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ETHNIC CONFLICT IN DEVELOPING SOCIETIES

Trinidad and Tobago,
Guyana, Fiji, and
Suriname

Ann Marie Bissessar



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*This book is dedicated to my beloved nephew and best
friend Angelo Bissessarsingh 1982–2017*

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This book began out of a disagreement between my husband John Gaffar La Guerre and myself when we decided to co-author a book on ethnic conflict. The twain minds did not meet. John went on to do a book which has been published with Lexington and I, this book. I still sought his advice and he was my sounding board. I am grateful for this advice and support.

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Introduction

Abstract This book attempts, perhaps for the first time, to examine, in detail, the experience of post-colonial territories and their attempts to manage ethnic communities within their countries. The book will focus on Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana and Suriname in the Caribbean as well as Fiji. It will look at the mechanisms, which vary from legislation to political structures, systems and institutions that have been introduced to allow for greater integration by these communities. It will also assess, if possible, the strengths or weaknesses of these mechanisms.

Keywords Ethnic · Gemeinschaft · Gesellschaft · Ringer and Lawless · Stavenhagen · Tonnies

It is true that ethnic and racial groups are not completely autonomous and self-contained entities (Ringer and Lawless 1989) but comprise part and parcel of a wider community, whether that community is a large continent such as Africa or India or perhaps smaller island states. The nature and method of assimilation of these ethnic groups or communities, however, will vary considerably according to the size of the groups, the number of these groups within the community, the history and incorporations of these groups, their socio-economic position as well as their level of literacy. What perhaps is the most critical factor, however, may very well be the size of the country. It is reasonable to assume that in large countries

where there are many ethnic communities, the method or mechanism for assimilation may vary from district to district. In small countries, however, where the potential for conflict exists, the mechanisms for assimilation will have to take into account the views and expectations of the various ethnic communities and accordingly translate them into what may be reasonable policies for the country as a whole. While theoretically it appears to be a quick fix in resolving ethnic challenges and may lead eventually to an assimilation of groups within the country, the implementation of this mechanism is difficult if not dependent partly on a number of factors which may be outside the scope of the policy makers. For instance, the perceptions a community may have of *others* may be critical in determining the nature of a particular policy or mechanism.

These perceptions of the “other” may well be what Tonnies (1940) described in his *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* relationships. According to Tonnies (1940), *gemeinschaft* relations are essentially identified with kinship and biological ties, sharing of *place*, as well as common values, ideals and bonds that are expressed through sacred beliefs and represented by sacred places and worshipped deities. *Gesellschaft relationships*, on the other hand, are best represented in states where convention, contract, legislative law and public opinion provide the bases for law, order and morality.¹ In many societies, particularly ex-colonial societies, *gemeinschaft relationships* seem to be the order of the day. It should be recalled, though, that the perception of “we-ness” as opposed to “they-ness” were constructs that were virtually imposed by the colonial administrators. No doubt, the policy of what some suggest as being a policy of *divide and rule* was deliberate in order to erect barriers to foster the assimilation of these groups. To further ensure the separation of these groups, in a number of colonial territories, groups were allocated separate and distinct geographic *spaces*. In some countries, as well, the imposition of colonial political structures, systems and institutions further served to maintain the separation of the various communities. The nature of the accommodation of the various groups is perhaps appropriately summed up by Stavenhagen (1996: 61). He observed that colonial domination created somewhat different patterns in societies where foreign peoples were brought in, either as slaves or indentured servants or simply as plantation labour. One similarity, he pointed out, was that the struggles that emerged in later years involved ethnic groups whose identities were not linked to early territorial claims (as in Fiji) in regional concentration (as in Nigeria) or to ancient historical markers (as In Burundi). Rather, these groups or

communities were linked to more recent and more visible ethnic markers such as race, religion and culture and directly related to political competition over the resources of the state.

This book will focus on the various mechanisms that have been introduced in a number of post-colonial societies in order to ascertain if these were effective in not only ensuring stability within the different ethnic communities but if the mechanisms also allowed these communities to be integrated into the wider whole. While a number of writers have attempted to look at mechanisms across countries, this book limits its scope to small, plural societies namely, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Fiji and Suriname. In these countries, the predominant ethnic communities are comprised mainly of descendants of East Indian indentured servants. These are primarily transplanted communities and thus it will be useful to observe what measures were adopted to allow for such communities to be incorporated as part of a larger whole.

What is well documented of this population was that the conditions in which they would be leaving India were strictly regulated by the British government. Four conditions were enforced by Colonial British Indian Government Regulations of 1837. These were the following:

1. The intending emigrant and the emigration agent were required to appear before an officer designated by the Colonial British Government of India with a written statement of the terms of the contract.
2. The length of service was to be of five years, renewable for further five-year terms.
3. The emigrant was to be returned at the end of service to the port of departure.
4. The vessel taking the emigrants was required to conform to certain standards of space, diet etc. and carry a medical officer.

These regulations and conditions were first introduced in Calcutta, and later were extended to Bombay and Madras. While the terms of employment was clearly spelt out in the regulations, the conditions of travel, however, were noticeably absent. Indian coolies were exported into mainly British colonies such as Mauritius, the Caribbean colonies – Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago, Demerara, the Pacific Island of Fiji, along with some French islands such as Reunion, Guadeloupe and Martinique.

The first chapter in the book will be theoretical in nature and will be devoted to definitions of identities. It will look at the elements that promote and sustain “we-ness” as opposed to the elements that militate against it. Chapters 2 to 5 will focus specifically on four countries, namely: Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Suriname and Fiji. These chapters will attempt to examine some of the mechanisms/instruments/legislation to allow for assimilation by differing communities that were introduced as the countries attained independence. It will attempt to assess the strengths of these mechanisms and as well as to observe whether new mechanisms were introduced as more migration between and within countries expanded. Chapter 6 will accordingly attempt to summarize the experiences of these countries.

NOTE

1. Ringer and Lawless provide an expanded explanation for these terms.

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The Persistence of Ethnic Communities

Abstract This chapter presents a comprehensive review of the literature on ethnic diversity. It points out that what is clearly a major limitation if not an under-representation in the existing literature is that the emphasis is not directed to post-colonial societies and in particular small island states. In examining societies such as Fiji, Guyana, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago, it is evident that one has to rely on the plural society model to provide explanations for the accommodation of the ethnic communities within these countries. In utilizing the plural society model, what emerges is an essential difference between these post-colonial, transplanted societies and societies which are larger and have been fissured by ethnic diffractions or what may be described as ethnic implosions within these communities.

Keywords Anthony Smith · Barth · Beer · Class analysis · Coakley · Coppel · Cultural ecology · Ernest Gellner · Ethnic implosions · Ethnic solidarity · Ethnicity · Fissparous tendencies · Group solidarity · Guibernau and Rex · Heterogeneous societies · Homogenous societies · Hutchinson and Smith · Jenkins · John Furnivall · Lipset and Rokkan · M.G Smith · Marx · Multicultural societies · Neilsen · Reactive-ethnicity model · Rex · Ringer and Lawless · Safran · Sanders · Schermerhorn · Self-identification · Stratification · Structural – functionalists · Structural-discrimination · Talcott Parsons · Unifying · Weber · Westminster Whitehall

While Guibernau and Rex (1999) suggest that the term *ethnicity* assumed importance in the social sciences in the 1960s,¹ the actual usage dates back to 480 BC to describe the *Hellenic* community in Greece. The following features were offered to characterize the *Hellenes*. These characteristics included the following:

1. *shared descent* ὁμοίμων – *homaimon*, “of the same blood”,
2. *shared language* ὁμόγλωσσον – *homoglōsson*, “speaking the same language”
3. *shared sanctuaries and sacrifices* Greek: θεῶν δρύματά τε κοινὰ καὶ θυσίαι – *theōn hidrumata te koina kai thusiai*
4. *shared customs* Greek: ἤθεα ὁμότροπα – *ēthea homotropa*, “customs of like fashion”.²

The similarity in these definitions of 480BC and that offered by Narroll (1964) in defining an ethnic group in the anthropological literature is startling. The term “ethnic group”, according to Narroll (1964), designated a population which

- *were largely biological and self-perpetuating;*
- *shared fundamental cultural values realized in overt unity in cultural forms;*
- *were made up a field of communication and interaction;*
- *had a membership which identified itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order.*

Currently, if one examines the specialized literature on the topic of ethnicity which is quite vast, it is obvious that these concepts have not changed {Stavenhagen (1996); Guibernau and Rex. (1999); Hutchinson and Smith. (1996); Coakley (2003)} Most of the writers agree with Schermerhorn’s description, namely:

An ethnic group is defined here as a collectivity within a larger society having real or positive common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood.³

Where distinctions emerge in overviewing the offerings of different writers, though, is in the approach that each author adopts. Using some of

the selected *classics* in the field as examples, it is obvious that while there is a common thread, each author or group of authors attempt to carve out a niche or perhaps expand the discourse on the topic. Coakley (2003) in his edited book *The Territorial Management of Ethnic Conflict* is obsessed with the territorial demands of ethnic groups and the response of the state to these particular cases. Hutchinson and Smith. (1996) along with well-known contributors including Schermerhorn (1978), Ericksen (2002), Weber, Geertz (1973), Barth, Banton and others, zero in on the concepts, theories and ethnicity in history very similar to the overtones adopted by Ringer and Lawless in 1989. Guibernau and Rex (1999), on the other hand, place emphasis on the areas of nationalism, multiculturalism and migration. Perhaps the newer trend in academia, given the proliferation of conflicts world-wide, is the focus on ethnic conflicts.⁴

What appears, though, in nearly all the offerings in the academic literature is the way the various writers attempt to define and then redefine the various dimensions associated with the term or concept of ethnicity. Much credit, however, should be attributed to the early debates of Weber (1922 {1968}) who made a distinction between ethnic groups and racial groups. He argued that it is not biological difference alone that constitutes an ethnic group. Rather common customs also were critical factors. He also suggested that shared ethnicity of itself did not lead to group formation. Rather, this facilitated group formation, particularly in the political sphere. He noted, and quite rightly, that it was the way the political community was organized which appeals to shared identity and brings it into action. Thirdly, Weber suggested that history or rather the *sense* of history a group had all persisted in maintaining the consciousness of an ethnic group. He also noted that ethnicity served to delimit *social circles* which were not identical with what he termed *endogenous connubial groups*.⁵

While Weber offered these elements to explain the maintenance of ethnic communities, structural-functionalists such as Lipset and Rokkan (1967); Marx (1964) and Beer (1980) concurred in predicting that modernization would bring about a decrease in the importance of ethnic distinctions. They reasoned that as culturally heterogeneous populations became industrialized, their participation in a common market economy and their increasing access to common institutions such as schools, hospitals and other administrative organizations and departments would lead to the precedence of universalistic criteria which would cut across the traditional ascribed statuses.; Neilsen (1985), however, observed that contrary to the views of the structo-functionalists, ethnic resurgences were

occurring all over the world. He then employed the framework of the *reactive-ethnicity model*⁶ by way of explanation for the persistence of ethnic solidarity in modern societies. One argument offered in this framework was that ethnic solidarity was reinforced when there was a cultural division of labour or a pattern of structural discrimination such that individuals were assigned to specific types of occupation and other social roles on the basis of observable cultural traits or markers. (Nielsen 1985) This was more intense where members of one group were restricted to subordinate and unrewarding social positions, creating levels of inequality between the groups. The greater the degree of economic inequalities between the groups, the greater the likelihood of status or ethnic group solidarity. In other words, with a cultural division of labour, ethnic boundaries tended to coincide with lines of structural differentiation and ethnic solidarity was increased. But even where groups were assimilated in the labour market, it was suggested that ethnic distinctions did not become irrelevant. Rather the crucial element, according to; Nielsen (1985), was that in such a situation, members of different groups found themselves increasingly in a position to compete for the same occupations and the same rewards. The end result was that these competitive tensions were manifested by a heightening of solidarity within the groups involved.

Barth (1998) also believed that ethnic boundaries, not culture defined the solidarity of ethnic groups. These boundaries were what he termed social boundaries, although, he observed that these may have territorial counterparts. He suggested that if a group maintained its identity when their members interacted with others this was in fact a criterion for determining membership and ways of signalling membership and exclusion. He noted that ethnic groups were not merely or necessarily based on occupation of exclusive territories and the differing ways they were maintained but rather they were validated by their social life. Sanders (2002: 328), contrary to this view, suggested that ethnic distinctions did sometimes coincide with territorial segregation in the host society and with social constructions of racial identity. He observed that widely acknowledged racial differences can sharpen in-group members' self-identification and out-group acknowledgement of intergroup distinctions. Similarly, he pointed out, when interaction between groups were limited and otherwise conditioned by territorial segregation, intergroup differences gained emphasis. Constraints on cross-group interaction contributed to the respective groups ignorance of one another, which in turn encouraged stereotyping.

Barth (1998) also raised a number of other, what are perhaps important criteria when discussing why ethnic communities are preserved. One such criterion is cultural ecology. He suggested, for example, that *niches*, to which a group was adapted was important in understanding why group solidarity was maintained. He constructed a rough typology in which he proposed that group adaptations could take the following forms:

- Groups may occupy clearly distinct niches in the natural environment and may be in minimal competition for resources. In this case, he argued, the interdependence of these groups would be limited despite co-residence in the area and the interaction between groups would tend to be primarily through trade and perhaps in a ceremonial-ritual sector;
- Groups may monopolize separate territories in which case they would compete for resources including political power;
- While groups may provide goods and services for each other while they occupy different niches they would still be in close interdependence.

These forms often allowed for stability within a society.

Rex (1997) suggested, though, that there are two distinct paradigms purporting to deal with the question of ethnicity. One was derived from the work of Ernest Gellner (1983), whose work revolved around the question of nations and nationalism. The other, from Anthony Smith (1986) arose from concerns about immigration from post-colonial societies more particularly the structure of Afro-Caribbean and South Asian communities and their relation to the British political systems. According to Rex (1997), both of these (what may be termed “opposing viewpoints”) attempted to explain ethnicity through some kind of class analysis. For Rex (1997), however, both attempts to explain ethnicity fell short. Firstly, he argued that Gellner’s (1983) was simply descriptive or empirical or historical. It merely attempted to describe various nationalisms in terms of their cultures, ideologies, internal structures and organizations, the relations between elites and masses and symbols such as flags and anthems. The other (Smith 1986) he felt concentrated on nationalist ideologies and often derided them by suggesting that they were invented as a means of manipulation of the masses by the political elite (Rex 1997: 456).

Rex (1997: 459) in examining the cases of Wales, Scotland and Ireland pointed out that these regions demonstrated different forms of adaptation

and differing types of nationalism. He suggested that these adaptations have to be viewed in terms of the strength of *unifying* and *fissiparous* tendencies and the viability of the institutions in terms of which the central government sought to accommodate the aspiration of subordinate nationalisms. He accordingly considered these tendencies as they were illustrated in the economic sphere, in linguistic, cultural and religious matters in politics. In short, he attempted to address the issue of subordinate nationalisms (as he called them) or ethnic minorities, the role they played in the economy and in the labour market and the method of accommodation by the central government.

In reviewing the various literatures on ethnicity and accommodation, it appears that each author is clearly trying to arrive at a simple equation to explain and perhaps resolve the problematique of multinational and multi-cultural societies. Essentially, though, it appears that the arguments still condense to the basic elements of what Jenkins (1996) describes as two interacting but independent entailments: a name (the nominal) and an experience (the virtual). He suggested that defining *who* is a member and *what it is to be* a member of a particular social group involves the consolidation of internal and external processes. But, as Fig. 2.1 illustrates, in these superordinate and subordinate relationships, the subordinate group is virtually imprisoned within a wider societal circle of concern or as Jenkins (1996) observed, it may be described as the *external imposition of a characterization*.⁷

In conclusion, therefore, after what may appear to be a comprehensive review of the literature on ethnic diversity, in a critical review of the empirical investigation of ethnic identity and how it might reflect the issues outlined above, it is evident that is clearly not straightforward. What is clearly a major limitation if not an under-representation in the existing literature is that the emphasis is not directed to post-colonial societies and in particular small island states. Indeed, in examining these societies, it is evident that one has to rely on the plural society model to provide explanations for the accommodation of the ethnic communities within these countries. In utilizing the plural society model, what emerges is an essential difference between these post-colonial, transplanted societies and societies which are larger and have been fissured by ethnic diffractions or what may be described as *ethnic implosions* within these communities. In the larger societies, for instance, the following elements are critical in explaining the maintenance of ethnic solidarity. These include according to Safran (2010) the following elements:

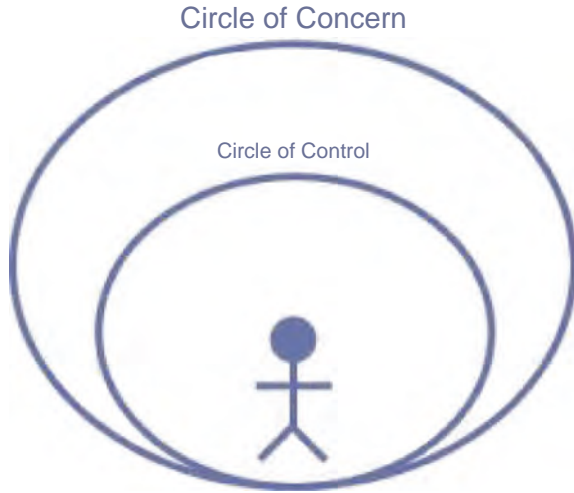


Fig. 2.1 Relationships Between Superordinate and Subordinate Groups

1. The policies adopted by many countries during wars and revolutions;
2. The impact of the forces of globalization and the awareness that countries do not have the capacity to solve both economic and internal challenges for themselves but are forced to depend on outside interventions.
3. The decline of traditional national elites as guardians of a nation's high culture – both because the behaviour of much of that elite had compromised its moral image, and because technology and the democratization of access to culture has dethroned those elites, the guardians of “high culture” and of the purity of language, and obscured the distinction between high culture and a popular culture that is increasingly international.
4. The loss of authority of many traditional fixed points of orientation within a nation: the family and its traditional head, the paterfamilias (the decline of family unity); religion (growing secularism); the trade union (desyndicalization owing to the delocalization of many industries); the political party (convergence of “catch-all” parties); and the national government itself (the weakening of state sovereignty).

5. The growing complexity of society within given nations, the consequence of the influx of immigrants who have brought with them their homeland cultures, languages, and customs that could not be easily eradicated. (Safran 2010)

In smaller, transplanted societies, while these elements are also important, it should be recalled that territorial boundaries, if these do exist, are recent. Authority and traditional fixed points of orientation within such societies may also be limited or non-existent. What may then be the more critical element in these societies may well be the introduction of measures or policies that allow for incorporation of the various communities. These measures may range from the crafting of constitutional provisions, the system of governance employed, decentralization or de-concentration of powers, as well as institutions that have introduced to protect the rights of individuals or groups. What will also be a key factor in the achievement of accommodation in these societies will be the willingness of the political elites to engage in accommodative behaviour.

THE PLURAL SOCIETY MODEL: ETHNIC COMMUNITIES IN SMALL STATES

According to Coppel (1997: 562) when British colonial administrator John Furnivall (1939) published his influential work *Netherlands India: A Study of Plural Economy*, he concluded with the hope that, whatever its inadequacies, his study would serve at least to:

Throw into relief the interest which attaches to Netherlands India as an example of a plural society; a society that, comprises of two or more elements or social orders which live side by side, yet without mingling, in political unit.

Furnivall (1945) went on to describe the plural society accordingly:

One finds there a society in which two or more groups live side by side but separately within the same political unit. All the members of the groups are subject alike to the economic process of natural selection by the survival of the cheapest and all respond in greater or less degree to the economic motive, the desire for individual material advantage. Each group holds its own religion, its own culture, and its own ideas and ways of life; the

members of each group mix with those of other groups only in the market place, in buying and selling.

Unlike writers like Jenkins (1996) and Rex (1997), Furnivall's ethnic community co-exists with other communal groups and could be represented as follows (see Fig. 2.2).

Figure 2.2 suggests an equal relationship among ethnic communities, which it should be noted are transplanted societies with no one group claiming ownership for land or boundaries or territories. It should be recalled that by Furnivall's (1939) definition, these groups meet only in the *market place*. What Furnivall (1939) refers to as the *market place*, however, lacks the characteristics which Durkheim (1933) envisaged in his concept as an organic solidarity. Furnivall's market place is not in keeping with shared values or solidarity but rather involves conflict and exploitation.

While another writer, M.G. Smith (1965), wrote originally about Grenada his theory of the plural society has been widely used as well in the analysis of colonial and post-colonial societies in the Caribbean. Smith (1965) is aware of the general sociological theory of Talcott Parsons (1945), and its assumption of four mutually supportive institutions. In

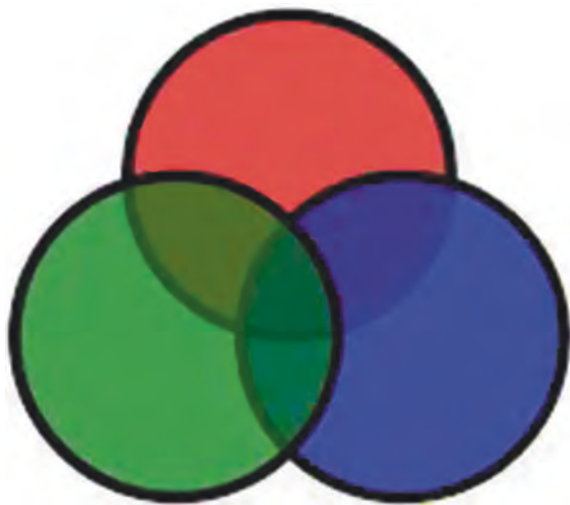


Fig. 2.2 Relationship of groups in plural societies

the Caribbean, however, he argues that there are several co-existing ethnic groups each of which has a nearly complete set of social institutions. He suggests that the various ethnic groups have their own family systems, their own productive economies, their own languages and religion but not their own political system. In other words, in the political sphere they are all controlled by one dominant segment. (1960:767). In these societies, therefore, all the communities or segments must participate in, or be subject to, common political institutions, otherwise the political unit would fragment into its component cultural sections. The argument, then, is that in order to prevent such social disintegration, one of the component sections must be dominant over the others.

As Smith (1960: 772) puts it, given the fundamental differences of belief, value, and organization that connote pluralism, the monopoly of power by one cultural section is the essential precondition for the maintenance of the total society in its current form.

