showed steady signs of growth. A privatisation programme was pursued. To this end, the facilitative apparatus of financial donors and local expertise made the transition possible. Evidence of the positive outcome of policy direction and management showed up at the latter end of the 1990s (Amosa, 2012).

The establishment of Samoa's own central bank earlier provided policies and processes to monitor and regulate financial transactions of banking institutions to support economic development. Its primary function to regulate financial policies would ensure it serves its purpose by protecting economy. Such measures have been ongoing and transforming over the years. Lately the charge for more liberalisation of the economy has government called for the deregulation of the financial sector, the encouragement of investment and for continual fiscal discipline (ADB, 2011). But the most telling evidence of government priority was to be witnessed in the building of contingency utilities in support of the economy. These were in the forms of the basic infrastructure, in new access roads, water and electricity projects, buildings, schools, for example, which people tend to equate with policy efficacy quite easily.

Samoa's economic policy has been the focus of international donors and partners interests, whose own measures impact both directly and indirectly on Samoa's policy direction and management. While success is reported 'in some circles', the ADB has noted several constraints that need to be addressed (ADB, 2011). First the rising costs of doing business due to government's central role. The state plays too large a role in the economy hence accounting for over 40 per cent of Samoa's GDP, said the report. Many state-owned enterprises were inefficient. Second, the issue of property rights as not well-defined because of the weakness in the land leasing framework. Third, the need for financial market deepening and the factors involved such as weak property rights, the lack of collateral framework and difficulty in collecting debts. Fourth, the need to complete law reforms. Commercial law reform is incomplete, the report stated. Fifth,

the need to improve policy in relation to promoting its niche agricultural products. Sixth, the need for better processes to attract foreign investment (ADB, 2011).

Seventh, the need to improve engagement between government and private sector, particularly the Chamber of Commerce. Reports on the lingering issue of mismanagement of resources as well as poor execution of policy served to highlight the practical difficulties that correlate with higher aspirations of the leadership adversely. Attempts at tackling inflation and cost of living is also a matter of policy and political expediency, something which the HRPP government has managed with variable success (Amosa, 2012). Fluctuation of market costs affect inflation which is translated to living costs. There has been a strong feeling among the populace that the cost of living has become burdensome for the average family. An AusAid led survey estimated that 20 per cent of Samoans live below the basic needs poverty line; 8 percent below the food poverty line (AusAid, 2011).

Facilitating its economic policy commitment has been well referenced in previous studies (Vaa, et al. 2012, Amosa, 2012; ADB, 2011). I can only reiterate briefly on two factors in terms of their impact on Samoa's economic growth. First, the factor of human resources. Samoa has enough reserve of human manpower to cater for its needs for the moment. Most of its paid workforce is concentrated in the service sector, served by a steady flow of school leavers from 26 colleges and own university yearly. They account for the 12 per cent of the total population. Samoa sends a number of students on overseas scholarships, many of whom return to serve the country. On the other hand, the lack of opportunities for young job seekers is an issue for government in its role of creating enough work for its younger population.

Otherwise, many will leave the country to join its international cohort of overseas based workers who send money home in the form of remittances and goods, hence contributing significantly to Samoa's economic development. The others may join the list of seasonal workers who have been frequenting New Zealand and Australian orchards as fruit pickers. Since its inception, a total of 2,405 Samoan workers have been employed so far, a good number of them have been regulars (Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Labour)⁶¹. In its report, the ministry cited evidence of economic growth at both micro

⁶¹ Cited in Samoan Observer Issue 05/03/2019. MCIL stands for Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Labour.

and macro level in relation to these developments (MCIL, Report 2018-2019). Such labour mobility and policy creativity were aimed at encouraging foreign investments (ibid.).

Government objected to the fact that a measurement of poverty is often Western based; the contention is that although the macro-Samoan economy is market-based, people still rely heavily on subsistence living. However, many have long become accustomed to other food choices over taro and other staple crops. In a culture whereby import foods play a central part in *faalavelave*⁶², and has become a big fixture in the country's consumer spending, the average family is directly affected when prices increase now and then. Chicken for example used to be reared and processed locally for home consumption, now is part of the imports cohort, along with canned meat, which people depend on for daily consumption. Mentioned earlier, an AusAid led survey estimated that 20 per cent of the populace live below the basic needs poverty line; 8 percent below the food poverty line (AusAid, 2011). The Tuilaepa study (2006) stressed the importance of the dimension of vulnerability in the 'poor' people's perception of their situation.

