

Some points on the Question:

Parliamentarians v Politicians - Role of some PAC members wearing two hats; one as a parliamentarian holding the Government/Executive to account and the other as a politician and member of the political party in Government.

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- The PAC's principal mandate is government by Standing Orders 109(2)(d) “... **including examining the accounts of the Government of the Republic of Fiji in respect of each financial year and reports of the Auditor-General, and for any other matter relating to the expenditures of the Government of the Republic of Fiji or any related body or activity (whether directly or indirectly) that the committee sees fit to review. The committee must only examine how public money has been dealt with and accounted for in accordance with the written law and must not examine the merits of the underlying policy that informs public spending.**”
- Members play multiple roles – as Committee members, representatives of their electorate and as members and representatives of their respective parties in Parliament.
- The challenge is to adequately play these roles without comprising any one of them.
- Members need to continuously find some balance.
- For PAC members, particularly the Government members or members whose party holds the majority, it is very difficult to maintain some objectivity. The PAC Government members are scrutinising Government ministries, departments and statutory bodies that are essential governed and led by Government MPs (ministers and assistant ministers).
- So Government PAC members are placed in a difficult situation i.e. having to play their scrutiny role over the Executive branch which is at the same time led by their party colleagues in Parliament.
- In some instances, the PAC may be scrutinising the actions of a Minister (who is an MP) of a particular Government Ministry or programme. PAC Government members who are mostly backbenchers would be essentially scrutinising the actions of their senior colleagues in the ruling party.

- PAC is essentially in most cases scrutinising the expenditure and financial practices of the governing party. So, for a PAC government member, it is basically scrutinising his/her own party. This can be difficult.
- Even for PAC opposition members, they face the challenge of being neutral and ensuring they are playing their scrutiny role in a fair manner and in line with the PAC's ambit of work.
- The PAC is only required to examine how public money has been dealt with and accounted for in accordance with the written law. It cannot examine the merits of the underlying policy that informs public spending.
- PAC opposition members and even Government members may find themselves going beyond the above remit because they will be compelled 'as a Member of Parliament' and a 'politician' to question the merits of the policies that inform or govern public spending. This is an ongoing challenge for any PAC member irrespective of which side of the House he/she is in.