The departure in the arguments of Furnivall and Smith is clear. While Furnivall suggests it is the “market” that holds the units together, Smith argues that the cement that holds such societies together is not adherence to common values but rather political coercion. Furthermore, Smith differentiated societies characterized by social and cultural pluralism from both homogeneous societies, in which all participate in common institutions (and thus share common values), and heterogeneous societies, in which all participate in common basic or compulsory institutions (and thus share fundamental values) but may differ in their participation in such alternative institutions as occupation.

There is thus a distinct departure between the positions held by Furnivall (1939; 1945) and Smith (1965). Smith (1965) embeds his argument in the way in which the former slave societies were stratified. Within these societies the colonial administrators left behind legacies of stratification systems according to colour and class and imposed political systems, structures and institutions which were in no way modified to accommodate the different transplanted, ethnic communities. Rather, these measures served to maintain stability within these colonies as well as the maintenance of the status quo. For Smith (1965), then, the dynamics of these societies could not be explained using the market place alone.

All the countries selected for this review were formerly British territories. But unlike British India, the colonials did not “imbibe” clear cultural agendas. Indeed, some suggest⁸ that the government officials, while willing to serve the capitalist interests of the planters, showed little

interest in introducing the whole population to British styles of education or to British forms of government. Accordingly, it is suggested that the prevailing British attitude towards the Indians appeared to be that these people had suffered a lot, and it was a relief to see that they were showing some cultural creativity and were busy getting their festivals and other religious activities organized. As independence approached in many of these countries, it was evident that the Indian communities were well organized and they began to take a number of initiatives. Indeed, in the case of Guyana, for example, it was felt that both British and American interest was served by an Afro-dominant segment rather than an Indian-led government.⁹

The other communities in these countries were different in each situation. In the case of Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago and Suriname, the other dominant, transplanted population were ex-slaves. In Fiji, they were populations who were deeply dislocated by colonial rule. The similarity in all the countries under review, however, is that both the Indian and the non-Indian communities were dislocated and searching for identities. During the pre-independence era, these communities had a common bond in that they were interacting primarily with the British. The confrontations between the various ethnic communities were therefore limited, if not managed. With independence the confrontation between the groups became complex as both groups sought to achieve political power. Given the nature of the newly constituted political system, the Westminster Whitehall model of government, it was clear, though, that one majority group would dominate the political arena and the other group would be more likely remain in the political wilderness. Given this arrangement, the question of how these countries managed to maintain stability will be interesting. While Fiji, Suriname and Guyana, and more particularly Fiji had a number of "disruptions", countries like Trinidad and Tobago managed to maintain some degree of stability overtime.

The question of the nature and functioning of the mechanisms that should be introduced in such societies to keep these groups together, therefore presents a challenge. If, as Furnivall (1939; 1945) suggests, economic incorporation is the challenge then the answer would be to allow for equal access to the *national pie*. If, however, Smith's (1965) proposition is correct then political incorporation may be the answer. The chapters which follow will accordingly examine the ways in which countries attempt to deal with the challenge of assimilating and maintaining stability among different ethnic communities in transplanted societies.

NOTES

1. They argued that this was a period marked by the consolidation of the process of decolonization in Africa and Asia as numerous new nation states were created.
2. This is taken by way of easy refereeing from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic_group
3. Definition taken from Hutchinson and Smith (1996).
4. For more of this, see writers such as Stavenhagen (1996), Burton (1987) and Carmack (1988).
5. Guibernau and Rex in association with Blackwell Publishers: These writers have presented a much expanded account of the various theories.
6. This model was proposed by Hechter (1974).
7. Quoted in Nazroo and Karlsen (2003).
8. Younger (2010).
9. For more of this, see book by Bissessar and La Guerre (2013).

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Fiji: A Fractured Society

Abstract Chapter 3 presents a micro-analysis of the history as well as the structural make-up of the island of Fiji. This chapter presents a description of the different ethnic group that makes up the country such as native Fijians (Melanesians) with some having a Polynesian ancestry, and Indo-Fijians whose descendants are the Indian indentureds. It attempts a difficult examination of the system of administration in that country. This administration comprises a number of geographical areas called *yasana* which were ruled by governors. The administration was further extended to have districts as Park (2006) referred to as *tikina*. Each district had various villages with a mix of people and cultures. This chapter points out that divisiveness of Fiji was in part due to the settlement pattern of the different groups. This chapter then examines the way the different ethnicities were accommodated into the political system. One mechanism, for instance, that was discussed in this chapter was the reformation of the Fijian Constitution, including a Bill of Rights, to ensure the rights of all groups in the country.

Keywords East Indian indentureds · Gillion · Girmits · Khula · Knapman · Lal · Lawson · Leonidas · Letters patent · Mayer · Parke · Popular representation · Premdas · Spate report · Yasana

OVERVIEW OF FIJI

Although Fiji covers a total area of some 194,000 square kilometres (75,000 square miles), only 10 per cent of this is actual land mass. It comprises 332 small islands of which 106 are inhabited with approximately 522 smaller islets. It is the hub of South West Pacific midway between Vanuatu and Tonga.

Fiji is what most persons will consider to be a classic example of a plural society. The population of Fiji is mostly made up of native Fijians, who are Melanesians (54.3%), although many also have Polynesian ancestry, and Indo-Fijians (38.1%), descendants of Indian contract labourers brought to the islands by the British colonial powers in the nineteenth century. There is also a small but significant group of descendants of indentured labourers from the Solomon Islands. Of the total population of Fiji about 1.2% are natives of Rotuma island (Rotuman) who culturally have more in common with countries such as Tonga or Samoa. In addition, there are small, significant groups of Europeans, Chinese and other Pacific island minorities (see [Table 3.1](#)).

Unlike British West Indian settlement where the indigenous populations were small, British colonization in Fiji in 1874 followed a period of internal strife in the Fijian islands. There were a number of rivalries between *Ma'afu* and the powerful *Bauan* chief, *Ratu Seru Cakobau*. *Bau* was one of three eastern confederations, or *matanitu* (the others being *Lau and Cakaudrove*), which had come to dominate all of the small islands off the north and east coasts of *Viti Levu* and *Vanua Levu*, as well as significant areas of the main islands themselves. As Lawson (1996) observed, what she called the “strife” was not confined only to the islanders. Rather, as with nearly all the colonies European interests were very much involved in the political turmoil.¹ Indeed, aided by a number of countries, various forms of government, usually purporting to exercise authority over the whole of the Fiji islands, were attempted under the leadership of *Cakobau*, with suitable concessions to *Ma'afu*. On the whole, however, these attempts were largely unsuccessful. Lawson (1996) conjectured that one explanation for this may have been the lack of socio-political unity among the Fijians, the native populations.

It should be recalled that the system of administration in what was then referred to as the *Kingdom of Fiji* prior to 1871 comprised of a number of geographical areas called *yasana* or provinces which were ruled by governors. To a large extent these *yasana* corresponded with the traditional *matanitu* or major socio-political confederations.² The complexity of this

Table 3.1 Inter-Censal Population and Religious Affiliation Changes 1996–2007

	1996		2007		Changes	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
FIJI	775075	100.0	837271	100.0	62196	8.0
i>Taukci	393575	50.8	475739	56.8	82164	20.9
Indo-Fijian	338818	43.7	313798	37.5	-25020	-7.4
Others	42682	5.5	47734	5.7	5052	11.8
Methodists	280628	36.2	289923	34.6	9335	3.3
Catholics	69320	8.9	76533	9.1	7113	10.3
AOG	31072	4.0	47778	5.7	16706	53.8
SDA	22187	2.9	32308	3.9	10121	45.6

Sources: Walsh 2006 and FBOS 2007 website census data

administrative system was further extended to include a number of districts or what Parke (2006) referred to as *tikina*. Within each district or *tikina*, there were as well a number of officially recognized *koro* or villages.

According to Parke's (2006) account, in 1871, after it had been decided that the *yasana* should be equated with the *Cakobau* Government, the then Governor, Arthur Gordon, and the Colonial government had to decide on titles for the official heads of provinces and districts (*yasana* and *tikina*). She observed that a major challenge, quite understandably, emerged at this period mainly due to the diversity of customary titles of heads of traditional *matanitu* and *vanua*, and the need for uniformity of official titles. The title of *Roko*, chosen as that of the administrative head of a province, originated from the traditional title of the spiritual paramount chief of certain major polities or *matanitu*, such as *Roko Tui Bau of Bau*, and *Roko Tui Dreketi of Rewa*. In the same way, the title of *Buli*, which was selected as the official title for the head of a *tikina*, originated from the traditional title of the head of certain federations or *vanua* such as *Buli Nadi* of the *vanua of Nadi* in south western *Vanua Levu*.

During British rule the islands of Fiji was divided into 12 *yasana*, and the *Roko* was the governor's deputy in his own *yasana*. These *yasana* were in turn subdivided into a total of eighty six *tikina*, each with a *Buli* responsible to the *Roko*. These *tikina* included, according to the 1881 census, about 1,400 villages, each of which had an officially recognized *Turaga ni Koro* or Village Headman, answerable to the *Buli*. Most of the 115,000 Fijians recorded at the time of the census lived in a village with which they had traditional connections. Each administrative unit of the Fijian Administration therefore had an appointed Fijian official administratively responsible for the unit, and there was a chain of responsibility from the lowest official to the highest and eventually (later, through the district commissioner as deputy S.F.A.) to the governor.

Schematically, the colonial system of Fijian Administration was illustrated as follows:-

AREA OFFICIAL IN CHARGE
 YASANA or PROVINCE ROKO
 TJI(JNA or DISTRICT BULI
 KORO or VILLAGE TURAGA NI KORO

It was evident that given this complex system of administration a "national" polity clearly could not exist in Fiji and different practices and structures

were applied throughout the Fijian islands. Under a *Deed of Cession* dated 10th October, 1874, the chiefs *Ratu Seru Cakobau* and *Vunivalu of Bau* along with 12 other chiefs ceded the islands of Fiji to Queen Victoria. In 1881, the colony was further extended when the chiefs of Rotuma ceded Rotuma and its dependencies to Queen Victoria on the 13th May 1881. The British government accordingly, for administrative expedience, combined Rotuma with Fiji. It was extended further in the 1960s when a small un-owned reef to the south-east of the main group was annexed.³

While clearly Fiji was a diverse society, this diversity was to be further extended. The deed of cession which was entered to in 1874 had one serious implication for both the governed and for those who governed. Unlike, the other British territories, it meant that Fiji was not a conquered region and therefore no Fijians would be asked to work on plantations because that would contribute to the breakdown of the village system and disrupt the balancing scales between the Fijian chiefs and the governor. The governor also realized that native populations were more difficult to control than an imported labour force.

While recognizing that the native populations could not be forced to work, at the same time, however, the governor was faced with the reality of maintaining the colonies which meant that some income-source had to be introduced. As with all the colonies at that time, it was decided that plantation agriculture, specifically sugar cane production was to be established. This kind of intensive labour meant that labour had to be sourced from outside Fiji. Accordingly, in 1876, the Colonial Office in England allocated funds for Indian immigration to Fiji. However, the first Indians did not arrive until 1879. It was suggested that part of the problem was due to the resistance from the planters. According to Gillion (1965), most planters had small estates (200–1,000 acres), were in debt, and could afford neither the large initial payments needed for Indian immigrants nor the hospital requirements that were set forth in the draft Indian Immigration Ordinance. However, despite the protests from the planters, the first ship the *Leonidas* arrived in May of 1879 carrying 464 Indians. The governor contracted the Colonial Sugar Refining Company based in Australia to run all the plantations in 1880. Under this arrangement, the planters had to work directly with the company.

The East Indian indentured labourers (*khula*) while they were indentured to the planter, rather than the Company, had a contractual obligation to work on the plantations for five years after which they were given the choice of returning to India at their own expense, or remain in Fiji.

The great majority opted to stay in Fiji because they could not afford to return under the low pay (even in many instances they were denied paid wages) of the British government or were refused to be sent back. After the expiry of their *girmits*, many leased small plots of land from Fijians and developed their own sugarcane fields or cattle *farmlets*. Others went into business in the towns that were beginning to spring up.

While, both Lawson (1996) and Parke (2006) were of the view that colonization by the British provided a unifying force for the various groups of Fijians, at least in institutional terms, it was clear, however, that this applied only to the indigenous Fijians not the transplanted East Indians. Obviously, the diverse (as well as diffuse) communities (including the newly introduced East Indian indentureds) were brought together as a single political entity to form a British Crown Colony. The reality, though, was that absolute power still resided with the governor who was responsible only to the secretary of state in London. The then Governor Sir Arthur Gordon was credited by some for establishing institutions and practices that were designed, in part, to reflect the new “national character” of the island group. In a sense, this arrangement was administratively convenient since it established a form of indirect rule in order to support traditional chiefly authority.

One institution that was established was the Council of Chiefs. Although there had been some gatherings of chiefs before colonization (mostly in the larger political units of the east), the Council that was now introduced during British rule was unquestionably a colonial artefact, brought into being under colonial rule. Another important *body* established during Sir Gordon’s tenure was the *Native Administration*, later renamed the *Fijian Administration*. It was clear that in order to maintain stability among the various communities and various chiefs, to a large extent, some kind of native representation, if not consensus, was sought. Again, however, the transplanted East Indian population was largely excluded under this type of arrangement.

This hybrid Fijian Administrative system, which effectively set up a form of local government through indirect rule for Fijians alone, persisted throughout the colonial era and into independence. Between 1915 and 1944, the mode of rule was much more direct, with traditional chiefs taking a lesser role in the management of Fijian affairs. It was suggested that a chief of the eastern province, *Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna* was credited with setting the tone of debate in introducing the Fijian Affairs Bill in the Legislative Council in 1944.

FIJI – ON THE WAY TO INDEPENDENCE

As with all the British territories, during the period 1944–1965 there were a number of debates with respect to the administrative apparatus that had been introduced in the colonies. In the case of Fiji, for instance, one early report, the *Spate report*, suggested that what emerged was that while seemingly there appeared to be some measure of input by the indigenous population in running the affairs of the country, this was not true. Rather, the governor was for all purposes the Head of the Legislative Council, chairman of the Executive Council and also responsible for implementation of policies in the territories. One major issue that would emerge in the debates, though, was that of loyalty. As to be expected, the general community felt loyalty not to the British but rather to their chiefs.

During the period 1879 to 1916, a total of 60,000 Indians arrived in Fiji. Approximately 25,000 of these returned to India. It was expected as the number of the East Indian population increased, this would be viewed with alarm by the natives Fijians. By 1940, Indo-Fijians outnumbered indigenous Fijians. Popular representation was first introduced in Fiji in 1904. Strangely enough, this *popular representation* was limited. The Colonial Council, according to Premdas (1993), comprised two nominated Fijians representing an indigenous population of 92,000 and six elected Europeans representing 2,440 persons of European descent. The Indian population of 22,000 was left completely without representation.⁴

But even among the East Indian society, there were divergences. According to Mayer (1957) this population could be divided into four cultural groups, namely: the orthodox Hindus from north (56% of which 10% were Arya Samaji) and south India (26%), members of the Arya Samaj reformed Hindu sect and Muslims {7%} (mostly northern Sunis). Each cultural group tended to reside in a separate ward of the settlement. These groups were further broken down into what Mayer (1957) terms “associations”. The first “association” comprised Gangs which harvested the sugar cane for the Colonial Sugar Refinery Company. These gangs comprised mainly of the growers in a single settlement. The second “association” was known as the School Management Committee. Most schools were organized under local committees whose responsibilities included the upkeep of buildings and collection of a percentage of wages for teachers. The final “association”, *The Settlement Association* or the *Youth Association* was formed to arbitrate disputes. It also assisted in the organization of major

village festivals. In a sense, then, there was division not only in the larger society but also among the racial groups as well.

There was no doubt an animus among the two major groups which the British government failed to understand, or perhaps did, but continued to skew representation towards the indigenous Fijians. In 1916, *Manilal Doctor*, the de facto leader of the Fiji Indians, persuaded the colonial government of Fiji to form an Indian platoon for the war effort during the First World War. He sent the names of 32 volunteers to the government but his requests were ignored. As a result, a number of Fiji Indians volunteered for the New Zealand Army while one served in Europe during the First World War. Further to this in 1934, Governor Fletcher enacted a policy which warranted an Indian Platoon within the Fiji Defence Force consisting entirely of enlisted-ranked Indians. Governor Fletcher encouraged Indians to regard Fiji as their permanent home. One could say this was Governor Fletcher's insurance policy against an anticipated anti-European revolt at the hands of the Native population, which subsequently took place in 1959.

There can be no argument that the divisiveness of the Fiji was in part due to the settlement pattern of the differing groups but also to a large part due to the policies that were crafted by the colonials. Lal (2006: 1) refers to the system of stratification within Fiji as a "three-legged stool." He suggests that the "three legs" comprised of the indigenous Fijian, the Indo-Fijian and the European communities. Each of these groups according to Lal (2006) was seen as distinct and separate in their culture, history and economic position, largely homogenous in their own internal social and cultural configurations. However, like the typical plural society each community was interlinked to the overarching national structure, making their unique contribution through their own separate compartments. Under this model, the following obtained:

1. The Fijians provided the land for economic development,
2. the Indo-Fijians provided the labour, and,
3. Europeans the capital.

Instead of bridging the gaps between the differing communities, the colonial policy of ensuring that lands remain in the hand of the native population⁵ along with ensuring that the native Fijians had their own separate court system, their own provincial administration, native regulations and strictly observed schedule of work in the villages, ensured the

complete isolation of this community from their neighbours. The way the education systems were arranged also maintained a strict separation of the native Fijians from the newly transplanted East Indians. The East Indian Fijians, for example, established schools often without the assistance of the British Government. Overtime, many of the settlements had both a primary and a secondary school with the outcome being that the graduates first filled the junior ranks of the civil services and from the 1950s onwards dominated the professional sphere as doctors, lawyers, nurses and accountants.

Lal (2006) while he notes that Fijians, too, had their own schools – with longer histories, and government support – suggests that educational success among this group was limited. The educational syllabus, in his opinion, was geared towards cultural factors, emphasizing group solidarity. In addition, factors such as rural isolation along with poor educational facilities played their part. He maintained too that Fijian leaders actively discouraged “academic” education for their communities and the few opportunities for higher education were reserved for people of chiefly rank.

The whites, on the other hand, as is to be expected, occupied the social and economic pinnacle. From Lal’s (2006; 1983a; 1983b; 1986; 1988) accounts, this group dominated the retail and wholesale commerce of the colony, owned copra plantations and shipping companies and occupied a pride of place in colonial administration. As he points out, and this obtained in all the British territories, this group had their own racially segregated clubs and exclusive voluntary associations and schools. In the twentieth century, Lal (2006) suggests that they began to move to urban towns and centres. Again, this community was not homogenous since they too comprised a number of nationalities.

This “ambiguous” assimilation of the different groups in Fiji would, of necessity, however, impact on the functioning of the political system that would later be introduced. In 1956, the then British Governor of Fiji, Garvey approached the Colonial Office with constitutional proposals, one of which was “ a multiracial bench” of four members, one each from the three major racial groups and the last to represent other races such as the Chinese and other Pacific islanders who were to be selected from a colony-wide constituency. Lal (2006: 9) conjectured that the governor’s ultimate goal at this time was “common Fijian citizenship”. The proposal, however, was not supported since it was felt that it was far too radical.

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE MINISTERIAL SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT

During the period 1956 to 1959 there were a number of strikes which perhaps pushed the new round of debates for constitutional reform. By 1961, a ministerial system of government – initially to be called the Member System – under which unofficial members of the Legislative Council would be invited to undertake supervisory roles for government departments, contribute to policy formulation and oversee its implementation, all under the principle of collective, cabinet-type responsibility was introduced. This new system was intended to be the first step towards full internal self-government. However, it should be noted that this new system was by no means “new” nor was it crafted to suit the country of Fiji. Indeed, it was no more than a “one size fit all system” that had been introduced throughout all the British colonies, irrespective of the number of ethnic communities or the level of development of these societies.⁶

In the case of Fiji, the government’s constitutional proposals were debated during the April 1961 sitting of the Legislative Council and the motion introduced by the Acting Colonial Secretary. By 1963, Fiji got “new” Letters Patent that provided for an enlarged Legislative Council, consisting of nineteen official and eighteen unofficial members. The three main communities had six members each – the principle of parity was preserved – four elected from racial rolls and two nominated by the governor. Property qualification for voters was abolished, and for the first time, a universal franchise was extended to the Fijians. The following year, the membership system was introduced.

A number of writers suggest that the major challenge after 1963 was not self-government nor independence. Rather, the question would be whether the terms and conditions would be acceptable to the various ethnic communities. One significant feature of colonial rule which had a significant and continuing influence on inter-community relations was rules and institutions which kept Indo-Fijians strictly segregated from indigenous Fijians. According to Lawson (2009) it was considered an offence for an Indo-Fijian to enter a native village – or for villagers to harbour an Indo-Fijian. This gave rise to an apartheid-like system with separate schools and other social facilities catering for the different “races” in the colony. All this was reinforced by racially based representation in the colonial legislature. Communal representation has remained enshrined in

all post-independence constitutions to date, although these were supplemented by some “national” electorates based on “cross-voting”.

In July 1965, Whitehall convened a constitutional conference, and invited the elected representatives of the three communities to London. The native Fijians and the Europeans had from all accounts taken a unified position and agreed only to limited internal self- government. The outcome of this meeting though was significant. The Legislative Council was expanded to 36 members and comprised 14 Fijians(nine elected on the communal role, three on multiracial cross voting and two nominated by the Great Council of Chiefs); 12 Indo-Fijians (nine communal and three cross voting) and 10 Europeans (seven communal and three cross voting).⁷

According to Lal (2006) the Fijian and the European delegation were delighted with the outcome, and for good reason: the Europeans’ privileged position was maintained, and the Fijians had, for the first time, received two additional seats. Fijian-European solidarity was consolidated. Understandably, the Indo-Fijians were disappointed since they had lost parity with the indigenous Fijians. In 1966, Fiji went through another election, for the first time on party lines: the Indo-Fijian-based Federation Party and the Fijian Association-backed, nominally multiracial Alliance Party launched in 1966. Both parties won in their constituencies, the Alliance winning two-thirds of the Fijian communal votes and the Federation a similar percentage among the Indo-Fijians. After the elections, *Ratu Mara* of the Alliance Party was declared the Chief Minister. The frustration of the Indo-Fijian-based Federation Party was understandable given the close contest between both groups. The culmination of this frustration resulted on the 1st September 1967, in their walking – out of the Legislative Council in the middle of an Alliance attack on the motion it had introduced.