In fairness, government's economic policy was marked by a prudent management of policy over the years regardless. Its policy direction however is still conditional due to factors beyond its control. International downturns in terms of market price fluctuation, its commitment to the World Trade Organisation, the far-reaching influence of globalization, physical isolation and the most challenging of all, natural disasters, are major examples of the types of demands it faces as it strives to become economically viable, at least uphold long-term sustainability. A country that is bereft of natural resources such as oil, gas and minerals will always depend on its human resources, foreign aid, and loans. The government was implicated in its use of laundered money to boost its financial position.⁶³ (Samoa Observer, Issue December 7, 2017). Yet the pace of development bespeaks government's belief that foreign debt, as long as manageable, is needed for the country's development. In response to its critics, government uses its work record to show, as well as reassure the country every now and then that things are under control,

⁶² Cultural obligations/practices such as funerals, etc

⁶³Tupua Tamasese Efi talked publicly about this issue; Samoa Observer Issue 22/5/2020. A 2017 EU report has the name of Samoa in its blacklist of 17 countries, alleged to be tax havens for such activity (Samoa Observer, Issue December 7, 2017; Samoa's Central Bank rejected the EU report: www.rnz.co.nz)

a reference to Samoa's record at debt repayment. Samoa's foreign debt reached the \$1 billion mark in 2017.

Overall, Samoa's economic policy is driven largely by its political agenda which puts first priority on infrastructural development and investment across the field both locally and overseas. While the people have benefitted from good roads and better services, the task of balancing the books due to rising demands of the services themselves is onerous. Ongoing commitments to the global community come at a cost, so as fulfilling government's role as fiscal manager of the state. By far the economy is largely dependent on tourism, foreign aid and remittances from Samoan citizens living abroad, most of which help to offset a persistently large trade deficit. The highest share of tax revenues in Samoa in 2018 was derived from value added taxes / goods and services tax (40.1%) (OECD, 2019). The fact that this tax is imposed on the demanding daily consumer items means the majority of the population contribute immensely. The tax is viewed as biased against the low wage earner due to its regressive formula (OECD, 2019).

To reiterate, the political implication of its economic policy is very much part of its political appeal to the public. As argued, it is core to its long-term strategy as a party (Malielegaoi, 2017). Yet the cost to the country and the people's well-being is obvious, according to the opposition. Short-term, the acceleration in the cost of living; long-term, the foreign debt and consequences for future generations. The risk of sustaining such policy means the HRPP will have to keep on developing with borrowed money. Evidence of the waste in terms of 'failed projects' are the hallmarks of such an ideologically driven policy, according to the opposition (Samoa Observer, Issue January 20, 2017).

7.5.2 Political strategy

As said earlier, the political chaos of the eighties had made a strong impression on a new party; the context of which provides a better understanding of its politics and direction once it consolidated power. Tofilau's tenure saw the party embarking on a mission of power consolidation. Political stability has been the core issue of politics at the time. It can be contended that this one issue determined its policy direction by and large. Both the HRPP and its critics conceded to the severity of the matter of political instability affecting the country. The HRPP would ensure that this would not happen

again under its watch (Malielegaoi, 2017). As the incumbent prime minister referred to in his book, it can only mean making bold decisions and drastic measures.

The reforming of the country's constitution created a precedent; its political impact may only be equated with New Zealand's experience with Rogernomics. What the latter has done for New Zealand economics alone, the former would do for Samoan politics; both experiences have been transformational in their own contexts. Since 1962 to December 2019, the constitution of the Independent State of Samoa has been amended liberally, mostly under the HRPP. First, constitutional amendments in which accumulation of political power under the Executive branch was construed as the ulterior motive. Toleafoa (2013) wrote about the decimation of constitutional offices that were placed in there for the democratic function of checks and balances on power. The fate of the office of Controller and Chief Auditor was his example. So as imposing direct political control on the public service and autonomy of sector, ending its political impartiality. Toleafoa (*ibid.*) viewed the changes in parliamentary tenure from 3 to 5 years, the enlargement of Cabinet from 8 to 13 members, the appointment of 13 Under Secretaries (later upgraded to Associate Ministers), the appointment of ministerial committees, as all part of government's control mechanism and creation of a powerful patronage system, which ultimate purpose was to normalize power in the Gramscian sense (*ibid.*).