The Party rejected the constitution and demanded a new one that was based on more democratic principles. This walk-out, the subsequent results of the by-election⁸ and the looming crisis between the groups led to a number of meeting between the groups. It was clear that some formula had to be devised to introduce some measure of parity. In the confidential discussions between August 1969 and March 1970, common ground was reached on many issues. Given the fast expanding Indo-Fijian population and in order to introduce some parity among the races, the Federation Party proposed an upper house, the Senate, where the nominees of the Great Council of Chiefs would have the power to veto any legislation that affected specific Fijian interests. The party also proposed to

seek independence without going into elections, primarily because the popular support for leader was the existing Chief Minister, *Ratu Mara*.

INDEPENDENCE AT LAST

On the 10 October 1970, Fiji attained its independence. However, for all intents and purposes, the final constitution consisted of little or no variations from the 1966 constitution. Some argued that this constitution merely continued to maintain the existing status quo. Under the 1970 constitution, Fiji was to have a bicameral legislature with an appointed Upper House (Senate) and a fully elected Lower House (House of Representatives) of 52 seats, with 22 each reserved for Fijians and Indo-Fijians and 8 for the general electors (Europeans, part-Europeans, Chinese and others). Of the 22 seats reserved for the Fijians and Indo-Fijians, 12 were to be contested on communal (racial) rolls and the remaining 10 on national (cross-voting) seats. This meant that candidates themselves were required to be Fijians, Indo-Fijians and general electors, but they were all elected by registered voters. In the House of Representatives, then, Fijians and Indo-Fijians had parity. The general electors' privileged position were also preserved: though they comprised only 4 per cent of the population, they had 15.4% of the seats, compared to Fijians and Indo-Fijians who had 42.3 per cent of the seats each. General elector over-representation was accepted, indeed advocated, by the Fijian leaders, who knew from experience that the general electors would support them, as they had invariably done in the past. In the 22-member Senate, the principle of Fijian paramountcy was explicitly recognized by giving the eight nominees of the Great Council of Chiefs the power of veto over legislation specifically affecting Fijian interests and privileges (Lal 2006: 21–22).

Due to the vast number of Indo-Fijians, political conflict on a national scale frequently occurred between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians. During the 1970s, Indo-Fijians were relatively protected under the Prime Minister *Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara*, who promoted multiracialism, but the contradiction was that there was an increasing number of Indo-Fijians in leading positions of administration and economy. This over-representation by one community was perceived by indigenous Fijians as an Indian dominance.

By the 1980s the Fiji Labour Party, basing their mandate on social reform, attracted large numbers of Indo-Fijians so it was no surprise that in 1987 the Indo-Fijian National Federation Party won the election. Needless to say, it signalled a “change of guard” from the native Fijians to

a “new” government dominated by Indo-Fijians. Some attributed this “changing” of the elites to be one of the major causes for a revolt by a military coup in 1987. A number of factors it seemed, though, could have also attributed towards this coup. Lal (1988, 1992), for example, suggested that the defeat of the Alliance Party that ruled Fiji from 1970 to 1987 was the major cause for the coup. Victor Lal (1988), on the other hand, believed that the coup was due to foreign involvement; while writers such as Robertson and Tamanisau (1988) and Sutherland (1992) saw the rise of Fiji Labour Party (F.L.P.)-National Federation Party (N.F.P.) coalition as an expression of class, if not racial aspiration. Howard (1991) and Lawson (1996) felt though, that problem was that the eastern chiefs, referred to by Howard as “eastern chiefly oligarchy,” did not want to relinquish its traditional political authority to a commoner indigenous Fijian. In reviewing the general literature on the coup and in particular the causes of the coup (1987), it seemed to be that each of the writers on the area was no more than a case of “the blind men and the elephant.” Each writer was correct . . . but . . . the factors were all interconnected. Included among these factors was the economic fortunes, or the decline thereof, in the case of Fiji.

Knapman (1987) pointed out, for instance, that by the mid-1980s, the Fiji Indians started leaving in large numbers to live in New Zealand, Australia, the USA or Canada, where their race counted for little and where talent was amply rewarded. He noted that In the weeks following the 14 May coup, Fiji’s economy was hit hard by the flight of financial and human capital, a virtual cessation of foreign investment, a collapse of tourism, temporary trade union bans on trade and travel from Australia and New Zealand, and a halt to the sugar harvest. In his article, he suggested that the resultant balance of payments crisis necessitated draconian macroeconomic policy measures that added to the unavoidable, but unequally shared hardship. The economic declines in the country, along with the changing of elites, were powerful push factors or triggers then that culminated in the Fijian coup of 1987. A second coup occurred on 25 September and according to Knapman (1987) this worsened the economic reversal by confirming the demise of democracy and introducing a fundamental uncertainty over the stabilization of the economy.

He documented the following:

- Sugar production, also affected by a severe drought in the second half of the year, was down 20% on the record 1986 level and would have been down by another 8% but for a rise in the sugar: cane ratio.

- Supplementary exports of 1986 sugar stocks plus a recovery in the world sugar price generated a damage-containing 17% rise in foreign-currency export value (Knapman 1987).
- Tourist arrivals were 26% down on the 1986 level despite ultralow package deals offered in the wake of the first coup, causing a 23% fall in gross tourism earnings for the year, which in turn contributed to a 26% fall in building and construction activity.
- Net private sector unrequited transfers on the balance of payments current account were four times the 1986 level due to increased emigration and overseas remittances, while aid cuts caused a 25% drop in net public sector inflows.
- The net outflow on capital account was F\$58 million, over half from the private sector. Overall, the balance of payments deficit in 1987 was F\$40 million, compared with a surplus of F\$39 million in 1986. Measured in Special Drawing Rights (the IMF unit of account), the respective figures were 54.7 million (deficit) and 35.2 million.
- During 1987 the Reserve Bank of Fiji raised its minimum lending rate from 8% to 2%, ceased automatic commercial bank access to its rediscount facility, removed interest-rate ceilings, suspended export finance at subsidized rates, and imposed tougher penalty rates on banks using its credit. Ceilings on commercial bank loans and advances were also introduced to further restrict credit, but were not mandatory.

Knapman (1987) noted, also, that the government's operating balance moved from a F\$13 million surplus at the end of March to a F\$13 million deficit at the end of June—on its way to an unprecedented 1987 level of F\$53 million. The total deficit for the year increased from a budgeted F\$86 million to F\$I09 million, and would have been much worse but for a drastic F\$37 million cut in capital expenditure, and September cuts in civil service and military wages and salaries of 15 and 20%, respectively. By the end of 1987, monetary restrictions propelled no doubt by devaluation while it did lead to some restoration in the external balance of payment, led to a worsening of the recession. Additional to the unemployment, underemployment, and pay cuts was the general decline in health, education and other services that resulted from financial stringency and acceleration of the brain drain. Emigration of Indo-Fijians proceeded at an average annual rate of I800 from 1971 to 1984 and in the early eighties constituted 83% of all emigration. The sequence of the 1987 coup is

important in trying to understand the reasons for the first and perhaps the second coup that followed in that year. It is clear from Lawson's (2009) account that leaning Fiji Labour Party (FLP) in coalition with the largely Indo-Fijian National Federation Party (NFP) was perceived primarily as an Indo Fijian party. This drew severe criticism from the Fijian nationalists who declared that their intension was to over throw the government. This later resulted in a military coup led by a third ranking officer of the Royal Fiji Military Forces in May and later September of that year. It was noted that this officer *Rabuka* abrogated the constitution, declared Fiji a republic and embarked on a project of marginalizing Indo-Fijians politically. In 1990 a new constitution was promulgated. Strangely enough, while justification for the coup was to ensure parity for the various communities, this was not reflected in the newly promulgated (25th July, 1990) interim constitution. For instance, representation in the "new" House of Representatives was strictly communal, with Fijians occupying 37 seats, Indo-Fijians 27 and others 6. This was, however, contested and opposed by Indo-Fijians and others marginalized by it. It was also denounced by the international community as disregarding universal human rights.

On March 15, 1995, the Constitution Review Commission was appointed with Sir Paul Reeves, Brij Lal and Tomasi Vakatora as members and after more than a year of hearings, the commission's report was tabled in the Fiji parliament on September 10, 1996. A Joint Parliamentary Select Committee then started negotiations and agreed to a new constitution, which was supported by both houses of parliament and by the Great Council of Chiefs. However, dissent within the Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei party⁹ (SVT) increased during consensus talks with the opposition and some indigenous members split and formed the Veitokani ni Lewenivanua Vakarisito (VLV) party in 1998.

In the western part of Fiji, veteran politician Apisai Tora spearheaded the establishment of a regional based Party of National Unity (PANU) and the Fiji Labour Party (F.L.P.) and successfully negotiated an agreement with the Fijian Association Party (F.A.P.), the Veitokani ni Lewenivanua Vakarisito(VLV)¹⁰ and the Party of National Unity (PANU). The Fiji Labour Party (F.L.P.) consolidated Indo-Fijian votes, and fragmented indigenous Fijian ones, through pre-election preference deals with its coalition partners and as a result won 36 seats. But the as with all coalitions, this one was doomed to also fracture with the Party of National Unity walking out of the relationship. Some claimed that the indigenous Fijians were threatened by the influence of the Indo-Fijian Prime Minister.

In April 2000, in another coup attempt the government ministers were held captive for fifty six days. Fiji went to the polls in August 2001. In 2005, the government proposed three pieces of legislation:

- Racial Tolerance and Unity (R.T.U), which aimed to promote reconciliation and tolerance and provide amnesty to the 2000 coup conspirators;
- The Qoliqoli bill, which sought to return foreshore and marine resources to indigenous Fijians;
- The Land Claims Tribunal bill, which was expected to hear application by aggrieved indigenous landowners whose land was previously alienated by deceit.

On Nov. 13, 2006, the military ordered the government to withdraw the bill.

Fiji's continuing political tensions, strongly expressed in 2005, were no doubt due to a number of underlying causal factors. While there was the inter-ethnic conflict phenomenon, which emerged as part of Fiji's colonial legacy, there was also the issue of power. The ongoing conflict between government and the military highlighted both modern and traditional conflicts expressed through state institutions. Bainimarama's,¹¹ (the military leader who led the coup in 2006), consistent stand on national security issues and the need to bring the 2000 coup perpetrators to justice became the centre of controversy between the military and the The Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua/Matanitu Vanua (SDL/MV) government, which had its power base in a number of coup-prone vanua (land-based traditional political entities). Qarase,¹² the then Prime Minister, believing that reconciliation was a long-term solution to Fiji's political instability promoted the drafting of a Bill: a Reconciliation, Tolerance and Unity Bill. The Bill promoted reconciliation through the principles of restorative justice, where the "wrong" and the "wronged" are brought together to discuss and resolve their problems. It had its foundation partially on the Fijian customary way of veisorosorovi (traditional apology), and it was felt that in the long-term, this process of reconciliation according to Durutalo (2003) would heal wounds and permanently solve problems. But before consideration of the bill in Parliament, opposition intensified when a few of the "chiefly perpetrators" of the 2000 coup were released from prison to serve their sentences extramurally. These included former vice president of the Republic of Fiji, Bau high chief Ratu Jope Seniloli; the Tui Cakau and

high chief in the Matanitu of Tovata, Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu; and Viliame Savu, a pioneer Fijian nationalist.

On December 5, the military tightened its grip on Suva and confiscated government vehicles, and in the evening of that day, the commander of the Royal Fiji Military Forces assumed executive authority and effectively incapacitated the Qarase government. A number of The Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua (SDL)-appointed individuals to various statutory boards were dismissed as the commander set in motion his “clean up” campaign. An Anti-Corruption Unit was established to investigate possible fraudulent practices in the Native Land Trust Board and the Fiji National Provident Fund and an interim government was sworn in after Bainimarama transferred executive power back to the president of Fiji, Ratu Josefa Iloilo. Unlike the previous three coups, the 2006 coup was enthusiastically embraced by many Indo-Fijians who disliked the ethnically exclusive policies of the Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua (SDL). In 2007, Commodore Bainimarama assumed the role of interim prime minister. While he advocated that elections were to be held in 2010, this did not take place until 2014. In the interim, in 2013, another constitution was promulgated.

In his address, Solo Mara, Fiji’s High Commissioner in London in 2013¹³ suggested, perhaps by way of explanation for the postponement of the General Elections, that the Fijian government undertook from 2007 to address the socio-political anomalies of this country on four fronts. These were:

1. Modernization of the country by restructuring, reforming and strengthening its governance institutions and framework;
2. Adoption at the core of its political reform the development of a constitution that will guarantee equal citizenry and equal opportunities for all its citizens;
3. Embark on an ambitious but focussed infrastructure development programme throughout Fiji to unleash the economic potential of previously neglected regions and diversify economic activities out of the main island of Viti Levu;
4. Reform of its financial sector to improve on financial prudence and avoid unnecessary wastage of government resources [through corrupt practices].

He pointed out that the first stage in the process of change involved the development of a Peoples Charter initiative that was launched in October

2007. This, he claimed, was developed by a 45-member council consisting of representatives of NGOs, academics, religious leaders and leaders of all major organizations in the country. This council was known as the *National Council for Building a Better Fiji* (NCBBF). According to the High Commissioner, one of the first tasks of the NCBBF was the preparation of a comprehensive, fact-based, diagnostic report on the State of Nation and Economy (SNE).

According to his report, The State of the Nation and Economy [SNE] Report found the following conditions obtained:

- i. A country wrecked by political instability with an ongoing cycle of coups leading to the repeated overthrow of governments;
- ii. A low level of trust between the major communities;
- iii. Increasing corruption and the gross abuse of power;
- iv. Low savings and investment, and consequently insufficient new jobs being created each year to employ school leavers, let alone the long term unemployed;
- v. A sharp rise in unemployment and poverty;
- vi. An increase in the number of people forced to live in squatter settlements, a situation exacerbated by the non-renewal of sugar farm leases;
- vii. Lack of access to land for both productive and social purposes;
- viii. A weakening export base as markets for garments and sugar contract and because some land has been withdrawn from agricultural use;
- ix. A serious loss of valuable skills, experience and expertise, because of the high rate of emigration;
- x. Declining standards of service delivery in the public sector and the community;
- xi. Increasing government debt with higher payments for interest pre-empting funds for vitally needed infrastructure such as water, roads, sewerage, electricity and housing; and
- xii. The dilapidated state of the country's infrastructure.

The Committee in examining these challenges recommended a number of solutions as well and these formed the provisions of the Peoples' Charter for Change, Peace and Progress. The Peoples Charter was adopted after a nationwide inclusive and participatory process. It represented Fiji's own way of addressing its deep rooted, complex and fundamental socio-political

problems. The National Council for Building a Better Fiji (NCBBF) received very strong, broad based support from the people of Fiji, with 64% expressing support for the draft Peoples' Charter.

The Peoples' Charter was then endorsed by the late President of Fiji in December, 2008. According to the High Commissioner the overarching objective of the Peoples' Charter was intended to rebuild Fiji into a non-racial, united, well-governed, truly democratic nation, a nation that sought progress and prosperity through merit based equality of opportunity and peace.

His speech outlined the following guiding principles:

- A just and fair society;
- Achievement of unity and national identity;
- Merit-based appointments and equal opportunity for all Fijians;
- Transparent and accountable government
- The uplifting of the disadvantaged in all communities;
- Mainstreaming of the indigenous Fijian (iTaukei) in a modern, progressive Fiji; and
- The sharing of spiritualities and interfaith dialogue.

A major discussion point in the High Commissioner's presentation was the 2013 Fijian Constitution. He pointed out that it comprised an independent judiciary, a secular state and a wide range of civil, political and socio-economic rights. It recognized the indigenous peoples of Fiji, people of Indian descent and other races [Chinese, Pacific Islanders etc.] and their customary practices; protected the rights of the predominantly indigenous landowners and importantly their tenants [most of whom are Indo-Fijians]; demanded accountability and transparency from government officials; built strong and independent institutions; and replaced old weighted electoral system with one based on the principle of one person, one vote, one value.

The Constitution provided for a single chamber 50-member Parliament – up from 45 in the Draft document – and this would be elected on the basis of one person, one vote, one value. Elections were to be held every four years and every Fijian over the age of 18 was entitled to vote. In adhering to the vision of a “united and prosperous Fiji”, the 2013 Constitution abolished communal/racial and regional constituencies as a basis of electing parliamentarians. There was now one national constituency covering the whole of Fiji, as in The Netherlands and Israel. And every voter would be entitled to one vote, choosing the candidate

who they believed best served their interests under a proportional representation system.

It was proposed that the legislature would only comprise the House of Representatives. In other words, the upper house would be abolished. The prime minister, he noted, would be appointed from the elected parliamentarians in the political party that commanded the most seats in Parliament and, in line with the existing practice, a president will be the head of state and perform the ceremonial function of commander in chief of the Republic of Fiji Military Forces.

In recognition of the political sensitivity of land tenure issues, the Constitution also contained specific provisions that guaranteed and strengthened the protection of communally-owned i'Taukei, Rotuman and Banaban lands (96% of total land area). This was also in response to a large number of submissions received during the constitutional consultation process in March calling for explicit protection clauses. They provided greater protection and security for I'Taukei, Rotuman and Banaban land than ever before.

Other notable features of the 2013 Constitution highlighted were the following:

1. A Bill of Rights containing specific provisions guaranteeing a range of civil and political rights and, for the first time, social and economic rights. These include the right to education, economic participation, a just minimum wage, transport, housing, food and water, health and social security.
2. A free media and freedom of speech, expression, movement and association.
3. The safeguarding of the environment.
4. The compulsory teaching of the i'Taukei and Fiji Hindi languages at primary school level, along with English as the common language.
5. The right to multiple citizenship but a provision that only Fijian citizens be entitled to stand for Parliament.
6. The right to fair employment practices.
7. The right to join, form or campaign for a political party.
8. The right to privacy.
9. A Code of Conduct for public office holders.
10. A provision requiring public office holders such as civil servants, members of the disciplined forces and trade unionists to resign before contesting a seat in Parliament.

The 2013 Constitution also abolished the communal representation system as provided for under previous constitutions and replaced it with the use of a common roll system for all future elections. On 29th July 2012, the Electronic Voter Registration (EVR) was launched and by 2013 approximately 540,000 eligible voters or approximately 87% of the total estimated number of voters were registered for the 2014 elections.

On the 17th September, 2014, General Elections were held in Fiji. There was a high voter turnout of 84% with almost 500,000 ballots cast. The party of Fiji's military ruler Voreqe Bainimarama won an outright majority in parliament, with 32 of 50 seats. Bainimarama alone won just over 200,000 votes, and, when other candidates from his party were added, Fiji first won 294,000 votes, or 59% of the total. Sodelpa candidates won 140,000 votes, or 28%. Parliamentary seats were allocated under a proportional system. While some attributed Bainimarama's victory to his long incumbency and others to rigged elections, The Multinational Observer Group (MOG), co-led by Australia, Indonesia and India, invited by the Fijian Government to observe the 2014 Fijian Election noted that it was indeed a "free and fair" election. According to their report, the 2013 Constitution removed racial voting blocs and the application of this new electoral system, with a single voter roll, seemed to be understood by voters and was positively received by most voters interviewed.¹⁴ Some still question whether Fiji's election was "free and fair."

In retrospect, it is clear that while there was some instability in Fiji, a number of mechanisms had been introduced to address the vexing challenges of ethnic dominance. One of the primary mechanisms was reforming the Fijian constitution. Key among the constitutional clauses was the inclusion of a Bill of Rights along with freedom of the media. In addition a significant introduction was the allocation of parliamentary seats according to proportional representation. It is clear, however, that ethnic contests will not be resolved with the revisions introduced. Rather, it should be expected that while changes appear on paper, the long term solution to Fiji's challenges would be to change cultures, perceptions and then behaviours.

NOTES

1. In the case of Guyana, see Bissessar and La Guerre 2013.
2. Much of this literature has been taken from a well-researched thesis by Aubrey Parke 2006.

3. Parke (2006, pp. 9–14) provides the bulk of the data in this chapter. The table is taken from page 9.
4. Ali 1980.
5. According to Lal (2006) the then Governor Gordon's land policies ensured that 83 per cent of all land remained inalienably in Fijian ownership. The justification for this policy was that without land the traditional Fijian community would collapse and suffer the fate of other dispossessed communities in the Pacific islands. He notes that Today, as Crown land (Schedules A and B—either not claimed by any landowning units or whose owners had died out) has come under the jurisdiction of the Native Land Trust Board, more than 90 per cent of all land in Fiji is now owned by the indigenous community although it has to be said that large portion
6. Much of this data is taken from Brij V. (Lal 2006). *Islands of Turmoil. Elections and Politics in Fiji*. Australian National University: Asia Pacific Press/Co-Published by ANU E Press and Asia Pacific Press The Australian National University Canberra ACT 0200.
7. For a more detailed account of cross-voting and communal roll, see Brij V. Lal (2006).
8. The Federation Party won all the Indo-Fijian communal seats, and increased its majorities.
9. Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei) was a party which dominated politics in the 1990s and was the mainstay of coalition governments from 1992 to 1999.
10. The Christian Democratic Alliance, better known locally by its Fijian name, Veitokani ni Lewenivanua Vakarisito (VLV), was a Fijian political party that operated in the late 1990s and early 2000s.
11. Voreqe Bainimarama, also called Frank Bainimarama (born April 27, 1954, Kiuva, Fiji), Fijian military leader who led a 2006 coup that resulted in his becoming acting president (2006–07) and later acting prime minister (2007–09) of Fiji. He was sworn in officially as prime minister in September 2014 following his victory in the country's first elections since the coup.
12. Laisenia Qarase (pronounced [ŋga'rase]; born 4 February 1941) served as the sixth Prime Minister of Fiji from 2000 to 2006.
13. Fiji's social-economic development, post-election" given by HE Mr Solo Mara, Fiji's High Commissioner in London. Mr Mara, who has served in the UK since late 2011, is a career diplomat. Following various government posts, he joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2000 and was appointed Permanent Secretary in 2008. Discussion at the Pacific Island Society of the UK and Ireland 07 Nov 2013; CPA, Palace of Westminster.
14. 2014 Fijian Elections Final Report of the Multinational Observer Group.

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Race and Politics in Guyana

Abstract Chapter 4 looks at the way race and politics intersect in the case of Guyana. Again, it was important to focus on the historical assimilation patterns of the two ethnic groups since this would later impact on the way political parties were formed and how these would impact on the trends in voting. The chapter also looked closely at some of the mechanisms that that allow for conflict resolution among the various ethnic communities.