McConnell (2010) was interested in the question of why a policy is successful from a government's perspective and a failure from the opposition's viewpoint. The reality lies somewhere in between, he suggested. Part of the problem is the fact that a policy has multiple dimensions; successful in one or two and not so in others. In general, policy has three realms according to McConnell: process, programme, and politics. The three strands of policy overlap. First, the Process which refers to the concern that society could and should make by means of the collective choices in the public interest. Traditions pertaining to this have pointed to government responsibility in terms of identifying the problem, examining potential policy alternatives, consulting, then making decisions. It can be an arduous effort as everything is weighed, assessed, and analysed (Lasswell, 1971; Lindblom, 1979). Secondly the programme; also known as the working role of the government, gives concrete form to a policy statement. It involves planning and a host of other factors. Then the third strand, politics. Any policy is political because it

affects people. Thus, any programme has political repercussions for a government if it failed to deliver, according to McConnell (2010).

Figure 2. McConnell Spectrum:

Policy as Politics: The Spectrum from Success to Failure:

Political	Resilient	Conflicted	Precarious	Political
Success	Success	Success	Success	Failure

McConnell believed that the most democratic-oriented outcome is in Resilient Success. Here a policy is achieved notwithstanding some modifications and setbacks. There is room for input from the opposition for instance, an added legislation or advice. Inevitably proponents of policy are prepared to compromise for sake of achieving higher goals of a programme. As McConnell pointed out, an attempt to align the three Ps can be problematic. A policy for instance can be good politics but not a good programme or process for that matter. A sound programme may not be good for politics, which may lead to conflicted or even precarious success in the end. This is where policy is viewed as more successful in one realm than in another or vice versa (McConnell, 2010, p. 357).

Using McConnell's spectrum as an analytic tool to study HRPP's policy requires another research to do it justice; what it can offer at this point is a basic framework that will help the reader pursue just that. Meanwhile, what can be substantiated generally is the fact of power relations and the need for balance. Now assuming that the HRPP has faced up to the challenge, handling all the three contradictions from a position of enormous power, it follows that policy as process is assumed a political success, so as programme, and politics. An example of process success was demonstrated in the amendments made to the constitution, with not so much difficulty overall. Granted there was some strong opposition in parliament, but they lacked the resources to win the people's support over, in order for government to take note and change course accordingly.

Even the amendments pertaining to checks and balances on power, such as the role of the Controller and Chief Auditor, were speedily processed and passed on as successful programmes of government. On the matter of policy as programmes, HRPP again has the numbers to push them through as demonstrated in its electoral reforms and other

programmes. The launching of the universal suffrage and changing the side of the road for driving encountered stiff opposition from interest groups, but in the end the majority of the voters lent their support. Because of the popular support, the government can claim legitimacy in launching these policies. This is Resilient Success and Successful Politics on the part of the government.

McConnell's analysis aligned with Foucault's idea of governmentality. Noted earlier, the concept puts rationality in the centre of government activity (Foucault, 1991). Responsible governance becomes the rationale as well as the moral charge of the state leadership (*ibid.*). The state is justified by its appropriation of knowledge in all aspects of the government activity. The government knows what it is doing is a script at the core of its political narrative. To the extent that such bodies of knowledge earn the right to be called state truths, they also become the people's truths and a common-sense part of society's predominant ideology (Gramsci, 1999). This monopoly of knowledge by the state gives the authority the advantage to control dissenting discourses within and outside its sphere of influence (Kelly, 2020). Because truth needs to be sustained, the government must act, whether in terms of policy direction or change. As shown in the discussion, the government has a reason behind each of the proposed changes, regardless of the opposite opinion, however rational it may seem (Foucault, 1997b; Kelly, 2020).

7.5.3 Social development and power strategy

For the purpose of this discussion, the name Strategy for the Development of Samoa is henceforth abbreviated SDS or simply Strategy. It is a name given to a Samoan government document or list of successive strategies for its development. For instance, the latest issue, 'Strategy for the Development of Samoa 2016/17-2019/20' provides government's policy direction from an economic and financial viewpoint. A clear signal about moving forward economically from the standpoint of the last SDS (Strategy). Key development strategies and sectors are listed as targets to focus on in the four-year period. In the words of the current finance minister, 'an important document for all Samoan. It is a guide to the path the Government is committed to follow over the next four years.' Four priority areas comprised Economic Sector, Social Policies, Infrastructure Sector, and the Environment, is a continuation of the previous SDS targets. So as pursuing the 'over-riding' vision to improve quality of life for all Samoans citizens.

As a strategy the SDS recommends a holistic approach, focusing on the three aspects of public development: economic, social and the environment. Sound economic management is the key to the strategy. The primary goal is to generate and sustain economic growth. Achieving the priority outcomes will be evidenced in the employment and generation of opportunities for example, towards the end goal of achieving an improved quality of life for all. Such improvement includes both quality outcomes in the two main sectors of public service: health and education. The aspiring goal is not to leave anyone behind, or in the context of two sectors mentioned, either pupil or patient, ‘to ensure that vulnerable groups can equally share in our progress’ (ibid. p. ii).

7.5.3.1 Health

Under priority Area 2 (Social) of the Strategy are three Key Outcomes. First, a healthy Samoa and Well-being promoted. This one can be achieved by means of a cohesive approach that targets two things: a ‘people focus’ service and preventative programmes. The keyword is improvement. For example, improvement can be measured by a reduction in numbers of alcohol drinkers and smokers by 5 per cent each. Improvement is demanded in the area of population screening for early non-communicable diseases, safety and quality of health care service, management and response to disasters and emergencies. For example, the call for a 100 percent compliance of healthcare workers with professional standards does bear on the level of negligence reported in the service at times. A recent incident of two children who died under the care of two registered nurses is an example (Samoa Observer, Issue August 2, 2019). Waiting time in the emergency department, general outpatient and triaging have been niggling concerns for many; so as the escalating costs of sending patients for overseas treatment that drained scarce resources.

Access to primary health care is also marked for some more improvement, particularly in the rural areas. In district hospitals, the need for doctors, medicine and advanced technology for treatment has been acknowledged by both the authority and the public (SDS, 2016/17-2019/20; Anderson, 2013). Along with health promotions on living healthy lifestyles and mental well-being, the government hopes this strategy will deliver an outcome that reflects population inclusivity, service effectiveness and fiscal accountability (ibid.). In 2013 Ian Anderson prepared a discussion paper on the state of Samoa’s health and the financing options involved. Samoa currently faces two important public policy

challenges in the health sector, he pointed out. One is to stem, and then reverse the rapid rise of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). The second challenge is to put the country on a health-financing path that is effective, efficient, and financially affordable and sustainable. The two challenges are interconnected (ibid.). For the first, NCDs include obesity, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, and cancer are a top health priority, with high and increasing prevalence rates: the obesity rate is currently 57.0 percent, the diabetes rate is 23.1 percent, and high blood pressure rate is 21.4 percent (ibid.).

For Samoa, the four main risk factors are smoking (tobacco), poor nutrition, excessive alcohol consumption, and physical inactivity (SNAP) (WHO Country Health Information Profile for Samoa 2009; Lima, 2004). Curbing measures come in the form of raising excise tax for instance. Anderson listed eight options which he examined and made proposals on to address the financial challenge. He concludes that the chief opportunity arises from more efficient use of resources already in the health system that are not presently used to maximum effect. Improving technical and allocative efficiency of the existing system has the potential to make a large difference and is technically feasible, he suggested. Anderson is one among others from outside who've commented positively on the strides Samoa have made to improve its health care. Comparisons with other lower middle-income countries have noted some interesting facts.

The World Health Organization figures showed that Samoa has achieved some higher health outcomes and outputs than other lower-middle income countries on a range of indicators, especially infant, child, and maternal mortality, births attended by skilled health personnel, and access to sanitation (WHO, 2013). Government expenditure on health is relatively high compared to other lower-middle income countries. About 7 percent of the country's GDP is spent on its health and the second largest item in government's 2011/12 budget, about 16 percent of total government appropriations in 2011/12, a distinct proof of government giving priority to health (WHO, 2014). The ongoing challenge for the government is how to sustain such commitment over time while still being able to maintain intended outputs, outcomes and impact as expected (Anderson, 2015; p.15).