Keywords A state council · An executive council · Cheddi Jaggan · Combined court · Court of policy · Despres · East Indian association · Forbes Burnham · Franchise commission · Greene · House of assembly · Keizers · Legislative assembly · Maha Sabha · People’s national congress · People’s progressive party · Plural societies · Premdas · Universal adult suffrage · Waddington constitution · West indian federation

AN OVERVIEW OF GUYANA

The country or what was referred to as the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, known as “Guiana” or “Guyana”, comprises the large shield landmass north of the Amazon River and east of the Orinoco River known as the “Land of many waters”. Prior to 1787, the country consisted of three Dutch colonies: Essequibo, Demerara and Berbice which were later incorporated. Guyana is bordered by Suriname to the east, by Brazil to the south and southwest, by Venezuela to the west, and by the Atlantic

Ocean to the north. At 215,000 square kilometres (83,000 square miles), Guyana is the third-smallest independent state on the mainland of South America after Uruguay and Suriname.

To the outsider, it is assumed that all British colonies would have shared similar political and administrative systems. That, however, is only partly true. Unlike Fiji, in the case of Guyana or what was earlier referred to as British Guiana or Guiana, little or no emphasis was placed on the protection of the indigenous population. Perhaps, this may have been due to two primary factors, namely, the small numbers of indigenous Indians or perhaps the peaceful nature of these people. At the time of settlement, there were nine tribes namely the Wai Wai, Machushi, Patamona, Arawak, Carib, Wapishana, Arecuna, Akawaio and Warrau. Unlike Fiji, the early settlers in Guyana were not the British but rather the Dutch. During the 1500s the Dutch established colonies along a continuous but interminable line between Spanish Guiana in the west and French Guiana in the east.¹ Within these areas the Dutch established the colonies of Essequibo, Demerara, Berbice and Suriname. However, historical accounts indicate that there was a frequent change of hands until 1802 with the Treaty of Amiens when these colonies were again restored to the Dutch. However, by 1803 when war broke out among the different powers, the British took possession of these colonies for the third time.

Although Dutch colonization was short-lived and sometimes sporadic, the settlement by this group did have an impact on Guyana. While the internal government of the colony was often developed in a piecemeal and haphazard manner and no careful planning went into the task of internal administration what was established was a network of trading depots in the interior of the country. As the importance of trade declined, however, increasing attention was paid to the production on small plantations of tobacco, coffee and indigo, and later on sugar. The greatest impact that the Dutch were to have, though, was their importation of Africans, East Indians, Portuguese, Chinese and 'poor whites.' With the British takeover of the colony in 1803, the plantation economy was to become the dominant economic organization of the island so that by 1829 there were 230 sugar plantations and 174 coffee and cotton estates.

In 1787, the Dutch colonizers introduced the first draft constitution, which became the basis for constitutional changes in the colony in 1789. The regions of Demerara and Essequibo were reintegrated administratively under the headship of a governor with headquarters at Stabroek in Demerara. There was to be one main Council for Policy and the private

planters were allowed to nominate representatives to the Council. According to Thompson, this new arrangement was upheld until 1796 when the private colonists were allowed to send representatives to meetings with members of the Court of Policy to discuss and vote on financial matters alone.² The two groups sitting together formed the Combined Court. Simultaneously with the development of legislative and executive institutions, that of judicial institutions was taking place. In other words, even before a system of government was imposed, in Guyana there was in fact a separation of powers between the executive, the legislative and the judicial arms.

Under Dutch administration, there were three major racial groups namely: Europeans, Africans and Amerindians. As in all the colonies, the Europeans were primarily land or plantation-owners, were clergymen, itinerant traders or soldiers or served within the administration of the country. The second group, the Africans, constituted the servile class and were assigned the role of field labourers, factory hands, artisans, and domestics. The Amerindians, who constituted the third group, occupied an anomalous position between the two extremes. As Thompson (1976) observed, those living in close proximity to the centres of white settlement were regarded as free. The Dutch accordingly provided the fructuous circumstances for the first political system of Guyana which was to emerge under British rule as well as the formation of cultural forms within the existing social system.

It was the British in 1831 who inaugurated the colony of British Guiana by forming a union with the colonies of Demerara and Essequibo. Later, the document setting out the union of the colonies this became the Constitution of British Guiana. This constitutional change in 1831 along with the abolition of slavery in 1833 ushered in a new phase in the politics of Guyana. According to Greene (1974), it was a phase noted more for the attempts by a rising class of native politicians to reduce the elective monopoly of the plantocracy, than for far-reaching changes in the structure of the Guyanese society. Indeed, what was challenged during the period 1831–1928 was the continuing monopoly of the planter class in decision-making, particularly at the level of the Court of Policy and the Combined Court. The Court of Policy, a type of executive organization, was presided over by the governor of the colony and its membership comprised three official members, one of whom was the attorney-general, along with six unofficial members elected by a College of Keizers (electors).³ The Combined Court, which may be seen to closely represent a legislative organization,

comprised the Court of Policy and six financial representatives who were elected for a term of eight years. In turn, the Keizers were elected for life by the colonists. Two major institutional changes accompanied the unification attempt in 1831. The first was that the Keizers no longer had the power of electing unofficial members to the Court of Policy or the six financial members to the Combined Court; they only elected them when vacancies occurred. Secondly, the elective franchise no longer required the ownership of 25 slaves, but was extended to include males assessed to pay direct taxes to the colonial revenue on incomes of not less than 143 pounds. This was significant since it meant that a number of freed Africans who had become artisans and craftsmen would have the necessary income to allow them to vote.

Following the abolition of slavery in 1834, followed by the mass exodus of the newly freed slaves from the estates, it was evident to the planters that if they were to survive, another source of labour had to be found. To solve the problem, John Gladstone, the owner of plantations in West Demerara, wrote the firm of *Gillanders, Arbuthnot and Company* inquiring about the possibility of obtaining Indian immigrants for his estates. Since East Indian indentureds were already used in Mauritius, Gladstone subsequently obtained permission for his scheme from both the Colonial Office and the Board of Control of the East India Company. In May of 1838, the first batch of Indian indentured labourers arrived in Guyana. The scheme was briefly interrupted from July 1839 to 1845 after which it continued uninterrupted to 1917. During this period 239,909 East Indian indentured servants arrived in Guyana. Indentureship, like slavery, was onerous. And it was not surprising that Indian indentured labourers began to openly defy the systems under which they operated. Many of the eruptions that took place were due to grievances including the overbearing behaviour of managers, wage rate disputes, disagreement over tasks, sexual exploitation of women by overseers and the arbitrary deduction of wages of labourers.

The first such disturbance took place at Plantation Leonora, West Coast Demerara in July 1869. The shovel gang complained that wages were withheld because they could not complete a job on waterlogged soil. They also demanded extra pay to do the job. A confrontation between armed police and the labourers was narrowly avoided, but the ringleaders were arrested, convicted and incarcerated at the penal settlement, Mazaruni. The following year violence erupted at Plantations Hague, Zeelugt, Vergenoegen, Uitvlugt, Success and Non Pariel. Indeed, the period of

the 1890s and beyond was prone to a number of riots and labour disturbances. For instance, four years before the termination of the immigration scheme, five labourers from plantation Rose Hall lost their lives during a strike and disturbance. Apart from riots and mass picketing, labour protests included work stoppages, assaults on managers and passive resistance such as feigning illness, malingering and deliberately performing poor work.⁴

The Government of India abolished the indentured system in 1917 and no more East Indian labour is allowed to enter Guiana. By this time, though, the population had increased exponentially from a total population of 39,560 persons in 1833 to total of 150,761 persons in 1929.⁵ As the population increased, a number of local organizations emerged and articulated their demands for electoral reform. One of these, the Reform Association, was led by a coloured Guyanese who petitioned the Court of Policy to recommend that the then legislative and financial institutions of the colony should cease. His petition argued that they should be replaced by a Council and a House of Assembly, a model which had been introduced in the neighbouring colony of Barbados.

There can be no doubt that, with strength in numbers, since the newly freed population had grown from 10,000 in 1833 to 95,000 in 1949, the Association was in fact agitating for full and direct representation. To this end, in 1850, they sponsored the first mass political meeting in the history of Guyana and were able to obtain over 5,000 signatures for its petition to the Court of Policy re-requesting greater representation under the Constitution. Another organization, the Progressive Association, which was established in 1887, also agitated for revisions as they related to the qualifications of the elective members of the Court of Policy. Previously, the qualification requirement was that candidates were to own at least 80 acres of 'cultivated' land, a requirement which meant that only planters were eligible for positions within this organization.

Greene (1974) concluded that it was primarily because of the agitation by these groups, that constitutional revisions were agreed to in 1891, allowing the Progressive Association to compete under the banner of the Progressive Party. It should be noted, though, that, to a large extent, agitation for expanded franchise was made by the African segment of the Guyanese population and the East Indians had little or no representation. Indeed, as Greene (1974) was to note, by 1928 the East Indians comprised 51.8% of the population but formed a mere 6.4% of the total electorate and 0.6% of the registered voters. The Africans, on the other

hand, comprising 42.3% of the population comprised 62.7% of the total electorate and 6.8% of the registered voters. In contrast to both these groups, the whites with 1.7% of the population and 17% of the electorate comprised 46.1% of the registered voters.

Like Fiji, Guyana was fractured along the lines of race. An examination of the census statistics for 1964 revealed that 4.0% of the population was Amerindian, 0.9% European, 1.4% Portuguese, 0.6% Chinese, 11.3% mixed, 33.5% African and 48.2% East Indians. One writer, Despres (1964) accordingly classified these communal groups as either 'maximal' or 'minimal' cultural sectors. He suggested that the difference between the two classificatory systems depended on the level of integration into a society or the extent to which the sector maintains its 'culture.' He relied on Steward's (1955) concept of levels of cultural integration to reinforce his classification. Maximal sectors could be defined as the manner by which a basic institutional system of a population served to integrate it socially and psychologically into the total society in a manner quite different from the institutional system of another population to that degree that the two populations might be said to constitute cultural sections. A 'maximal' cultural sector differs from other groups by its total institutional pattern. He went on to note that "because of this difference a maximal cultural sector is usually integrated into the total society in a distinguishable manner".⁶

However, he pointed out that, on the other hand, an ethnic group (normally identified with reference to national or religious practice or some other one or two institutional dimensions) might be thought of as a 'minimal' cultural section. The ethnic group is no different from other groups in a society with reference to most institutional dimensions (e.g. family system, occupational status, social class and membership). Based on these definitions he then classified the various sectors in the Guyanese society accordingly. He suggested that the Amerindians, the Europeans, the Africans and the East Indian groups could be defined as maximal groups since in many ways they remained segregated. However, by contrast, he noted that the Portuguese as well as the Chinese were minimal group since they were easily acculturated into the host society. With reference to the coloured or mixed population, which was a fairly large percentage, he observed that this presented a difficult problem of classification since many of them were the most educated of the non-European populations. As a result they occupied positions of relatively high status in the professions and the civil service and eventually adopted many patterns

of European behaviour including consumption and recreational patterns. The social status of this group, he observed, was relative to one's point of view. From a European perspective, for instance, the coloureds were considered middle class while, from an African perspective, they represented the African elite or upper class.

Similar to Fiji, the settlement patterns of the two major communal groups, the Africans and East Indians, differed significantly. The newly freed slaves migrated to the urban areas in Guyana, in particular the coastal area, and sought employment as artisans, craftsmen and vendors. The indentured East Indians, on the other hand, were relatively confined to the estates where they were placed and this prevented them from mixing with the other ethnic groups. By 1946, 90% of the Indian population were classified as non-Christian and in 1931 fewer than 16% of the professionals in British Guiana, and only 8% of those employed in the public service, were Indians. As late as 1943, Indians comprised only 11% of the fixed establishment of the civil service and, by 1956, approximately 75% of all farm operators were East Indians.

It was to be expected, therefore, during the period 1833 to 1892, that of the 110 unofficial members selected to the Court of Policy and the financial representatives, only 2% were African, while 16% were of mixed descent and 82% were white. Professionally, 44% were white planters, 22% businessmen and 34% were lawyers or solicitors. The East Indian group was visibly absent from decision-making positions during this period. Greene observed, however, that Crown Colony administration was accompanied by four major and significant electoral changes.

THE INTRODUCTION OF A LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

The first change involved the abolition of the Court of Policy and its replacement with a Legislative Council. The new Council consisted of the governor as the president. Further revisions were made as follows:

- i. In 1928, in accordance with an Act of Parliament, an order of the King abolished the Court of Policy and replaced it with a Legislative Council. This new Council consisted of the governor as president, and of 10 official and 19 unofficial members. The Colonial Secretary and Attorney-General were ex-officio members and, of the 19 unofficial members, 14 were elected and the remainder were nominated by the Governor.

- ii. In 1943 the Constitution of 1928 was amended so that the Legislative Council consisted of 24 members in addition to the governor as president. There were three ex-officio members, namely, the colonial secretary, the attorney-general and the colonial treasurer. There were seven nominated members and 14 elected members. Greene's accounts suggest that the Popular Party was instrumental in moving the British Parliament to act in the reforming of the politics of Guyana. The Popular Party, strangely enough, was led by Anthony Webber, a Trinidadian journalist and, as was to be expected, it mobilized support from the local non-planter class. In other words, it appeared to be targeting the grass-root supporters. Again, this Party was comprised of primarily black middle-class professionals and much of its support came from the trade unions.
- iii. In 1952 the Waddington Constitution enacted universal adult suffrage. It should be recalled that universal adult suffrage had already been introduced in the neighbouring colonies of Jamaica (1944) and Trinidad and Tobago (1946).

While previously it was suggested that the East Indians, defined by Despres as a maximal group, had been confined to the plantations, by 1881, many of them had moved away from the sugar estates, first dividing their labour between their farm plots and the plantations, and then turning completely to peasant farming.

In 1881, for instance, out of a total Indian population of 79,929, 34% lived outside the plantations. Further, by 1911, the gradual but steady movement of Indians away from the plantation resulted in fewer than half of them remaining on the sugar estates, although only 5.7% migrated to the urban areas. What was significant in the new pattern of settlement made by the Indian group was their quite successful attempt to move away from sugar production to larger holdings of rice production. It was a venture that was to provide this group with the main economic basis for their later upward mobility and improved status.

Indeed, the rapid growth of commercial rice production resulted in the attainment of self-sufficiency in the early 1900s and, in the early twentieth century, rice production had expanded to such proportions that by the 1960s it occupied most of the arable land on the coast and provided a direct livelihood for 45,000 people and for 200,000 people indirectly. With the improvement in their economic fortunes, the Indians, as was to be expected, began competing for places in the civil service and the

teaching profession. Their assimilation into the mainstream institutions though was slow. The census data of 1931 revealed, for instance, that Indians constituted 8.08% of all persons in the public service and nearly half of them were in the lower grades such as that of messenger; out of 1,397 teachers, only 100 were of East Indian descent. By 1964, Premdas (1995) was to observe that when Indians constituted slightly over half the country's population, their social, political and economic condition had improved so rapidly that they comprised 33.16% of the civil service, 27.17% of government agencies and undertakings, and 41.49% of teachers at the primary school level.

Interestingly, too, by 1910, East Indians started developing voluntary associations to serve their specific interests. By 1920, therefore, a number of organizations and associations, representing both the African and East Indian sectors, had sprung up. These included organizations such the League of Coloured Peoples, the East Indian Association, the Chinese Association and the Portuguese Club each of which catered to the social, cultural and religious needs of the different racial sectors. The uni-ethnic pattern in the voluntary associations also extended to organizations such as trade unions, so they were individually identified by the public as belonging to the 'blackman' or 'coolie' or 'potagee'.⁷ As mass political parties developed, especially after 1955 when separate Indian and African mass parties were launched, the voluntary associations would accordingly be associated with either one of the racial parties.

During the period 1910 to 1921, a number of African associations were established: The Universal Negro Improvement Association, the African Communities League and the Negro Progress Convention. Initially, all these organizations were of course Black, urban-based and had limited memberships. The primary purpose of all these organizations was to promote the social, economic and educational interests of African people. The Negro Progress Convention though later evolved into the League of Coloured People (LCP) in the 1930s and, as Premdas (1995) pointed out, evinced strong 'racial overtones.' This was clearly reflected in its support of the West Indian Federation since it meant that in joining the Federation it would elevate the African minority in Guyana. On the matter of expanding the franchise to vote, the organization opposed universal adult suffrage without a literacy test. It should be noted that a literacy test would have meant the exclusion of the majority of East Indians.

By 1916, the East Indians had also established one of their most important associations, the East Indian Association (EIA) comprising

professionals, businessmen, landlords and rice millers. Their goal, similar to that of their African counterparts, was to unite the members of the East Indian race in all parts of the colony for representation purposes and to advocate and promote the general public interest and welfare of the Indian community at large. The membership of this organization, too, was small. It embarked upon a programme to stimulate Indian religious activities by importing missionaries from India. It also demanded the establishment of special government schools under East Indian masters for the teaching of both Hindi and English to children of East Indian parents. In other words, like the Maha Sabha in Trinidad, the EIA also sought to integrate the Indian cultural community and forge a coherent identity.

It was evident that like Fiji, the settlement pattern in Guyana, to a large extent, reinforced the isolation of the two primary groups. Understandably there were occasional but rather sporadic clashes between these two communities. By 1947, however, these clashes became more pronounced with some writers suggesting that it was now a fight not only for political power but indeed was a battle of exclusive dominance of one group over the other. However, it was not until after the Second World War that that dramatic changes emerged between the two major sectors. It was clear that, prior to 1950 and the introduction of universal adult suffrage, two kinds of political mobilization had been occurring almost simultaneously. The first was, of course, the formation of groups and associations to represent various sectoral interests. The second was the development of the trade union movement. The unions, in the first instance, had been established to represent the interests of the working class in various areas but, as race and occupation were often limited to certain groups, over time the unions also were representative of one racial group or the other.

While the country itself was marked by a system of ethnic stratification from the outset, for both groups there was little or no political competition since power and administrative control remained largely in the hands of the colonials. Indeed, it can be argued that the colonial administrative machinery was a powerful countervailing force that not only separated the groups but also, to a large extent, excluded them from the decision-making process within Guyana. Between 1935 and 1938, it was evident, particularly in the case of the West Indian territories that the administrative, colonial machinery was failing. Following widespread labour disturbances and in some cases rioting in many of the colonies, by 1938, the British Government appointed a Commission, commonly referred to as

the West India Royal Commission to carry out a comprehensive investigation of the social and economic conditions of all the British territories in the Caribbean. The Royal Commission was chaired by Walter Guinness, 1st Baron Moyne. The commission's further members were composed of experts who could offer substantial insight into the Caribbean crisis. This included the former governor of Jamaica from 1926 to 1932, Sir Edward Stubbs; Dr. Mary Blacklock, an expert in tropical medicine; Professor F. Engledow, an expert in the field of agriculture; economist Hubert Hudson; Dame Rachel Crowdy, a distinguished social reformer; Sir Percy MacKinnon, a representative for Parliament's financial interests; Sir Walter Citrine, 1st Baron Citrine, president of the international federation of trade unions; and two members of parliament, Morgan Jones from the Labour Party and Conservative Ralph Assheton. According to Johnson, Blacklock's and Crowdy's appointments were important because the Royal Commission required women who would offer a greater understanding towards the plight of women in the West Indies (Thomas 1987).

The Commission arrived in Jamaica on November 1st, 1938 for a tour of the British West Indies that would be cut short at the onset of the Second World War. The Commission visited Guyana during the period 27 January to 20 February, 1939, and it was in session at the time of the Leonora disturbances. Among the organizations presenting opinions to the Commissions were the nine registered trade unions, the Civil Service Association and the Sugar Producers' Association. A number of individuals, including sugar workers, also gave evidence at meetings of the Commission. Workers who appeared before the Commission complained of fear and victimization at their workplaces. A total of 43 persons presented evidence at sittings before the Commission.

The Commission completed its report in 1940 but it was not until the end of the Second World War, in 1945, that the report was released. The report pointed out a number of deficiencies in the British administrative system including deficiencies in the education sectors, economic and social problems as well as poor health conditions which led to a high infant mortality rate. It also observed the challenges facing both sugar workers and small private farmers, pointed out the use of child labour and discrimination of women in the work place. In its report, the Commission also examined the political system (in this case the administrative system) operating in the various territories and among its other recommendations suggested the expansion of the franchise as well as the reduction of the margin between qualifications for registration as a voter and those for the

membership of the Legislative Council. This recommendation later resulted in the establishment of a Franchise Commission which in 1944 recommended the lowering of qualifications voting and for membership of the Legislative Council. These qualifications were in the areas of land ownership, value of land owned, property occupation, income and literacy in any language.

In the case of Guyana, the Commission recommended sweeping reforms in everything from employment practices and social welfare to radical political change. While many of the recommendations were not implemented immediately following the release of the report, one immediate outcome was that the British government decided to make substantial increases in the amount of money available for colonial development of all kinds and set about creating a framework for change. In 1943 the British Guiana constitution was amended. Among the amendments was the reduction of the property qualifications for candidates for the Legislative Council, the removal of the bar on women and clergymen, the reduction of the property or income qualifications for voters, and an increase in the number of elected members to give them a majority in the Legislative Council. It was a small victory for the local populace since the governor continued to retained control of the Executive Council and the right to disallow or pass legislation against the wishes of the now mainly elected Legislative Council.

1953- GENERAL ELECTIONS IN GUYANA

In April, 1953, Guyana held general elections based on the new franchise which extended the voting age to persons 21 years and older. At that time, the political structure was a bi-cameral legislature consisting of the following:

- a. A House of Assembly composed of 24 elected representatives and 3 ex officio members;
- b. A State Council composed of 9 members of whom 6 were appointed by the governor on his discretion, 2 on the recommendation of the Ministers elected from the House of Assembly and 1 appointed after consultation with the independent and minority party members of the House of Assembly.
- c. An Executive Council in which were vested all the essential powers under the Constitution. This Council consisted of the governor as

president, with a casting vote only, the 3 ex officio members of the House of Assembly, 6 Ministers chosen by ballot from among the elected members of the House of Assembly and a member of the State Council.

The People's Progressive Party (PPP) took 18 of the 24 seats. It should be recalled that the PPP was established on the 1st January 1950 and was actually a merger of the British Guiana Labour Party led by Forbes Burnham⁸ and the Political Affairs Committee led by Cheddi Jagan, At its inception the PPP appeared to be multi-ethnic party supported by workers and intellectuals. The party held its first congress on 1 April 1951. Its third congress was held in 1953, with Burnham unsuccessfully seeking to become party leader. The party went on to win the 1953 elections, taking 18 of the 24 elected seats in the House of Assembly, resulting in Jagan becoming Chief Minister.

It was to be a short-lived victory, however, as the Constitution was suspended in October, 1953. It was evident that the two leaders and their supporters, Burnham and Jagan, differed ideologically on the direction of the party. On May 4, the second Vice-Chairman of the PPP, Clinton Wong resigned and many suggested that Burnham had been misled since he thought that he would have been selected as leader of the House. Instead, he had been appointed as Chairman of the Party. Burnham claimed that he had not been treated as an 'equal partner.'⁹ In the case of Guyana, some suggest that it was a return to 'racial voting' with a call for Apan Jaat as well as demands of the partition of the country.

Like all plural societies, where there is slim numerical majority, it is to the best interest of both parties to form alliances. In the case of Guyana, in 1957, Burnham's breakaway party entered into an alliance with the smaller National Democratic Party and later changed its name to the People's National Congress. In February 1960, attempts were made at establishing a grand alliance or nationalist government with the People's National Congress and those splinter parties included the National Labour Front, the Progressive Labour Party and the United Force. However, these efforts failed.

The United Force, which was led by Peter D'Aguiar, had submitted a 21-point letter to the People's National Congress in which they had recommended that Burnham should step down as leader for at least 18 months, and allow D'Aguiar to be the leader of the alliance. Again, the issue was one of leadership. One of the other recommendations which the

United Force had made was that the two parties should establish a ruling committee of 15 persons, nine of whom should be Burnhamite and six D'Aguiarites. The People's National Congress had recommended a bicameral legislature, a form of proportional representation as recommended by the Constituent Assembly, and internal self-government with a view to joining the West Indian Federation. But their efforts at forming the alliance failed.

In 1963, one suggestion by the then British governor was that a national government should be formed comprising five members of the People's Progressive Party, five representatives People's National Congress and two representatives from the United Force. While some suggested that the major factor was the differing ideologies of the leaders, it was evident though that the challenge with such an arrangement was simply who would lead. In the election held in 1957, Jagan's party secured 9 of the 14 elective seats, so that again it was the largest political party in the Legislature, though owing to the constitutional changes introduced by the above mentioned Order in Council of December, 1956, the party was no longer in a position effectively to carry out its programme. A constitutional conference was held in London in 1960, and it was agreed that a new constitution should be introduced in August 1961, giving British Guiana full internal self-government.

THE INTRODUCTION OF FULL INTERNAL SELF- GOVERNMENT

The British Guiana (Constitution) Order in Council, 1961, was accordingly issued. The broad features of the new constitution promulgated under this Order. The two chambers were styled respectively, the Senate and the Legislative Assembly. The Legislative Assembly comprised of 35 elected members, the Senate or the Upper House consisted of 13 senators of whom 8 were appointed by the governor in accordance with the advice of the premier and 3 were appointed by the governor acting after consultation with such persons as, in his discretion, he considered could speak for the political points of view of groups represented in the Legislative Assembly by members constituting the minority in the Assembly A, and the remaining two were appointed by the governor acting in his discretion. The executive power effectively vested in the Council of Ministers consisted of a premier and not more than 9 other ministers. Under this arrangement, Jagan and his Council of Ministers were able to dominate the proceedings.

While on the surface, it was evident that Jagan's popular appeal would ensure his victory in continuing elections, what was not apparent was the impact his political ideology was having on the international players. Although, Jagan had won the election in what was clearly a free and fair election as early as the 1950s, the US government was already increasing concerned over both his political and his economic policies. The criticism of the Opposition party that he promoted communist ideologies perhaps also contributed to the unease of the US government. From the late 1950s and particularly after the re-election of the People's Progressive Party in 1961, the US government actively supported efforts to overthrow the Jagan government. Destabilization efforts by local opposition political parties and trade unions, heavily backed by funding from US sources, found ready support from the Kennedy administration. One document for instance revealed this:

The politics of British Guiana is dominated by the Communist led People's Progressive Party (PPP) of Cheddi Jagan. Jagan is an East Indian, and his party draws its support almost entirely from East Indians, including not only poverty-stricken rural and urban workers, but also a considerable number of small businessmen in Georgetown and other centers. Jagan's US born wife, who exercises very strong influence over him, is an acknowledged Communist. She shares with Jagan control of the PPP and is a government minister. Several other PPP leaders are believed to be Communists. Jagan himself is not an acknowledged Communist, but his statements and actions over the years bear the marks of the indoctrination and advice the Communists have given him. While there is no Communist party per se in British Guiana, a number of the leaders in the PPP have been members of, or associated with, Communist parties or their front groups in the US and the UK.

Moreover, these individual leaders maintain sporadic courier and liaison contacts with the British and US Communists and with Communist Bloc missions in London. Both Jagans have visited Cuba in the past year and have since chosen to identify the PPP with Castro's cause. However, neither the Communist Bloc nor Castro has made any vigorous effort to exploit the British Guiana situation.¹⁰

In sum, nearly all the classified documents revolved around the following questions:

1. The extent of Communist association on the part of Jagan and his colleagues;
2. Alternative leaders to Jagan;

3. The probable outcome of any new election;
4. How long could independence be delayed; and,
5. What might be done prior to independence to alter the difficult situation faced.

On the 14th June, 1961, the Legislative Council was dissolved by the Governor and elections were held on the 21st August, 1961. The People's Progressive Party won with 20 of the seats, the People's National Congress attained 11 seats and the United Force won 4 seats. The overall results of the elections showed that the People's Progressive Party had won 42.6 percent of the total votes cast while the People's National Congress obtained 41 percent and the United Force attained 16.3 percent. It was to be an uneasy victory. Faced with mounting challenges to develop Guyana, Jagan sought assistance from the United States, only to be rejected. He then approached the Soviet Union. It was an alliance that was to be his downfall. Ever vigilant, the United States responded as follows:

The need for a change in U.S. policy is as urgent in British Guiana. The colony's 5-year development plan, which is regarded as the minimum that must be done if the economy of the territory is not to regress, is running into financial difficulties, and Dr. Jagan has to raise some \$BWI55 million, if it is to be completed. Moreover, he has ideas for vastly expanded expenditure on development (his favourite figure is \$BWI400 million), and all his efforts are directed towards finding the finance for such a total. Her Majesty's Government cannot assist him further and Dr. Jagan is willing to look anywhere for money, including the Soviet bloc. Dr. Jagan, however got no firm promise of money and only a general undertaking on aid during his recent visit to Washington. He is now distrustful of American intentions, and the general atmosphere of bumbling associated with the American efforts to do something does nothing to change his convictions. In spite of their tactful reception of Dr. Jagan during his recent visit to Washington, their handling of the situation contrasts with what we have taken to be their policy of proving to British Guiana that its future lies in association with the West rather than in following the path taken by Dr. Castro, who is one of Dr. Jagan's heroes.¹¹

By 1962, the international powers were even more sceptical of Jagan. This time, a despatch from the British government noted:

The Americans are extremely worried at the situation and are exerting pressure at very high level to try to ensure there should be fresh elections and that an independent British Guiana should not be led by Dr. Jagan. Unfortunately, they do not seem to have any very constructive ideas as to how this could be arranged. Incidentally, on present information, it seems likely that further elections would again result in Jagan's Party being returned. The Americans cannot escape little responsibility for the recent disturbances in British Guiana because of their failure to make a firm offer of aid. But apparently the Administration does not dare in an election year to lay itself open to the charge of being "soft", with regard to a Government like Jagan's, which most Americans believe to be if not Communist, at least Castroist in tendencies.¹²

What was also evident to both the British and the American government was the increasing East Indian population (Table 4.1).

During the period 1960–1964, Guyana was faced with a number of unrests. In 1962, for instance, 50 civilians were injured, 42 of them being East Indians, 6 Africans and 2 Portuguese. 20 of these detained in hospital, 3 of them being considered as seriously hurt. 3 Policemen were injured, none of them seriously. 20 persons were arrested by the Police for varying offences. Similar disturbances occurred in 1963 /1964. While these disturbances failed to unseat the People's Progressive Party Government, it did succeed in establishing a constitution conference which was due in May 1962 to October 13, 1962. Interestingly, the two major Opposition parties opposed independence. They found common

Table 4.1 Population Increase 1936–1960

	<i>Gross</i>	<i>Increase/Decrease</i>		<i>% increase/decrease</i>
	1936	1945	1960	1936/60
East Indians	140,768	164,522	279,460	99
Africans	129,648	137,442	190,380	47
Mixed	39,664	47,853	66,180	67
Amerindians	*8,774	*9,516	22,860	*
Portuguese	8573	8247	7610	.11
Other Europeans	2,188	2,370	5,230	140
Chinese	3,283	3,548	3,550	8
TOTAL	332,898	373,598	575,270	

Source: LETTER FROM A.K. RUSSELL TO P.F. DE ZULUETA (18 April 1962)

grounds and introduced demands for new elections under the system of proportional representation.

It was suggested that the primary goal of the Opposition parties on insisting on a system of proportional representation was to remove the People's Progressive Party from office. But, the People's Progressive Party rejected proportional representation out of an awareness that in several other countries where this system was instituted the result was a multiplicity of parties and weak Government based on coalition, sometimes with small groups wielding influence out of proportion to its support by holding a balance between two of the larger parties as in fact happened after the 1964 elections.

It was clear that the conference was to be a stand-off since none of the parties were prepared to budge on their original positions. The People's Progressive Party then agreed to have new elections using the traditional first past the post system of voting. This, of course, was rejected by the opposition, leading eventually to a break down in negotiations. Jagan finally agreed to allow the British government to arbitrate. As expected, the British government refused to fix a date for independence, imposed the Israeli model of Proportional Representation and proposed new elections in 1964, one year earlier than due. Jagan defended his position accordingly:

Our position in Government had become untenable and humiliating. In actual fact, although we were in office we were without any of the real power which a Government ordinarily has, as has been shown, especially during the 1963 disturbances when our Government was under siege. What is more, the Colonial Office, in reply to our request for financial assistance to meet a possible shortage of money for the payment of salaries to civil servants, had insisted on a financial inspection by its appointee, K. C. Jacobs, and had later stated that direct assistance from the British Treasury to meet the anticipated budgetary deficit of about 5 million in 1964 would have to mean Treasury control.

This would have meant going backward, not forward, and an indefinite delay of independence. It was to me the last straw; life was already unbearable and difficult under existing conditions. plus United Kingdom Treasury Control.

THE 1964 GENERAL ELECTIONS

General elections were held in British Guiana on 7 December 1964. The People's Progressive Party won 24 of the 53 seats. However, the People's National Congress (22 seats) and United Force (7 seats) were able to form a coalition government with a working majority (see [Table 4.2](#)).

Table 4.2 1964 Election results – Guyana

<i>Party</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Seats</i>	<i>+/-</i>
People's Progressive Party	109,332	45.8	24	+4
People's National Congress	96,657	40.5	22	+11
United Force	29,612	12.4	7	+3
Justice Party	1,334	0.6	0	New
Guiana United Muslim Party	1,194	0.5	0	New
Peace, Equality and Prosperity Party	224	0.1	0	New
National Labour Front	177	0.1	0	New
Invalid/blank votes	1,590	-	-	-
Total	240,120	100	53	+18
Registered Voters/turnout	247,604	97.0	-	-

Source: Nohlen

The 1964 elections in Guyana, according to one observer,¹³ could have been described as a 'racial census' in which voting was polarized according to ethnicity. The elections were intense with a high voter turnout of nearly 97%.

It was claimed, however, that once Burnham attained power, he consolidated his rule of Guyana through party 'paramountcy.' This 'paramountcy' perhaps could have been attributed to Burnham's taking over the armed forces. For instance, in 1964, the total number of armed forces in Guyana was 2, 135. In 1977, this number had increased to 21,751. In 1964, there was about one military personnel for every 284 citizens; in 1976, there was one for every 37 citizens. Apart from Burnham's takeover of the armed forces, however, it was contended that the expansion of these forces had distinct racial overtones. For instance, in 1965, of the total security forces of 3,671 only 733 (about 20%) were East Indians. In 1970, of a total of 4,145 persons in the Guyanese defence and police forces, 2,840 were of African descent, 994 or 24% were of East Indian descent and 310 or 7% were classified as other (Table 4.3).¹⁴

It was claimed that after the 1968 elections the policies of the Burnham government assumed a more 'leftist' leaning and Burnham announced that he would lead Guyana to socialism. Many suggested that to large extent, the domestic policies of this government were based on gerrymandering, manipulation of the electoral processes and politicization of the civil service. But apart from allegations and charges of irregularities, one policy that was embraced by the Burnham administration was that of nationalization. In 1973, for instance, the government took over one of the largest bauxite

Table 4.3 Racial Distribution (%) in the Security Forces, the Civil Service and Other Government Agencies, 1965

<i>Body</i>	<i>Indians</i>	<i>Africans</i>	<i>Others</i>	<i>Total</i>
The Security Forces	19.9	73.5	6.6	100
The Civil Service	33.1	53.0	13.9	100
Government Agencies and Undertakings	27.2	62.5	10.3	100
Percentage of Total Population	47.8	32.8	19.2	100

Source: Adapted from Robert and Byrne (1965:33)¹⁵

company, the Reynolds Bauxite Company. It then turned its attention to the sugar industry and by 1976 the government had nationalized the huge sugar company, Booker McConnell Company. By the late 1970s, the government had control of over 80% of the Guyanese economy.

Apart from the nationalization of large foreign companies, by the early 1980s, the government had also taken over the bulk of the retailing and distribution systems. It was a virtual takeover of all exports, imports, financial institutions and in addition to the regulation of the currency exchange of the country. During the 1970s, as world prices of both sugar and bauxite increased, it was to be expected that the newly nationalized enterprises realized significant profits. Indeed, the Gross Domestic Product of the country grew to about four percent per year from 1970 to 1975. When the prices of the primary exporting commodities began to decline by the latter half of the eighties, it was evident that the Government of Guyana had not introduced measures to deal with the downfall. Government spending continued at a high rate, and Guyana was forced to begin borrowing abroad. This pattern of declining GDP, continued high levels of government spending and foreign borrowing were common throughout Latin America in the 1980s.

Guyana's economic decline grew more acute during the 1980s. Unfavourable world prices were only part of the problem. There were two more basic difficulties: the lack of local managers capable of running the large agricultural and mining enterprises, and the lack of investment in those enterprises as government resources were depleted. Bauxite production, which had dropped from 3 million tons per year in the 1960s to 2 million tons in 1971, fell to 1.3 million tons by 1988. Similarly, sugar production declined from 330,000 tons in 1976 to about 245,000 tons in the mid-1980s, and had declined to 168,000 tons by 1988. Rice

production never again reached its 1977 peak of 210,000 tons. By 1988, national output of rice was almost 40 percent lower than in 1977.¹⁶

The decline in productivity was a serious problem, and the Burnham government's reaction to the downturn aggravated the situation. As export revenues fell, foreign exchange became scarce. Rather than attacking the root of the problem, low domestic output, the government attempted to ration foreign exchange. The government regulated all transactions requiring foreign exchange and severely restricted imports. These controls created their own inefficiencies and shortages. More significantly, tight government control encouraged the growth of a large parallel market. Smugglers brought in illegal imports, and currency traders circumvented government controls on foreign exchange. Although many citizens began working and trading in the parallel economy, many others were leaving the country. An estimated 72,000 Guyanese, almost one-tenth of the population, emigrated between 1976 and 1981. Among those who left the country were many of the most skilled managers and entrepreneurs. Finally, the hostile political orientation of the Burnham government foreclosed the possibility of aid from the United States.

The crisis finally came to a head in the late 1980s because of Guyana's unsustainable foreign debt. As export revenues fell, the government began borrowing abroad to finance the purchase of essential imports. External debt ballooned to US\$1.7 billion by 1988, almost six times as large as Guyana's official GDP. Because the government funnelled the borrowed money into consumption rather than productive investment, Guyana's economy did not grow out of debt. Instead, the government became increasingly unable to meet its debt obligations. Overdue payments, or arrears, reached a staggering US\$1 billion in 1988. Rather than risk a curtailment of all foreign credit (even short-term loans for imported machinery and merchandise), the Hoyte government embarked on an IMF-backed austerity and recovery program. The Economic Reform Program (ERP) introduced in 1988 amounted to a reversal of the statist policies that had dominated Guyana's economy for two decades.

INTEGRATION IN GUYANA

Even amidst the stagnant economic climate which persisted in Guyana for well over two decades, it was evident that during the period 1961–1988 the Guyanese society remarkably had no revolts or rebellions or major eruptions like those which took place in countries such as Uganda or Bosnia. A number

of factors, it was true, led to the separation of the ethnic groups and perhaps laid the foundation for the divides that existed in that society. One of the primary factors, for example, was the way the groups were assimilated in their host society. The newly freed African slaves migrated to the urban areas while the East Indians moved to the rural areas of the country. The system of voting by way of proportional representation further exacerbated the situation since it promoted a governance structure which was based on sheer numbers of the voting population. Yet, some threads held this fractured society together. There was no doubt that overtime a few Indo-Guyanese were co-opted into the PNC, but the ruling party was unquestionably the embodiment of the Afro-Guyanese political will.

It may be suggested that one of the threads that kept the society together was the written Constitution that had been introduced in 1966. Over the years there were a number of amendments. In 1970 amendments were made proclaiming Guyana a Co-operative Republic. The British Monarch was replaced by a Ceremonial President who was elected for a fixed term. The 1980 Constitution identified the President as the Head of State and the Supreme Executive Authority and established a system of local democratic organs. In 1994, the National Assembly passed a resolution which set up a Special Committee to review the Constitution and to present a proposal for reform. In 1996, 50 public meetings were held in 10 regions. Further discussions on the reform of the Constitution were held in 1999.

Embedded in the 1966 Constitution, in Article 149 was a clause which protected a person from discrimination on the grounds of race. Under the Racial Hostility Act, Cap. 23:01 there were provision for preventing conduct tending to excite hostility or ill-will against persons by reason of their race. In addition, Sections 139 D and 139 E were inserted in the Representation of the People Act, Cap 1:03 by the Representation of the People (Amendment) Act 2001 to prohibit any person or political party from causing racial or ethnic violence or hatred.

Section 2 of the Racial Hostility Act created an offence of excitement of hostility or ill-will against a section of the public or against any person on the grounds of their or his race. This section included by means of words spoken by him in a public place or spoken by him and transmitted for general reception by wireless telegraphy or telegraph; or by causing words spoken by him or by some other person to be reproduced in a public place from a record. It was also noted that could have been by means of written or pictorial matter. What was noteworthy was that exemption was given to anything said or done in the course of any proceedings of the National

Assembly or any judicial proceedings; or the publication of any matter by order, or under the authority, of the National Assembly.

Under this clause any person guilty of an offence under this section was liable on summary conviction to a fine of 60,000 dollars and to imprisonment for two years. Once a person is convicted under Section 2 of this Act, then irrespective of any punishment to which he may be sentenced in pursuance of that section, he shall be disqualified for a period of five years for certain offices and appointments including, but not limited to, being a member of the National Assembly or of any local government authority, the appointment of editor of any newspaper or any appointment on the editorial staff of any newspaper; and any appointment on the managerial or editorial staff of any broadcasting station.

The Ethnic Relations Commission was also established under Article 212 A of the Constitution. Two important functions of this Commission as set out under the Article was

1. To provide equality of opportunity between persons of different ethnic groups and to Promote harmony and good relations between such persons;
2. To promote the elimination of all forms of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity.

What the laws did not specify, however, was what precisely was ‘conduct’ (words spoken or written or action) that tended to incite ethnic or racial hostility. Under section 2 (1) (c) of the Racial Hostility Act, it was noted that a person can be guilty of an offence if he even publishes pictorial matter. To what extent these laws were enforced is quite questionable. There is no documentation of charges made against someone under this clause.

The Hoyte government which assumed power after the death of Burnham insisted on a number of reforms of the system of governance. They suggested that the system of government should be transparent and fair, that there should be reductions in the perceptions of injustice and that elements of ethnic exclusion be eliminated. Indeed, it was evident that Hoyte at this time, while not opening acknowledging that power sharing was a bad idea, felt that perhaps what were necessary were strong, transparent institutions along with the legal authority to protect minority rights. In the wake of the 1985 elections, it was evident that the strategies of the opposition political parties had shifted. For instance, five of the six main opposition parties agreed to form the Patriotic Coalition for Democracy (PCD), having

as their major goal the need to press for electoral reforms as well as to agitate for the presence of international observers. In the period between 1985–1990, the leaders developed a list of fundamental electoral reform processes and included the establishment of an independent Elections Commission with authority over all aspects of the electoral process. However, these reforms were slow and it was not until the Hoyte government entered into a Standby arrangement with the International Monetary Fund that some reforms were introduced. One of the more critical introductions was the passage of the Elections Laws Amendment Act of 1990. This amendment provided the Elections Commission with some degree of control over matters pertaining to elections personnel and the administration of election. While the amendment specified that the Elections Commission had the power to ‘supervise and direct’ the functioning of the commissioner of National registration, one challenge was the day-to-day operations of personnel including their appointment remained unclear.

Influenced no doubt by the *Carter Electoral Observer Team* a number of additional electoral reform measures were passed on December 29, 1990. Included among these measures were the following:

- The Elections Law (Amendment) (No. 2) Act 1990;
- Representation of the People (Amendment) Act 1990.

In addition, in order to permit sufficient time for the registration process to occur, Parliament passed a constitutional amendment extending the life of the Parliament the government beyond the date of its scheduled dissolution (February 2nd, 1991 but not to exceed September, 30, 1991).

It may be suggested that perhaps these amendments were what were responsible for the dramatic change in the General Elections of 1992. While there were reports of sabotage at the Elections Commissions and reports of crowds of persons lodging complaints, in addition to 100 persons being wounded during squabbles between the two racial groups, the People’s Progressive Party/Civic won the elections with 99 members as against the People’s National Congress who secured 91 seats. The villages and the regions where East Indians dominated voted overwhelmingly for the People’s Progressive Party/Civic while in the case of the more urbanized areas the African population voted for the People’s National Congress.

It was apparent though that the appeal by the newly appointed president was broadening. On assuming office on October 9th, 1992, Jagan

did not focus on his ideological position in embracing communism but rather called on the population to rebuild Guyana and to have a united front. In 1997 as well, with a voter turnout of 88.4%, the People's Progressive Party/Civic won a majority of twenty nine seats to the People's National Congress twenty two seats. Even with this victory, though, it was difficult to keep the party together. Bereft of its leader (Jagan succumbed to a heart attack in 1996 and was succeeded by his wife, Janet) there were incidents of looting, arson, assaults and murders directed towards the Indian community. On the whole there were objections to the rule by Janet Jagan who was referred to as the 'white woman.'