Conversely, the average Samoan's low expectation of their own health system does not match such a serious political commitment on health by the government. Allegations against government policy as not being pro-poor points to the low level of access to treatment by the poorer population when compared to the wealthier. As the Anderson report mentioned, the latter is overrepresented in the diabetes, 29 percent compared to the poorer' 9 percent. Which means that they have far more share of the resources as patients, given the fact that the poorest 10 percent earned 1.8 percent compared to the wealthier' 31 percent of total income (p. 5). The cost of sending patients for treatment overseas has become a lingering issue; about 15 percent of total public health expenditure annually, exceeding even the spending costs of twelve government ministries/agencies (p. 24). Also reflected in the priority outcomes is the disparity factor between urban Apia and the service of the rural population. Which means that emergency and specialized treatment are still the preoccupation of Apia. Savaii and the outer islands are disadvantaged and will remain so for a longer while. Many families would rather take their patients to Apia than their district hospitals, believing that the service in Apia is more reliable.

The recent exposure of the system in terms of its response to the measles outbreak has reaffirmed two important points. First, Samoa's vulnerability in the face of a global disaster/emergency; secondly, the permanence of its poor public image in terms of the people's trust in its own national health care system. The negative image has been entrenched, reinforced by incidents such as the one that was blamed for the proliferation of the measles 2019 outbreak. One of the goals of this Strategy is to change such perception, especially among the common folk. This can be done by measures such as relocalizing the health care, as it used to be with the *Komiti Tumama* institution, according to a participant of this research. Perhaps more transparency is needed, another participant suggested, who also believed there is a serious misunderstanding between the government and the public in the way its policy is processed, programmed and promoted.

On promotion alone, two participants argued for a better approach, a well-coordinated effort from the standpoint of village leaders, to lift the level of awareness on healthy living that could even be internalized by the majority through mass education and routinized community activities. His point is, the problem is too big for any government,

it can only be tackled by having the people on board. Besides, a country's health is a collective responsibility. A new approach is sought or perhaps in this case, old ways of doing things revisited. There is a concern raised that Samoa's health is dictated mainly from outside forces to which government policy is tied in many and various ways (Faalili-Fidow, 2014).

In the final analysis, while government commitment in dollar terms may reflect positively on its politics, this may not be from the view of some sectors, particularly the poorer population, whose assessment of a policy is much truer and cannot be underestimated for any reason. In cases of emergencies of international proportions, resources have become the key issue, though the expectation for leadership to lead at such crucial moments was found lacking as in the handling of the measles epidemic. The public outcry and cynicism that emerged against the Ministry was well documented by the independent media in its reports throughout the course of the outbreak. The prompt response to the Covid-19 could only mean that some lessons were learnt.

7.5.3.2 Education

Like its health, Samoa's education policy is an outworking of many factors and players (Lee-Hang, 2011). It involves dynamic relations between government and communities, local, regional, international, even global. A closer look reveals a hybrid of both old and new elements merging easily or coexisting incongruently (*ibid.*). Its education system is a legacy of the Christian missionary enterprise, the colonial German, and New Zealand administrations. The latter introduced modern schooling to Samoa, which system of governance and teaching pedagogies have been the mainstay for more than a generation. Prominent in the colonial policy was the role of education and assimilation programmes that employed a colonial curriculum and the English language. National development has been the rallying call by the leaders of the newly independent state, and education was the key then and still is. English was and still is the language of development and progress. The call has been sustained politically since.

In the name of national development, Samoa has pursued the course of globalization. As part of the global family, obligations to its major donors and various institutions have become serious commitments. Samoa is a member of UNESCO, UNDP, and a signatory of WTO. Advocates of globalization point to the benefits for small economies (Becker,

1994; Naisbitt, 1994). Becker argued that cost affordability can work in favour of small open economies as world economies become more integrated (Makhlouf, 2018).

Conversely, those who find fault in globalization pointed out a huge imbalance in power relations as big economies dictate to the small and the vulnerable their values and standards. Changes on a global scale can modify policy, and in Samoa's case, the influence of borrowed policies from donor countries and world agencies (Tuia, 2013). Imposing an alien policy runs the risk of clashing with indigenous people's cultural values and priorities. Jackson (2016) noted that there is no global consensus on the benefits or otherwise of globalization. World educators do not just react but interact with its flow on the basis of one's perspectives, values and priorities. So, while small economies may benefit to some extent, the long-term disadvantages will prevail finally, is the counter-argument.

So far, the Samoan stance on globalization has been that of accommodating and adjusting, striving to legitimize her standing among the rest of the global family franchise (ibid.). Legitimacy primarily means adhering to global standards and expectations; accepting the fact that outside donors does have a say in its education policy. Its development blueprint 'Samoa Development Strategy' (SDS) echoes a global call for a lift in the quality of Education and Training. So as pushing for inclusive curricula through sustainable programmes and raising organization capacity to achieve quality standards (SDS 2012-2016). Reviews of the SDS help give us a close glimpse into Samoa's schooling agenda and a list of current priorities. On the face level, the theme of quality education and training is echoed and sustained successively. Ideally boxes are ticked in terms of goals and strategy shared but the repeated call for improvement denotes more clarification at the micro level.

In a 2015 Review Report on Education for All, several gaps have been identified. For instance, while Early Childhood Education is recognized as an important component of the sector, it lacks government support in terms of funding infrastructure and training staff. While it is compulsory for all children to attend school, its enforcement falters and therefore fails the moral purpose of the policy: to provide quality education for all. While adult literacy rate is relatively high the overall student literacy rate has not measured up to own standards according to the latest report (Samoa Observer, Issue March 22, 2021).

The review report noted a high percentage of at-risk students at both primary and secondary levels over the years. Classroom overcrowding, teacher shortage, poor implementation of policy has become part of the media's regular reporting (Samoa Observer, Issues April 26 & 28, 2017). Quality can also be assessed in terms of changes put in place. A few participants alluded to a decline in the quality of teaching since the old Samoa Teachers' Training College was incorporated into the country's university.

Gender inequality in education on the other hand has been improved (Amosa, 2010), though the low level of tertiary enrolment reflects growing inequality between the haves and the have-nots of society or the fact that money determines access. Legitimacy can also be assessed on the basis of the human output, the ability of the economy to provide employment for the country's school leavers annually. Education remains government's top priority in its budget allocation, more than Health.

7.6 Conclusion

From its humble beginnings to initial activation of power to political hegemony, the HRPP has ruled Samoa for almost four decades with not much opposition to stand in its way. A combination of factors is attributed to its political success. First, a prudent management of the economy guaranteed its constant relevancy as a political manager of the state over the years. Secondly, strong leadership and a good organisation strategy made for a lasting impression on the voting public. The HRPP took its stance seriously among the power competitors through better organisation, assertive leadership, and a political will to take risks, even if that rouses the ire of its opponents. Thirdly, by its political strategy of normalizing infrastructural development and the electoral process for example, it enabled direct connection with the people. In this way, the government has established direct and lasting relationships with the voters to earn their trust and loyalty.

The manufacture of consent as Gramsci called it is the opposite of coercive power; a mental disposition in the realm of ideas and knowledge (Freire, 1970), as the means of modern state control (Kelly, 2014). As the literature pointed out, the expectation for the state to deliver could not be higher. As the state took over social responsibilities, it has all the reasons to accumulate and utilize power through knowledge systems and government apparatus. Foucault in his concept of biopolitics, talked about the role of the state

by which the new technologies of power are unleashed to the singular goal of managing the person in all his/her intricate details (Foucault, 1991).

Government on its own cannot solve inequality for the less privileged, at least apply relief measures on its own when traditional culture rules over the whole. One way or another, it is government which can have the last say in the final shape and design of social policy.

Finally, without a strong Opposition in parliament, only the HRPP government can genuinely assess the success of any of its policy from the vantage point of a fiscal manager of the economy, no less importantly its role as a responsible provider of the people's social needs. It is not just a professional but a moral charge the task of balancing the act, on its own, without any opposition or other checks and balances to remind (Teachout, 2015). And given its enormous power status in the relations, the question is, would the HRPP government be willing to sacrifice successful politics for the sake of pursuing more flexible processes and programmes for the benefit of all stakeholders?