In a CARICOM-brokered peace agreement and the election which followed in 2002, with a voter turnout of 91.7%, the People's Progressive Party/Civic won with 34 seats to the People's National Congress, 22 seats. Even with this electoral outcome, however, there were still violent clashes between supporters. Indeed, the new leader Bharat Jagdeo was criticized and it was alleged that he established 'death squads' and was involved with a number of 'killings.' The 2006 elections, however seemed to be a turning point. Although the People's Progressive Party/Civic party led by Jagdeo won 30 seats, a new party, embracing both Afro and Indo Guyanese voters, gained five seats. The People's Progressive Party/Civic also saw a decline in core support from 220,000 votes in 2001 to 166,000 by 2011.

The persistence of ethnic voting blocs while still existing were significantly being eroded by not only a party which had a broader appeals but also due to significant changes such as declining birth rates, an increase in Guyanese immigration, along with a disenchantment with the traditional parties. In the case of Guyana, the race for political power was traditionally between the African-based party the People's National Congress (PNC) and the East Indian Party, the People's Progressive Party. It was not surprising, given that the system of voting proportional representation favoured the group who captured the highest number of votes that the East Indian-based party won elections during the period 1992, 1997, 2001, 2006, and 2011. Overtime, however, as [Table 4.4](#) illustrates a number of smaller political parties had started experimenting with the idea of 'alliance' politics.

The challenge for these parties (e.g. Rise, Organised and Rebuild, the United Force etc) was that they failed to understand that coalitions must of necessity have a foundation or platform on which to launch its ideas. By 2011, however, The Partnership for National Unity (an alliance of the People's National Congress, the Guyana Action Party and the Working People's Alliance), nominated David A. Granger, a former commander of

Table 4.4 Election results 1992–2015 in Guyana

<i>Year</i>	<i>Parties</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Seats</i>
1992	People's Progressive Party	162,058	53.15%	28
	People's National Congress	128,286	42.31%	23
	The United Force	3,183	1.05%	1
	Working People's Alliance	6,86	2.01%	1
1997	People's Progressive Party/Civic	220,667	55.23%	29
	People's National Congress/Reform	161,901	40.52%	22
	Alliance For Guyana	4,983	1.25%	1
	The United Force	5,937	1.49%	1
2001	People's Progressive Party/Civic	210,013	52.96%	34
	People's National Congress/Reform	165,866	41.8%	27
	Guyana Action Party/ Working People's Alliance	9,451	2.38%	2
	Rise Organised And Rebuild	3,695	0.93%	1
	The United Force	2,904	0.73%	1
2006	People's Progressive Party/Civic	182,156	54.33%	36
	People's National Congress/Reform	114,283	34.09%	22
	Alliance For Change	27,397	8.17%	5
	Guyana Action Party/ Rise Organised And Rebuild	4,588	1.37%	1
	The United Force	2,915	0.87%	1
2011	People's Progressive Party	166,340	48.60%	32
	A Partnership For National Unity	139,678	40.81%	26
2015	APNU – Alliance For Change	207,201	50.30%	33
	People's Progressive Party	202,694	49.20%	32

the Guyana Defence Force. A coalition government was in the making. By 2015, the result was a victory for the APNU – Alliance for Change alliance, which won 33 of the 65 seats in the National Assembly. It was, however, a 'one' seat victory for David Granger, the leader. This limited control, it is to be expected, continues to promote a measure of instability in Guyana.

NOTES

1. J.J. Hartsinck, Dutch Historian and Comptroller of the Amsterdam Chamber of the WIC, noted that in 1770 the western boundary was either the Barima or the Waini River and the eastern one was the Sinamari or the Maowini River. (Beschrijving Van Guiana, Amsterdam 1770, p.146), translated into English MS by WE Roth in boxes 13 and 14, University of Guyana Library, Guyana.
2. Alvin O. Thompson, 1976.

3. This College was established in 1743 for the primary purpose of electing the representatives of private planters.
4. Taken from Celebrating East Indian Arrival in Guyana – a story of survival against tremendous odds May 6, 2015. *Guyana Chronicle Online*, 30th June 2015.
5. Greene, Race vs. Politics, 14
6. Despres, “Nationalist Politics in British Guiana,” 1054.
7. The Port-of-Spain Gazette June 13, 1946.
8. After completing a law degree in 1947 Forbes Burnham returned to Guyana where he founded the People’s Progressive Party (PPP) in 1950 with Cheddi Jagan, an Indo-Guyanese dentist who had also attended Queens College. Both had strong leftist leanings, and their party was affiliated with the British Guiana Labour Union. In 1953 British authorities finally allowed elections with universal suffrage in the colony, and Burnham and Jagan’s PPP won 18 of the 24 seats in the legislative assembly.
9. For more on this, see GUYANA UNDER SIEGE A History of Political Alliances in Guyana: 1953–1997 by Hazel Woolford <http://www.guyanaundersiege.com/Historical/Political%20Alliances.htm>
10. SNIE 87.2 61 Washington, March 21, 1961 PROSPECTS FOR BRITISH GUIANA. Declassified Documents on British Guiana (Extracted from Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Volume XII – American Republics. This volume was published by US Department of State, Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, and printed by the United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1996).
11. DRAFT BRIEF PREPARED BY BRITISH COLONIAL OFFICE (Undated, but prepared in December 1961) SECRET DRAFT BRIEF FOR PRIME MINISTER’S VISIT TO BERMUDA – ANGLO-U.S. APPROACH TO THE CARIBBEAN AREA Declassified Documents on British Guiana (Extracted from Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Volume XII – American Republics. This volume was published by US Department of State, Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, and printed by the United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1996).
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13. See Horowitz, 2000.
14. Jain, 1989.

15. Taken from Roberts with the assistance of Byrne, 1965.
16. Guyana – HISTORY OF THE ECONOMY – Post independence <http://countrystudies.us/guyana/55.htm>

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FOREIGN OFFICE MEMORANDUM SENT TO LORD HOOD, MINISTER AT THE BRITISH EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON (8 March 1962) TOP SECRET & GUARD FOREIGN OFFICE, S.W.1 March 8, 1962. Declassified Documents on British Guiana (Extracted from Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume XII – American Republics. This volume was published by US Department of State, Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, and printed by the United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1996). The Port-of-Spain Gazette June 13, 1946. (Trinidad and Tobago) Taken from GW Roberts with the assistance of JA Byrne. 1965. “Memorandum on the racial Composition of the British Guiana’s Public Service. Appendix V.

Suriname

Abstract Suriname's history seemed to have led to entirely different interplay between the ethnic groups and their formation into political parties. In the case of Suriname, for example, the experiment with a model of consociation was one which seemed to be fraught with conflict. Indeed, this chapter focuses on a number of coups in Suriname and the attempts that were introduced by way of preventative mechanisms.

Keywords Bultler · Hoefte · Moore · Peace Accord · People's assembly · Thomas · Timmermans and Moury

OVERVIEW OF SURINAME

Suriname or the Republic of Suriname is a sovereign state on the north-eastern Atlantic coast of South America. It is bordered by French Guiana to the east, Guyana to the west and Brazil to the south. At just under 165,000 km (64,000 sq mi), it is the smallest country in South America with a population of approximately 534,189 persons (2012). The majority of the population of Suriname reside on the country's north coast, in and around the capital and largest city, Paramaribo. Suriname was explored and contested by European powers before coming under Dutch rule in the late seventeenth century. In 1954 the country became one of the constituent countries of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. On 25 November 1975, the country of Suriname left the Kingdom of the Netherlands to

become an independent state. It still maintains close economic, diplomatic and cultural ties to its former colonizer.

Suriname is a country comprising a number of diverse ethnic groups. The East Indians, descendants of indentured labourers, are the largest ethnic group comprising approximately one-fourth of the total population (29%). The second major ethnic group are the people of African descent, referred to as *Creoles* who make up 19% of the total population. The descendants of Javanese (people from the island of Java in Indonesia) contract labourers and the Maroons (descendants of escaped slaves of African origin) each constitute nearly one-sixth of the population (Maroon (16%), Javanese (15%), and the Amerindian (4%)). At least one-eighth of the population is of mixed ethnicity. Indians, descendants of the original inhabitants of Suriname, make up only a tiny fraction of the population. The coastal groups include the Carib and Arawak, while the Trio (Tiriyo), Wayana-Aparai, Warao (Warrau), Wayarekule (Akuriyo), Tucayana and Akurio live in the interior (10%). Minor ethnic groups in Suriname include descendants of Chinese, Lebanese, Portuguese and Dutch immigrants; Creoles from the West Indies; and US citizens. More recent immigrants include Chinese – known in Suriname as “New Chinese” to distinguish them from the descendants of those Chinese who were brought over as labourers in the nineteenth century – and Brazilians who arrived in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.¹

Suriname was occupied by the Dutch in 1667. The country (then Dutch Guiana) was ruled from the Netherlands until 1954, when it gained autonomous status under Dutch sovereignty. Full independence was achieved in 1975. According to Menke and others (2013), when it is compared with most countries in the Americas, ethnicity is in Suriname relatively more important than skin colour.² They observed that *ethnicity* not race became important in official social constructions in the post-Second World War decolonization process of this country, and replaced the concept of “race” by the 1964 Census of the island.

Like all colonial societies, the society of Suriname was stratified along the lines of both race and class. The Dutch colonials held key positions in the state bureaucracy, parliament and in the army. The middle class, comprising mulattoes, held positions in occupations such as law, medicine, journalism, teaching and as middle-level civil servants. At the lower stratum were the two majority groups. The peasants and wagedworkers in the agricultural sector were primarily of Indian (East

and Javanese descent. Their African counterparts were employed in the balata and mining sectors or the urban manufacturing sector. The basis for the planned development of Suriname according to Menke et al. (2013) commenced in 1947 when the law on the *Welfare Fund* was passed in the Dutch parliament. Following this in 1948 was the introduction of “Universal Adult” Suffrage and then the first General Elections in 1949. Not unexpectedly, however, when the electoral system was introduced, this was sanctioned by Holland resulting in the mulattoes assuming control of government and maintaining governmental control until 1958.

SHIFTING POWER IN SURINAME

The introduction of Universal Adult Suffrage in 1948 was no doubt the primary impetus for political mobilization among the various groups. It should be recalled meant that the spoils of that power would be distributed mainly among the governing group. It was not surprising, therefore, that most of the political parties and pressure groups were organized along ethnic lines. The light-skinned Creole elite, for instance, who were strongly against the concept of universal suffrage, since understandable this would erode their status and control in Suriname, established the Suriname National Party (Nationale Partij Suriname; NPS). The working-class Creoles gravitated towards The Progressive Suriname People’s Party (Progressieve Suriname Volkspartij; PSV), while the South Asians and Indonesians were represented by the United Reform Party (later called the Progressive Reform Party [Vooruitstrvende Hervormde Partij; VHP]) and the Indonesian Peasants’ Party (now the Party of National Unity and Solidarity [Kerukunan Tulodo Pranatan Inggil; KTPI]).

Clearly, quite early in its political development, it was evident that ethnic groups had recognized, unlike either Fiji, Guyana or even Trinidad (Trinidad will be discussed in the following chapter), that in order to achieve power, there had to be some measure of “power-sharing” if not “brokering.” By 1958, in order to contest the General Elections held in this year, two parties, the NPS (Nationale Partij Suriname) and the VHP (Vooruitstrvende Hervormde Partij), united. In a strange union, the professional creoles had established a tie with the East Indian and Javanese groups. The party won with a total of nine seats to the United Hindustanti Party of four seats and the with the Suriname Progressive People’s Party attaining four seats as well.

By 1961 the left-wing Nationalist Republican Party (Partij Nationalistische Republiek; PNR) was established. In addition, another party the Action Group (Aktie Groep) representing the East Indian population was introduced. The arrangement between NPS-VHP coalitions, however, was short term and after the 1967 elections a new coalition of the Action Group and the NPS emerged and assumed power.

After a short period of two years, in 1969, that government fell. Factors cited for the demise of this government included massive strikes that were fueled by social unrest caused by austerity programs. Other factors included the authoritarian style of the leader as well as allegations of corruption. Perhaps though one of the major factors was the pressure of the unions which had become more independent than the political parties.

The ethnic instability in Suriname was not only exhibited in the number of failed attempts at coalition or partnering arrangement but also was evidenced by the level of emigration from the country. It was noted that nearly one-third of the population of Suriname emigrated to the Netherlands in the years leading up to independence, as many people feared that the country would fare worse under independence than it did as an overseas colony. This was not true, however, for even after the granting of autonomy in its internal affairs by the Netherlands in 1954, development aid from the Netherlands increased steadily. From 1964 onward, Suriname, as an associate member of the European Economic Community (EEC; later succeeded by the European Union), also received aid from the EEC's development fund. In spite of this aid, Suriname's rate of economic growth was strong only during the mid-1960s, when there were dramatic increases in the production of alumina and aluminium.

After the failed attempt by the government, a new coalition party was established by the VHP and the Progressive National Party (Progressieve Nationale Partij; PNP), which was set up by a group of intellectuals who had left the NPS. The National Party Alliance, a coalition of the NPS, the PSV, the KTPI, and the PNR, won the 1973 election. In the 1973 elections the NPS and the PNR collaborated and together with another Creole ally, the Progressieve Surinaamse Volkspartij (PSV, Progressive Suriname People's Party) and a small Javanese party, managed to attain victory over the rival Hindostani bloc (Table 5.1).

Some suggest that after the elections, attempts were made to unify the various groups but the accounts revealed this was not successful. Meel (1998), however, suggested that attempts to bring groups together were a priority at the period. He observed that nationalism, particularly during the

Table 5.1 Results of the 1973 general elections

<i>Party</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Seats</i>	<i>+/-</i>
National party combination	61,700	50.3	22	-
VHP Bloc	47,931	39.1	17	-2
Progressive national party	3,908	3.2	0	-
Bush negro unity party	3,198	2.6	0	New
Renewed progressive party	3,121	2.5	0	New
United people's party – surinamese women front	1,215	1.0	0	New
Democratic people's front	676	0.6	0	New
Democratic union of suriname	334	0.3	0	New
Invalid/blank votes		-	-	-
Total	122,711	100	39	0

Source: Nohlen. 2005. Elections in the Americas: A Data Handbook, Volume I, p614 ISBN 978-0-19-928357-6

second half of the 1970s, was advocated by the *Progressieve Arbeiders en Landbouwers Unie* (PALU, Progressive Union of Workers and Peasants), the *Volkspartij* (VP, People's Party), and the *Demokratisch Volksfront* (DVF, Democratic People's Front). He suggested that these small opposition parties, which had in vain opted for parliamentary seats in 1973 (DVF) and in 1977, appeared to be aware of the existing social injustices and structural weaknesses of the Suriname polity. To eliminate these abuses and to reconstruct the polity, he observed that they proposed "national" solutions which were primarily socioeconomic in orientation. For example, all three parties resisted foreign dominance over Suriname's economy and urged a broadening of the country's economic foundations. In their opinion, the modernization of agriculture and nationalization of industry deserved high priority. PALU, VP and DVF wished to achieve in a leftist spirit and with grass roots support the policy the Arron-administration had named "the mobilization of the self." Meel (1998) notes that in order to strengthen the people's participation in the development of the republic, the VP in particular defended the institution of local government boards. The party stated that the centralist government in Paramaribo hindered the formation of an all-embracing democratic polity and that additional forms of organization were needed in order to involve the population in the advancement process. He argued that from an egalitarian perspective PALU, VP, and DVF strongly opposed the ethnic emphasis of the leading political parties and displayed an uncompromising multi-ethnic attitude.

It was evident, however, that equity remained a theory rather than being practised. Meel (1998), in analysing the situation, claimed that during the period 1969–1973, there was a reinforcement of class divisions rather than equitable distribution of resources. For example, in the rice sector as a consequence of the “Green Revolution” of the sixties an agrarian and commercial elite evolved comprised predominantly of East Indians. Meel (1998) also noted that in the case of the Ministry of Agriculture between 1958 and 1973 all four ministers of government were of Indian origin. He argued that at this time the state had evolved towards an instrument of “class formation” through political patronage by providing facilities and resources to one group.

On another point, Thomas et al. (2015) observed that the 1973 elections had produced the nightmare scenario that the Hindu (East Indian) population had feared namely a Creole government moving towards independence and control of the state. However, the progress to independence occurred without any major rifts since the heads of the various parties were able to negotiate a settlement by concessions to the Hindus to ensure proportional representation. However, that did not prevent many Hindus from leaving Suriname during this period.

From all accounts it is clear, that during the period 1930–1990 there were a number of contestations among the various groups ranging from mass protests against administrations to take-overs by military coups (1930s, 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and 1990s). However, it can be argued that other factors apart from ethnic fractioning were also responsible for some of the challenges that were to plague Surinamese politics. For instance, at the time of independence about a quarter of the Surinamese population was living in the Netherlands. According to Hoefte (2014), other post-war demographic changes such as a high growth rate of 39.5 per 1,000 in the period 1939–1962 mainly on account of lower death rates and higher fertility was one factor. In addition, the percentage of Hindustanis had increased to 34.7% and moving closely to the Creoles with 35.5%. The Javanese population was estimated to be 14% of the total population with the total percentage of Maroons standing at 8.5%. During the period 1971–1980, though, the number of inhabitants had been significantly reduced due to a lower birth rate coupled with emigration.

What can be evinced from the early attempts at coalition “power-sharing” arrangements in Suriname during the period 1958–1973, apart from the environmental pressures was that the discussions between the

communities or groups could not have been what Timmermans (2003) and Timmermans and Moury (2006) suggested was an instrument for “pre-cooking” decision-making between parties with different preferences. Rather, it appeared to be an attempt to forge alliances between ethnic parties who each realized that no one party had the ability to achieve power on their own. The coalition arrangements in Suriname apparently defy the existing literature in which coalition is based on ideology or philosophy. Rather, it may be true to suggest the following:

- a. That the alliances were not based on any major philosophical underpinnings,
- b. That the alliances were not a result of a long-term planning or discussions or negotiations,
- c. That the majority of these alliances or coalition agreements coalesced immediately prior to the announcement of a General Election.

These three factors, among others, may then provide some explanations why the early coalition-experiments were so short-lived.

THE 1980 COUP AND ITS AFTERMATH

Many Surinamese seemed to believe that the military takeover of Suriname on the 25th February 1980 would have made way for bringing the various groups together. Indeed, the declaration of the government on May 1st, 1980 celebrated February 25th as “liberation day” and the beginning of a new era. It was argued that the military had rescued the country from a regime that had promoted corruption, injustice, social inequity, bureaucracy and nepotism. This “dream” ended in 1982.

On December 8, 1982, a group of 13 dissidents, including a newspaper editor, two human-rights lawyers and several labor leaders were executed. Bouterse, the military leader, would later admit political responsibility for the murders in a 2007 public apology, but placed legal responsibility upon a deceased battalion commander. After the murders, Bouterse was quick to implement severe security measures including limiting the freedom to assemble, imposing a curfew, and closing Suriname’s borders, airspace and university. The tragic events, labelled the “December Murders”, and the government’s response led to the resignation of the prime minister and his cabinet and a call by the citizens of Suriname for the restoration of

popularly elected officials. Suriname's rising unemployment, the public's discontent with growing political disorder and Bouterse's squeeze on civil liberties led to a demand for his removal.

The request to have Bouterse removed was understandable. The Organization of American States in its Report dated 1983 (*OEA/Ser.L/V/II.61; doc.6 rev. 1; 5 October 1983- Chapter III; sections 14- 15*) noted in its report:

At the time this report was being prepared, there was only one newspaper being published in Suriname – the *De Ware Tijd*. It was subjected to prior censorship, which the Commission was able to verify directly – and was under the obligation to publish the news provided by the government, has become an organ of official propaganda. All other press organizations have been suppressed. This situation has been the culmination of a process which began with the interruption of the constitutional order on February 25th, 1980. From that moment on, and in an increasing manner, a system was established which prohibited publications relating to the government or the armed forces without previous authorization, the obligation to publish news or commentaries based on orders from different civilian and military authorities, the arbitrary arrests of editors and reporters for different periods of time. This process has taken place in spite of legal provisions in force – which guarantee the freedom of opinion-and without the possibility of legal appeals. It has culminated in the present situation where all non-official press organs have been closed.

In the same manner, non-official radio stations have been closed down by the military. In addition, attempts against the freedom of the press have acquired increasingly brutal characteristics. During the tragic events of December 8th, 1982, four reporters critical of the government were killed. The government set fire to two radio stations, ABC Radio and Radika, and the offices of a newspaper, *Vrije Stem*. Moreover, the Commission verified that the firefighters received orders from the authorities to not put out the fires.

Clearly, the governmental regime during this period was one that used force rather than one that sought consensus. In February 1983, a new government was formed under President La Alibux. However, this was short lived as he was replaced the following year.

Elections were held in 1987, and a new constitution was adopted, which among other things allowed the dictator to remain in charge of the army.

While the Front for Democracy and Development won with 147,196 votes, there was no doubt who wielded actual power in Suriname. For, dissatisfied with the government, Bouterse summarily dismissed them in 1990, by telephone, an event that became popularly known as “the telephone coup.” Bouterse’s power began to wane after the 1991 elections, however, and a brutal civil war between the Suriname army and the Maroons loyal to Ronnie Brunswijk further weakened his position during the 1990s.

THE INTRODUCTION OF A NEW CONSTITUTION/ THE 1990 COUP

In 1987 a new Constitution was introduced in Suriname. This Constitution was fairly large consisting of 27 chapters, 183 articles and over 53 pages. One of the major changes was the establishment of a mixed presidential/parliamentary system of government. This allowed for the introduction of the positions of an executive president and vice-president. Under the Constitution, too, a Cabinet was retained (Council of Ministers) and a Parliament (the National Assembly). A critique of this system was that it suffered from inherent tensions, for example, the president should retain the confidence of the National Assembly.

The Legislature comprising the National Assembly, the District and Local Councils, as defined under Articles 55 and 61 were representative, elected bodies. Further to this Article 90 stipulated that the president was the head of state and was responsible to the National Assembly which elected him. Articles 99 and 116 of the Constitution invested executive power in the government (comprising the president, vice-president and council of ministers) and Article 110 empowered the president to form and run the government. However, under Article 54 of The Constitution stated that no one (including politicians) is above the law, “no one shall be nominated for life in any political office”, and that “those who hold political office shall be under the obligation to fulfil their tasks in the public interest”. The principles also obligated the government to maintain levels of transparency.

The Constitution also listed the social objectives that the government is required to aim for as:

- raising the standard of living;
- ensuring an equitable distribution of national income;

- ensuring a dispersion of public services and economic activities;
- protecting the environment; and
- ensuring labor’s co-management of companies, especially with regard to decisions on production, economic development and planning.

In addition, the Constitution places extensive social obligations on the state. These

Obligations included:

- guaranteeing citizens’ access to health care;
- providing free education (including the free “practice of science and technology”);
- eradicating illiteracy;
- providing special protection for youth;
- indicating the conditions for work, remuneration and rest to which employees are entitled;
- guaranteeing the right to work;
- taking care of “the creation of conditions” to satisfy basic needs for work, food, Health-care, education, energy, clothing and communication; and
- making services of legal aid institutions accessible.

However, one report of the IADB (2001)³ pointed out that there were a number of fundamental weaknesses in the governance of Suriname. They observed that the governance structure, as set out in the 1987 Constitution, did not lend itself to good governance. The Constitution, the report suggested, was incomplete or vague on important constitutional matters and such weaknesses contributed to a Constitutional crisis in mid-1999. The Constitution also, according to the report of the IADB, did not clearly and explicitly set out the separation, and balance, of power between the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government. Such weaknesses contributed to a crisis in the judiciary in 1998–1999.

The report also observed that the effectiveness of the three branches of government (legislature, judiciary and executive) had been limited in recent years. The legislative body, the National Assembly, was paralysed for much of 1998 and 1999 by its failure to obtain a quorum. The lack of a quorum prevented the National Assembly from meeting and engaging in

its business for months at a time during that period. The judicial branch of government was in a state of crisis during 1998–2000 because of a conflict between the executive and judiciary over the procedures for appointing senior figures in the judiciary. In addition, they noted that the executive was overextended, trying to do too much with too little capability.

What was also worrisome in the 2001 IADB report was the issue of “conflict of interest.” They pointed to the case the Chairman of the Auditor’s Office (Rekenkamer) who was appointed by the President of the Republic, who also headed the executive branch that the Auditor’s Office was supposed to oversee. In addition, the report went on to note, the state airline and telephone companies, which had a vested interest in preserving their near monopoly powers, had represented the government (and consequently the Surinamese public interest) in international negotiations in air travel and telecommunications issues. Moreover, the Presidency itself was subject to a conflict of interest between the traditional role of being an apolitical and neutral final arbiter of disputes and the role, since 1987, of being the most powerful political actor in the country.

On December 24, 1990, military officers forced the resignations of the civilian President and Vice President elected in 1987. Military-selected replacements were approved by the National Assembly on December 29 and the government held new elections on May 25, 1991 (Table 5.2).

The New Front (NF) Coalition, comprised of the NPS, the VHP, the Javanese-based Indonesian Peasant’s Party (KTPI), and the labour-oriented Surinamese Workers Party (SPA), won a majority in the National Assembly (See Table 4.5). On September 6, 1991, NPS candidate Ronald Venetiaan was elected president, and the VHP’s Jules Ajodhia became vice-president. The Venetiaan government was able to effect a settlement to Suriname’s domestic insurgency through the August 1992 *Peace Accord* with Bush Negro and Amerindian rebels. Economic reforms instituted by the Venetiaan government eventually helped curb inflation, unify the official and unofficial exchange rates, and improve the government’s economic situation by re-establishing relations with the Dutch, thereby opening the way for a major influx of Dutch financial assistance. However, again the rule by this administration was short-lived.

The National Democratic Party (NDP), founded in the early 1990s by Mr. Bouterse, benefitted from the NF government’s loss of popularity. The NDP won 16 of 51 seats at the National Assembly and Jules Wijdenbosch was elected president in 1996.

Table 5.2 General election results 1991

<i>Party</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Seats</i>	<i>+/-</i>
New front for democracy and development	86,217	54.3	30	-
National democratic party	34,429	21.7	12	+8
Democratic alternative '91–Pendawa Lima'	26,446	16.7	9	+5
Progressive workers' and farmers' union	4,807	3.0	0	-4
Partij Perbangunan Rakjat Suriname	4,463	2.8	0	0
People's party	1,232	0.8	0	New
General liberation and development party	616	0.4	0	New
Suriname progressive people's party	599	0.4	0	New
Invalid/Blank votes		-	-	-
Total	158, 809	100	51	0

The KTPI, dissenters from the VHP, and several smaller parties were part of an NDP-led coalition government. In May 1999, after public demonstrations protesting poor economic conditions, the government called early elections. The elections in May 2000 returned Ronald Venetiaan and his NF coalition to the presidency. The NF based its campaign on a platform to fix the economy. It can be surmised, though, if one examines the election results in 2005 that the campaign promise may not have materialized sufficiently to convince the population to re-elect Venetiaan to government. Rather, the 2005 results led to further brokering among the parties and coalition arrangements (Table 5.3).

In the 2005 elections, the governing New Front for Democracy and Development of President Ronald Venetiaan lost seats, remaining the largest party but failing to get a majority in the National Assembly of Suriname. Following the election the National Assembly had two months to elect a president who would then appoint a government. An agreement was brokered between The New Front party and the A Combination alliance giving them a majority in parliament but still short of the two-thirds required to elect a president. In the first two rounds of the presidential election 27 members of the parliament voted for the New Front candidate, incumbent president Ronald Venetiaan, while 20 voted for Rabin Parmessar. As neither candidate received a two-thirds majority, the election was taken to the People's Assembly. In the People's Assembly, which was composed of members of parliament, provincial and district councils, a simple majority was required to be elected president. In the election on August 3, 2005 Venetiaan won 560 votes as

Table 5.3 General elections 2005

<i>Alliances and parties</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Seats</i>
New front for democracy and development		41.2	23
• National party of suriname			
• Progressive reform party			
• Pertjahjah luhur			
• Surinamese labour party			
National democratic party		23.1	15
People Alliance for Progress		14.5	5
• Democratic national platform 2000			
• Basic party for renewal of democracy			
• Party for national unity and solidarity			
A-Com		7.3	5
• General Liberation and development Party			
• Brotherhood and Unity in Politics			
• Seeka			
AI		6.2	3
• Democratic Alternative 91'			
• Democrats of the 21st century			
• Political Wing of the FAL			
• Meeting Point 2000			
United Progressive Surinamese		4.9	-
Party for democracy and development through unity			
Progressive workers' and farmers' union	PALU	10	-
Total (turnout 65.1%)			51

against 315 for Parmessar and so was re-elected as president of Suriname. It was a one term rule.

In 2015, the NDP led by former military commander Bouterse assumed government. As Bouterse took office, he pledged to distance the country from its former Dutch colonizer and begin focusing on building ties with other nations. Some suggest that the Bouterse appealed to the young voter and this in addition to social reforms which the government initiated over the years such as increasing pensions, abolishing school fees and the introduction of a minimum wage rate was responsible for his popularity. In addition, the government had invested in infrastructure and the building of affordable housing.

What is not clear, however, is whether the government under the leadership of Bouterse attempted to address the issue of inequity among the various groups. For example, the statistics presented by Menke and others (2013)⁴ in Table 5.4 indicates a startling imbalance in racial groups at the top civil service positions).

Table 5.4 Imbalance in civil service positions 1949–2001

	1949– 58	1958– 69	1969– 73	1973– 80	1980– 88	1988– 90	Total 1991– 2001	Ethnicity 1949 – 2001
Creoles	46	30	6	23	68	7	33	213
East Indians	4	6	6	2	20	7	19	64
Javanese	0	1	1	4	5	3	10	24
Others	0	0	1	0	2	1	6	10
Total	50	37	14	29	95	18	67	310

This bias appears to be accentuated in Suriname by the fragmentation of the society and a general lack of information.

CONCLUSION

Evidently the fragmentation of the society of Suriname can easily be discerned by the relative ease with which small groups form and coalesce as political parties and later fragment. Some suggest that despite the attempts by varying governments overtime to promote a cohesive national identity, yet the lack of information about public and collective actions and their benefits preclude these attempts. In examining the history of Suriname, for example, what emerges is that the Dutch colonial policy was one of assimilation through universal education; it required the use of Dutch language, laws, and customs. However, some argued that the Javanese and Hindustani traditions proved too resistant and, in around 1930, the Dutch began to recognize Asian cultural traditions such as marriage practices. In later years, the Creole elite attempted to promote *Creolization* as a means of national identity. This too was met with resistance by other segments of the population. After independence, Suriname began to promote an integrated Surinamese identity, but this political platform lost popular support when the military regime associated with it began to commit human rights violations in its efforts to disempower rival political groups.

Suriname's present dilemma is appropriately summed up by Taylor and Berns (2010). They concluded that the *modern* political stability is often attributed to several factors unique to Suriname's political system and to its national vision. First, according to these writers Suriname's political roots are in consociational democracy. Consociationalism is a power-sharing system where each of the political groups or parties is too small to hold a majority position.

Thus, there is maximum autonomy of groups, political power sharing, and proportional representation. Political parties divided along ethnic lines are the norm in Suriname. While latent tensions exist between Creoles and Hindustanis, they have not tended to manifest themselves in violence. This can largely be ascribed to strong political leadership early in the emerging government. As Suriname transitioned from an autonomous republic to a completely independent state, ethnic and political groups were able to rally together against the Dutch colonial power. Party leaders reached across party lines to form coalitions, including the New Front Coalition, with the goal of ensuring that one group was not overly represented in the leadership of the country. This philosophy of *broederschap* (brotherhood), they note, is well respected in Suriname; it is based on an ideology that values the inclusion of many ethnic groups in leadership in order to avoid conflict or to resolve it in a peaceful manner. Finally, they contend, friendship and collaboration among political leaders is greatly valued as a non-institutionalized binding force between political parties.

In addition, others offer other factors to account for the relative stability prevailing in Suriname. They observe that while in the past political parties were created along ethnic lines, currently there is an increase in mixed political parties which share economic and social goals rather than identical ethnic backgrounds. The largest political party, the National Democratic Party (NDP), is not tied to any particular ethnic group. There has also been a movement to increase the representation of indigenous populations in public life. In 2003, the political organization SaMaDe (Cooperating Maroon Experts) was formed, with the goal of increasing Maroon representation in government. This was followed by the formation of a coalition of Maroon parties called A-Combinatie that resulted in three political parties with Maroon backgrounds along with one Amerindian party taking part in the 2005 elections. Given that Suriname's heavy reliance on fiscal revenue from extractive industries has posed challenges in the past, and may continue to do so in the future, like Guyana and Fiji, the situation, at least at the political front, seems to be far from what the develop countries term "stability."

NOTES

1. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Suriname>
2. The Political Culture of Democracy in Suriname and in the Americas, 2013.
3. Governance in Suriname, April 2001.
4. The Political Culture of Democracy in Suriname and in the Americas, 2013.

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Trinidad and Tobago

Abstract Chapter 6 placed emphasis on Trinidad and Tobago beginning with a location and historical overview. In this the various ethnic groups were highlighted with the majority being Africans and East Indian. In the case of Trinidad and Tobago one measure to ensure stability was the written constitution in which the rights and freedoms of all persons of all groups were outlined. What was a drawback is the system of voting, First-Past-the-Post system which means winner takes all. This chapter placed great emphasis on two major political parties which are dominated by the two main ethnic groups, the African and East Indians. This places the country on a set back as it is not favourable for the equitable distribution of resources as well as power among the racial groups.

Keywords Centre for ethnic studies · Democratic labour party · Equal opportunity act · People's national movement · Stewart · Stratification · The first past the post system · United labour front

LOCATION AND HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

The twin island Republic of Trinidad and Tobago Trinidad is 11 km (6.8 mi) off the northeast coast of Venezuela and 130 km (81 mi) south of the Grenadines.

The transplanted populations of the islands are the descendants of the East Indian indentured servants who make up 35.4% of the total population, the African descended population which comprise 34.2% of the population, mixed-other 15.3%, mixed African/East Indian 7.7%, other 1.3%, unspecified 6.2% (2011 estimates.) Trinidad and Tobago, like Fiji, Guyana and Suriname, had its foundation in the initiation and expansion of slavery and indenture ship systems. Thus, like all colonies, a stratification foundation based on colour – white, browns and blacks prevailed. Where the country of Trinidad and Tobago perhaps differed significantly perhaps from other colonies which retained particular cultural mores derived from the colonials, for example Suriname and Martinique which still remained close ties to the Netherlands, was in the third constituent element highlighted by Gordon Lewis (1983). He suggested that what had emerged in the case of Trinidad and Tobago was a distinctive “creole” culture.

Like all colonial territories, Trinidad and its sister isle, Tobago, changed hands many times during the period 1800s–1900s, from Spanish to finally British. During each period of colonial rule, because the countries had no mineral deposits and therefore were not classified as “extractive economies”, the colonial administrators developed plantations which supplied products such as tobacco and then sugar cane which were exported to the metropolis. The plantation economy was to have a long-lasting impact on both the economic and the political development of both countries. Indeed, Despres (1964) suggested that this pattern of settlement created societies that were fractured along the lines of not only class but also race (in a more expanded sense, ethnic communities). In Trinidad and Tobago because there were two major ethnic groups, he suggested that there emerged “maximal” groups and “minimal” sectors. According to Despres (1964) the difference between the two groups was the extent to which the group became integrated into the society.

The settlement pattern in many former colonies, particularly those whose majority groups were Africans and East Indians, seemed to have followed similar lines (e.g. Guyana, Suriname). In the case of Trinidad, for example, the newly freed slaves had migrated to the urban areas where they were employed as artisans, craftsmen and vendors. The indentured East Indians, on the other hand, were confined to the estates (mainly rural areas) where they were placed, and this, along with religious and cultural beliefs, prevented them from mixing with other ethnic communities. Essentially, these were communities or societies which Furnivall (1980)

went on to describe as plural societies. He observed that a plural society is comprised of two or more distinct social orders, living in parallel within one political entity, without much intermingling. In the case of Trinidad and Tobago the settlement pattern, along with what some suggests were strategies by the colonial administrators to force a separation between the two groups, were to result in societies that were deeply fractured. This “fracturing” was to have a major impact on the way associations were established but more importantly it also had a significant if not long-term impact on voting trends when systems of government were officially introduced in both islands.

Stewart (2004)¹ reinforced the concept of “fracturing:

The role of European planters implementing indentured servitude had a tremendous effect on shaping social attitudes in colonial Trinidad. For instance, Indian indentured laborers were kept apart geographically and culturally from the rest of captive labor force. This separation fostered an atmosphere that perpetuated the negative stereotypes initiated by the white planters. This tactic was used to further divide the labor force from uniting. The planter elite rationalized the division of labor by claiming that Afrikans were poor workers, lazy, irresponsible and frivolous while East Indians were characterized as industrious, docile, obedient and manageable. Later, some East Indians also adopted this view of the enslaved Afrikans. Hence the perpetuation and institutionalization of hackneyed image of the oppressed by a group in a similar situation. East Indians were also stereotyped as stingy, prone to domestic violence, and a heathen for not adopting “Western ways”. Therefore, the division of labor was created by the planter elite as a means of effectively controlling the labor force.

Essentially the social hierarchy in colonial Trinidad consisted of whites as the plantation owners; the Chinese and Portuguese in trading occupations; Afrikans and coloureds in skilled manual occupations; and East Indians in the agricultural fields. The “commodification of ethnicity” caused by the division of labour has had extensive implications on the process of symbolization for those it involves. This meant the subordinate groups could not fully develop their own-shared ethnic and cultural standards. Instead, images and stereotypes were superimposed by more powerful “outside” groups. Yet despite the isolation among the various ethnic groups during the nineteenth century, syncretism and acts of “cultural borrowing helped shape the formation of typical Trinidadian culture.

Before *granting* independent status to these colonies, it should be recalled that the British administrators experimented with a number of models before they finally adapted the Westminster model to suit their colonies. They, for instance, established a Crown Colony system of government, then attempted a unified civil service establishment and finally made an attempt to influence the countries to introduce a West Indian Federal system. When the Federal “attempt” failed, the countries, starting with Jamaica, requested and attained independent status and introduced the governing system later referred to as the Westminster Whitehall model of Government. Implicit in this model of government was a written constitution and a model of voting, commonly referred to as the First Past the Post system. The First Past the Post system could have been easily introduced in the country particularly to facilitate the early election in 1956 for a premier since the country had been demarcated according to the boundary lines formerly known as “districts” under colonial administration. Under this method of voting, persons voted in each district or what became known as “constituencies” for the party of their choice. The candidate who won the highest number of votes in each constituency represented the constituency as their member of parliament. The party who attained the largest number of constituencies formed the government and the leader of that party became the prime minister of the country.

THE FIRST PAST THE POST SYSTEM OF VOTING

In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, the First-Past-The-Post system was introduced when the country attained independence in 1962. Also called the “winner-take-all” system, this system awards a seat to the individual candidate who receives the most votes in an election. The candidate need not get a majority (50 %+) of the vote to win; so long as he has a larger number of votes than all other candidates, he (she) is declared the winner. The first-past-the-post system generally depends on single-member constituencies, and allows voters to indicate only one vote on their ballot (by pulling a single lever, punching a hole in the ballot, making an X, etc.) The constitutional requirements in Trinidad and Tobago for the first-past-the-post system is that all constituencies be as practically of equal size, having regard to the influence of such factors as population density, geographical barriers and administrative boundaries. Approximate equality of constituency size is critical for satisfying the important principle of equal weight of each ballot.

The First-Past-The-Post is defended primarily on the grounds of simplicity and the propensity to produce winners who are representatives

beholden to defined geographic areas and governability. The most often cited advantages are that:

- i. It provides a clear-cut choice for voters between two main parties. The inherent disadvantages faced by third and fragmented minority parties under FPTP in many cases cause the party system to gravitate towards a party of the “left” and a party of the “right”, alternating in power. Third parties often fade away and almost never reach a level of popular support above which their national vote yields a comparable percentage of seats in the legislature.
- ii. It gives rise to single-party governments. The “seat bonuses” for the largest party common under FPTP (e.g. where one party wins 45 per cent of the national vote but 55 per cent of the seats) mean that coalition governments are the exception rather than the rule. This state of affairs is praised for providing cabinets which are not shackled by the restraints of having to bargain with a minority coalition partner.
- iii. It gives rise to a coherent opposition in the legislature. In theory, the flip side of a strong single-party government is that the opposition is also given enough seats to perform a critical checking role and present itself as a realistic alternative to the government of the day. It advantages broadly based political parties.
- iv. Finally, FPTP systems are particularly praised for being simple to use and understand. A valid vote requires only one mark beside the name or symbol of one candidate. Even if the number of candidates on the ballot paper is large, the count is easy for electoral officials to conduct.

On the other hand, the First-Past-The-Post system is often criticized for a number of reasons. These include:

- a. It excludes smaller parties from “fair” representation, in the sense that a party which wins approximately, say, 10 per cent of the votes should win approximately 10 per cent of the legislative seats.
- b. It excludes minorities from fair representation. As a rule, under FPTP, parties put up the most broadly acceptable candidate in a particular district so as to avoid alienating the majority of electors.
- c. It can encourage the development of political parties based on clan, ethnicity or region, which may base their campaigns and policy

- platforms on conceptions that are attractive to the majority of people in their district or region but exclude or are hostile to others.
- d. It leaves a large number of wasted votes which do not go towards the election of any candidate.
 - e. Finally, FPTP systems are dependent on the drawing of electoral boundaries. All electoral boundaries have political consequences: there is no technical process to produce a single “correct answer” independently of political or other considerations. Boundary delimitation may require substantial time and resources if the results are to be accepted as legitimate. There may also be pressure to manipulate boundaries by gerrymandering or mal-apportionment.

However, it is evident while so many advantages are cited, in summary though, particularly in “fractured” societies such as Trinidad and Tobago this system of voting promoted an outcome where in fact and in practice the “winner takes all.” Indeed, it was evident that while the First Past the Post method of voting could be applied in countries where the population is fairly homogenous and where the difference between the governing party and the opposing party has to do with ideological differences, in the case of plural societies such as Trinidad and Tobago, fractured along lines of race, it is to be expected that the political parties will be split along primarily racial lines. This emerged quite early in the 1961 elections. The People’s National Movement (PNM) which had the majority of African descended population as its backbone support formed the government with 190,003 votes while the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) which depended on its support from the East Indian segment of the society formed the Opposition.

Given the nature of the electoral system in Trinidad and Tobago, from the 1950s to the 1985 one party remained in power while the other seemed doomed to forever remain in Opposition. In other words, the party winning the majority of seats rather than the total number of votes for a particular party determined who would form the government. In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, the People’s National Movement, the African-based party remained in power from 1962- 1985 (see [Tables 6.1](#) and [6.2](#) below). What was evident was that the demographic settlement of persons within particular constituencies determined the outcome of the elections.

But, it was argued that the outright victory by one party was not the issue. Rather, it was the way that public goods were allocated. Ryan

Table 6.1 Results of the general elections 1966–1971

<i>Political party</i>	<i>1966</i>	<i>1971</i>
People's national movement (PNM)	158,573 (52.4%) 24 Seats	99,723 (84.1%) 36 Seats
Democratic labour party (DLP)	102,792 (34.0%) 12 Seats	14,940 (12.6%) 0 Seats

Table 6.2 Results of the general elections of 1976

<i>Political party</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>Percentage %</i>	<i>Seats allocated</i>	<i>+/-</i>
People's national movement (PNM)	169,194	54.2	24	-12
United labour front (ULF)	84,780	27.2	10	New
Democratic action congress (DAC)	25,586	8.2	2	New
Tapia house movement	12,021	3.9	0	0
Democratic labour party	9,404	3.0	0	0
Social democratic party	5,928	1.9	0	New
West indian national party	1,242	0.4	0	New
United freedom party	1,047	0.3	0	New
Liberation party	872	0.3	0	New

observed, quite rightly, that the hoary issue arose way back in 1961–1962 and had to do with the concerns of Indo-Trinidadians who felt that they were being marginalized as the country proceeded to independence. Extremist elements demanded “parity or partition”, and voiced their concern at the Marlborough House Conference in 1962. As the Indian National Association expressed it:

We the Indians, must demand parity with the Negroes in government, in the Civil Service, in the Police and every aspect of government. If there are thirty seats in the House, we insist on having 15. If there are 12 Ministers, we demand six. We demand that 50 per cent of the jobs in the Civil Service be given Indians, and 50 per cent of the men in the Police Force be of our community, as well as 50 per cent of the officers.

Dr. Eric Williams, speaking on behalf of the Afro-creole community, rejected communal representation outright.²

But, it should be recalled that race was an important component of party loyalty, and the dominant PNM drew its support largely from black

voters. Blacks controlled most PNM leadership positions; Williams's cabinet in 1961 had only two East Indians – Winston Mahabir, a Christian, and Kamaluddin Mohammed, a Muslim. East Indians generally supported the DLP. The vexing issue of “representation” as well as equality of opportunities was one that remained as the “elephant in the room” over the years.

For instance, one contention was that Indo-Trinidadians were under-represented in most professions and government positions, despite comprising nearly 40% of the population. A study from 1970 showed that: “[O]f the 100 employees of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, 84 were Afro-Trinidadians, 10 were Indo-Trinidadians, 3 were of Chinese descent, 2 were of Portuguese descent, and 1 was white.” This unequal employment situation was further evident in 1989, when statistics showed that of the total number of persons employed in all government organizations, 29% were Indo-Trinidadians. In the police force, Regiment of the Defence Force, Coast Guard, and Port Authority, respectively, the percentage of Indo-Trinidadians was 25%, 5%, 16% and 6% respectively. At that time, census data indicated that Indo-Trinidadians made up 40.3% of the country's population, while Afro-Trinidadians comprised 39.6%, thereby demonstrating the wide disparities. The report further found that Indo-Trinidadians reached and surpassed the equity ratio in the areas of medicine and finance, but that the criteria for employment and advancement in these two areas were clearly technical skill. There was also pervasive racial tension between the Indian and Afro-Caribbean communities. Moreover, Hindus faced restrictions on religious freedom, state preference for Christianity and inequitable funding of religious activities in comparison to Christians.

By 1976, the outcome of the General Elections of that year clearly indicated that the two party race was becoming more intense as new political parties emerged and joined in the bid to attain political power. By this time as well, the East Indian party, the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) was bifurcated, with a small group remaining with the DLP, while a larger group including workers from the sugar belt forming the United Labour Front. The race now became a three-way split (many of the smaller parties were too small to attract the population) between the People's National Movement, the Democratic Labour Party and now the United Labour Front. When the votes were tallied, it appeared the United Labour Front was now the official opposition. What was also emerging was the bid by Tobagonians (Trinidad's twin sister island) to flex its political arm by

casting its vote behind a new political party, the Democratic Action Congress.

One reason offered for the emergence of the number of political parties contesting the General Elections of 1976 (it should be recalled too that there was a boycott of the election in 1971) was the loss of popularity by the ruling People's National Movement. It was felt that the poorest segment of the population including the East Indian population was largely left out of the governing process. It was claimed too that the leader of the People's National Movement had become so removed from his cabinet and from the population that he had not held a press conference for five years (since April, 1970). He therefore had not been equipped to cope with the Black Power Movement which had swept across the Caribbean had been introduced by the National Joint Action Committee. This party sought fundamental changes, and challenged the government for its continuing policy to rely on foreign businesses. By 1973, the People's National Movement struggled to maintain control and at a convention in 1973, the prime minister resigned, only to return a few months later as oil prices, the staple product of the country once more increased.

THE EMERGENCE OF A THIRD FORCE

The windfall in oil prices and the concomitant increase in government income led to increased spending by the government. By the latter half of the 1970s the state established over 50 government-owned companies. Along with the increased spending came charges of corruption and a poll conducted in January /February 1981 suggested that 50% of the sample polled felt that the prime minister should resign. In March of that year, the prime minister died leaving to succeed him one of three deputy prime ministers, George Chambers. The 1981 election marked the appearance of a new political party, the Organization for National Reconstruction (ONR). The ONR, led by an early PNM Prime Minister Hudson-Phillips, attacked government inefficiency and called for a rollback of "massive state capitalism". The party attempted to appeal to a cross section of voters, including black and East Indian workers as well as all groups in the middle class. In addition, three opposition parties – the ULF, the DAC, and Tapia House (a reformist party of intellectuals and the middle class) – attempted to form an electoral coalition appropriately termed the Alliance. Even though the population was disenchanted, and although

Table 6.3 Results of the general elections of 1981

<i>Party</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Seats</i>	<i>+/-</i>
People's national movement	218,557	52.9%	26	+2
Organisation for national reconstruction	91,704	22.2	0	New
United labour front	62,781	15.2	8	-2
Democratic action congress	15,390	3.7	2	0
National joint action committee	13,710	3.3	0	New
Tapia house movement	9,401	2.3	0	0
National freedom party	864	0.2	0	New
Fargo house movement	143	0.0	0	New
West indian political congress movement	130	0.0	0	New
Trinidad labour party	34	0.0	0	New
People's republican party	25	0.0	0	New
Independents	39	0.0	0	0
Invalid/Blank votes	2,638	-	-	-
Total	415,416	100	36	0

only 30% of the population voted for the People's National Movement, that party won the election attaining a total of 26 of the 36 seats. Clearly, the alliance had not succeeded. Some claimed that the idea of alliance between the groups forming the party was too "new" for the society to digest. Others claimed that the segmentation of the country according to constituencies which were racially populated was responsible for the defeat of the ONR (see [Table 6.3](#)).

However, 1981 marked a turning point for Trinidad and Tobago. For the first time, it was abundantly obvious that there was a major shift in voter preference with no clear demarcation according to race. The marginal or shifting voter was to become a major factor in the General Elections to follow.

THE SHIFT TO A NEW POLITICS

By 1986, the die was cast. One major Alliance group, the National Alliance for Reconstruction (NAR) comprising of a number of interests (including East Indian Labour, middle class interest and Tobago interests), joined forces to contest the 1986 General Elections. With a war cry of "national unity" the NAR won 33 of the 30 seats. The PNM was vanquished with three seats, a minority in the Lower House.

The NAR attained 380,029 votes or 66.3% of the total votes cast. Yet, this was an uneasy victory.

Trinidad and Tobago had experienced rapid economic growth in the 1970s largely as a result of the increase in international oil prices and the subsequent increase in domestic crude oil production and oil exports. Diversification strategies during this period focused largely on the development of petrochemical industries and the establishment of energy based companies. Given this wind-fall, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago had taken over the commanding height of economy, nationalizing numerous companies.

However, with the decline in international oil prices in the mid-1980s and an economy that was still heavily dependent on the income generated from this sector, the economy experienced a significant decline in its export earnings and government revenue. Government addressed these problems with tough measures aimed at restructuring the economy. It approached the International Monetary Fund and soon after entered into a structural adjustment agreement. The government embarked on a number of fiscal measures in the 1980s began with tightening of government expenditure together with improved management of expenditure and investment. Many small companies closed and in the public sector, the government introduced measures to reduce wage expenditure by introducing firstly an early retirement scheme as well as a Voluntary Separation Programme (VTEP).

By 1985 and well into 1986, a number of specific reforms aimed at increasing private sector investment were introduced. These included among others:

- A tax reform programme aimed at removing the disincentives to private sector investment, which included a reduction of personal and corporate income tax levels and the implementation of Value Added Tax (VAT).
- By the 1990s, restructuring, divestment and liquidation of a number of state owned enterprises.
- Divestment was done through the sale of some companies directly to foreign investors, such as in the case of the Telephone Company of Trinidad and Tobago, Fertilizers of Trinidad and Tobago, and Trinidad and Tobago Urea Company, as well as through the issue of shares on the stock market such as in the case of Trinidad Cement

Limited, the Point Lisas Industrial Port Development Company and, more recently, the National Flour Mills.

- Improvement in the incentive framework for the private sector, including a number of new incentive schemes such as the Free Zones Act.
- Improvement in a number of procedures that tended to obstruct business activity such as the removal of the licensing system and negative list for a number of imported goods, and reductions in tariffs.
- And by 1993, a change from a system of fixed exchange rates and exchange control, to a system of a managed float of the dollar and removal of the restrictions on the sale and purchase of foreign exchange.³

These measures were perceived by the wider population as harsh and onerous. When a coup was attempted in 1990, this perhaps signalled the end for the NAR Government. A post mortem of the 1990 would clearly suggest that perceived ethnic or racial injustice was not the root cause for the 1990 failed coup attempt. Rather the coup attempt which took place on the 26th July 1990 comprised mainly black Muslim youths led by its leader Imam Yasin Abu Bakr. A number of factors, it was alleged was largely responsible for the insurgence that took place among them severe difficulties in the economy, a swelling hostility towards the government and its policies since attaining power in 1986 and the emergence of new political and social groupings. Specifically, the Muslimeen were annoyed that the High Court had ruled against them in April that they had illegally constructed buildings on a plot of land at Mucurapo Road. The group was actually demonstrating outside the Red House while parliament was in session to bring attention to the complaints. Ironically, this made it easy for the group to amass its forces without arousing much suspicion of their damaging and illegal terroristic intention. However, the group was small and in retrospect, the coup was poorly conceived. The impact of the coup, however, was far-reaching. By 1991, the voters expressed their lack of confidence in the government and re-established the PNM government.

THE CONTINUING SHIFT IN VOTER BEHAVIOUR

While the PNM once more returned to power with 233,150 or 45.1% of the votes cast, the outcome for 1991 clearly revealed a shift in voter confidence. In order to appease the East Indian population, the Prime Minister at that time, Patrick Manning established a Centre for Ethnic

Studies based at the University of the West Indies. This Commission, led by two academics, were mandated to investigate racial imbalances (if it existed) within the public as well as the private sector.⁴ Table 6.4 was a general table which presented data (according to the racial groups of all appointments to positions in the public service during the period 1981–1991).

Table 6.4 revealed that approximately 33.2% to 34.8% East Indian candidates were appointed in the public service during the period 1981–1991. When the data was further disaggregated according to positions and ranking from clerical officer 1 (first level) to clerical officer IV (senior level), the data revealed a gross imbalance as it related to East Indian officers (Table 6.5).

The data emerging out of the reports of the Centre seemed then to substantiate the claims that one of the two majority groups were under-represented at the level of the executive arm of government. Following up the 1994 report, yet another Report from the Centre for Ethnic Studies revealed that ethnic discrimination was not confined to the public service. Rather as this report also indicated there were ethnic imbalances in the award of scholarships and in training. For instance, in 1976 it was found that out of a total of 86 scholarships awarded in various areas of study, only 14 were awarded to East Indian candidates. In 1981, the then Leader of the Opposition pointed out that there were imbalances in the various

Table 6.4 Appointments to positions in the public service 1981–1991

<i>Years</i>	<i>Total appointments</i>	<i>Indian appointed</i>	<i>Indians as a percentage of total appointments</i>
1981	1,500	489	33.2
1982	1,552	601	38.7
1983	1,582	499	31.5
1984	1,718	711	41.4
1985	904	241	26.7
1986	713	279	39.1
1987	311	111	35.7
1988	70	17	24.3
1989	360	133	36.9
1990	1,529	463	30.3
1991	1,028	371	36.1
Total	11,267	3,924	34.8

Table 6.5 Breakdown of ranges according to ethnic group

Years	Range 60+		Range 46-59		Range 35-45		Under 35	
	Indian	Other	Indian	Other	Indian	Other	Indian	Other
1970	20.7	79.3	25.6	74.4	33.5	66.5	25.1	74.9
1980	27.1	72.9	28.9	71.1	25.8	74.5	35.6	64.4
1992	35.6	64.4	41.3	58.7	37.0	63.0	41.0	59.0

Source: Centre for Ethnic Studies (1992:93)

appointments to state boards as well. In a Speech in the House of Representatives he lambasted the ruling party. He contended:

When one looks and sees the performance of the Government in appointing the board of Caroni Ltd., one notices on the part of the government and the Cabinet the deepest and stinkiest kind of corruption of that Board . . . Government does not look around to see whether there are people of competence and commitment to the industry, it looks around for party followers . . . Integrity is questionable and there is no sense of commitment to industry⁵

Yet, it should be recalled that there were avenues available to address concerns of discrimination. Remedies varied from institutions such as the Public Service Commission, the Office of the Ombudsman, to Appellate Boards as the Public Service Tribunal as well as various unions and the right to litigation or appeals to international bodies. Clearly, given the data presented, there were deficiencies with these remedies. It should be recalled, however, that during an effort to revise the Constitution of the country, that in The Report to the Constitution Commission (1987) one of seven commissioners appointed under the Commissions of Enquiry Act Chapter 19:01 to hold an inquiry in public “to consider the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and to make recommendations” had proposed at that time the introduction of Equal Opportunity Legislation and an Equal Opportunity Commission. He had argued then:

*To ignore the demand is to fail to come to grips with the forces which stimulate such a demand. Grievances, unless they are channelled, investigated and dealt with, are likely to explode in diffuse directions as happened in 1970.*⁶

However, it would take more than a decade before legislation and the relevant Commission was established.

THE 1995 ELECTIONS AND ITS AFTERMATH

In 1995, after seeing its majority reduced to a single seat due to a defection and a lost by-election, the People's National Movement called election. The results saw the PNM and the United National Congress both attaining 17 seats. Although they had received fewer votes, the UNC was able to form a coalition with the two-seat National Alliance for Reconstruction, allowing UNC leader Basdeo Panday to become the country's first Prime Minister of Indian descent. The Voter Turnout was 63.3% (Table 6.6).

By 2001, this pattern again re-emerged. The ruling United National Congress lost its majority in the House of Representatives following four defections. However, the election results saw the UNC and the People's National Movement both win 18 seats. Although the UNC received the most votes, President A. N. R. Robinson nominated the PNM to form the government. By October, 2002 after People's National Movement leader Patrick Manning had failed to secure a majority in the hung parliament produced by the 2001 elections another General Election was called. This time the PNM was able to secure a majority, winning 20 of the 36 seats. The voter turnout was consistent at approximately 69% (see Tables 6.7 and 6.8 for election results for the years 2001 and 2002).

Table 6.6 Results of the general elections of 1995

<i>Party</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Seats</i>	<i>+/-</i>
People's national movement	256,159	48.8	17	-4
United national congress	240,372	45.8	17	+4
National alliance for reconstruction	24,983	4.8	2	0
Movement for unity and progress	2,123	0.4	0	New
Natural law party	1,590	0.3	0	New
National transformation party	83	0.0	0	New
People's voice party	16	0.0	0	New
Invalid/blank votes	4,985	-	-	-
Total	530,311	100	36	0

Table 6.7 Results of the general elections of 2001

<i>Party</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Seats</i>	<i>+/-</i>
United national congress	279,002	49.9%	18	-1
People's national movement	260,075	46.5	18	+2
National team unity	14,207	2.5	0	New
National alliance for reconstruction	5,841	1.0	0	-1
National democratic organisation	50	0.0	0	New
Invalid/blank votes	2,818	-	-	-
Total	561,993	100	36	0

Table 6.8 Results of the general elections of 2002

<i>Party</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Seats</i>	<i>+/-</i>
People's national movement	308,762	50.9	20	+2
United national congress	284,391	46.9	16	-2
National alliance for reconstruction	6,776	1.1	0	0
Citizens' alliance	5,983	1.0	0	New
Democratic party of trinidad and tobago	662	0.1	0	New
Independents	193	0.0	0	New
Invalid/blank votes	2,818	-	-	-
Total	561,993	100	36	0

Like Fiji and Guyana, the results of the General Elections between the majority groups were either very close or very unstable. One new introduction in 2002, however, was the proclaiming of Equal Opportunity Legislation (Act 22:03- Act 69 of 2000). The Equal Opportunity Commission ("the Commission") was created by the Equal Opportunity Act Chap 22:03 for the purpose of exercising the jurisdiction conferred upon it by that Act. That Act was passed by Parliament and the responsibilities under this Act included the following:

- a. To prohibit certain kinds of discrimination
- b. To promote equality of opportunity between persons of different statuses
- c. To establish an Equal Opportunity Commission
- d. To establish an Equal Opportunity Tribunal.

The key functions of the Commission as outlined under the legislation was to receive, investigate and as far as possible conciliate allegations of:

- Discrimination on the grounds of status,
- Discrimination by victimization or
- Offensive behaviour lodged with it by members of the public; to work towards the elimination of discrimination; and promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different status generally.

The Commission effectively came into operation in 2008 and the first Commissioners were appointed on 21st April, 2008. During the year 2008, the Equal Opportunity Commission received a total of twenty four complaints. In 2009, nineteen complaints were received. The areas under which the complaints were classified were⁷:

- Racial Discrimination – 11
- Religious Discrimination – 2
- Employment Discrimination – 11
- State Services Discrimination – 18
- Education Discrimination – 2
- Other areas of Discrimination – 9
- Complaints against the EOC – 1

Yet, even with the introduction of the Equal Opportunity Legislation, charges of discrimination continued. For example, there were⁸ complaints over the years from the public that the medical fraternity discriminates against Africans who seek to become doctors.

By 2007, it was evident that the victory at the polls continued to remain with the ruling party, the People's National Movement. However, the victory was short-lived. Criticized for over-spending and plagued by the various trade unions, by 2010, the prime minister and leader of the PNM called an early election. What was obvious from the outcome of this election (2007), though, was the awareness by the Opposition party that what was necessary in order to attain an outright victory at the polls what was necessary was an alliance between other political parties (Table 6.9).

The Opposition accordingly by 2010 formed an alliance with other smaller parties which was mainly responsible for its victory in that year (see Table 6.10).

Table 6.9 Results of the general elections of 2007

<i>Parties</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Seats</i>
People's national movement	299,813	45.85	26
United national congress – alliance	194,425	29.73	15
Congress of the people	148,041	22.64	0
Democratic action congress	8,801	1.35	0
Democratic national assembly	376	0.01	0
Independents	120	0.00	0
Total valid (turnout 66%)	651,576	100.00	41
Invalid	2,306		
Total	653,882		

Source: EBC

Table 6.10 Results of the general elections of 2010

<i>Parties</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Seats</i>
People's partnership coalition	432,026	59.81	29
People's national movement	285,354	39.50	12
New national vision	1,998	0.27	0
Independents	349	0.02	0
Total valid (turnout 69.45%)	719,727	100.00	41
Invalid	2,595		
Total	722,322		

As [Table 6.11](#) reveals, the victory by the coalition was overwhelming with the coalition winning an outright victory with a majority of 29 seats to the PNM's 12 seats. The coalition comprised the black power centred National Joint Action Committee, the union-based Movement for Social Justice, the greater autonomy-seeking Tobago Organisation of the People, the middle-class, multi-ethnic Congress of the People and the rural, Indian, working class United National Congress. What later emerged from the *coalition experiment* though was that no set procedures were put in place for power-sharing. Indeed, one member of the faction later described the so-called inclusiveness the People's Partnership government a farce. He claimed:

The UNC dealt a death blow to the promise of April 21st, 2010 by the worst abuses of office ever seen from Reshmi to Prison Gate to witness tampering. The hopes of the people for creating new participatory governance so that

Table 6.11 Results of the general elections of 2015

<i>Party</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Seats</i>	<i>+/-</i>
People's national movement	378,447	51.68	23	+11
United national congress (PP)	290,066	39.61	17	-4
Congress of the people (PP)	43,991	6.01	1	-5
National Joint Action Committee (PP)	5,790	0.79	0	0
Independent liberal party	5,123	0.70	0	New
Tobago forwards	2,162	0.30	0	New
Tobago organisation of the people	1,750	0.24	0	-2
New national vision	883	0.12	0	0
Platform of truth	469	0.06	0	New
Laventille outreach for vertical enrichment	334	0.05	0	New
National coalition for transportation	331	0.05	0	New
Democratic development party	153	0.02	0	New
Trinidad humanity campaign	108	0.01	0	New
Independent development party	108	0.01	0	New
The new voice	101	0.01	0	New
Youth, national organisation, farmers unification, policy reformation	74	0.01	0	New
Youth empowerment party	34	0.00	0	New
Independents	2,376	0.32	0	0
Invalid/blank votes	2,452	-	-	-
Total	734,792	100	41	0

“everyone counts and everyone is needed” have been shattered on the altar of UNC dominance, the entrenchment of their power in the institutions of state and the stench of corruption.

He went on to note:

This Principle has been mocked from very early in its term by the UNC. Corruption has been worse than at any time previously, to the point where the Attorney General had to be removed because of allegations of witness tampering! The state enterprises and public service have been used to benefit friends, family, supporters and financiers of the UNC. . . . has been forgotten by the UNC as it would have frustrated it getting hundreds of millions of \$ from financiers who also benefited from government/state enterprise contracts⁹

When elections were called in 2015 to some it was not surprising that power once more returned to the PNM. The “one love” approach to governing

had dissipated. The PNM attained a majority of 23 seats to the Opposition's seventeen (Table 6.11).

CONCLUSION

Like many of the countries already discussed, it was clear that a number of remedies or solutions had been introduced in order to allow for some measure of stability in what has often been described as a fractured society. In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, one measure was the introduction of a written Constitution in which the rights and freedoms of persons of all groups were outlined. What, however, seemed to be dysfunctional was the First-Past-the-System of Voting which promoted a system in which the "winner took all." In this chapter, great lengths were taken to show not only the oscillation between the two majority political parties but also as the data indicated by 1981, there was an in-decisiveness in voter behaviour. Thus from 1981, the victory by any one party was unpredictable. In addition, commencing in 1981, the voting trend suggested that what was necessary was the need to build alliances with smaller parties. Like the countries of Suriname and Guyana, however, while the idea of coalition was embraced, the actual process and procedures involved in making this arrangement work was not sufficiently deliberated. The result was the dissipation of these arrangements. Thus like its neighbours, it is evident that electoral trends in Trinidad and Tobago are likely to be unpredictable and the country seems to be far off in actually putting measures in place to allow for equitable distribution of resources as well as power-sharing between the various racial groups.

NOTES

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4. Ethnicity and Employment Practices in Trinidad and Tobago. Centre for Ethnic Studies, University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad. 1994. Tables underneath are accordingly reproduced from this report.

5. Speech by the Leader of the Opposition in the House of Representatives, Trinidad, 1981, Hansard.
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8. <http://www.trinidadandtobagonews.com/blog/?p=286>- Exposing Racism in the Medical Fraternity and the Media.
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Conclusion

Abstract The book examined four countries (Fiji, Guyana, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago) as they are usually referenced as plural or fractured societies. The book brought out the similarity that each of the country has, which is the fact that there are two major ethnic groups (Africans and East Indians) dominating the scenes especially the political aspect. While each country had measures of legislative as well as institutional mechanisms being introduced, the fear of a dominating ethnic group could not be dismissed. However, there were attempts to form coalitions and alliances for proper representation and these mechanisms were accordingly outlines.

Keywords Plural · Fractured · Conflict-prone · Westminster Whitehall · Equal Opportunity Legislation · Equal Opportunity Commission

This book micro-examined four countries which are usually referenced as ‘plural’, ‘fractured’ or ‘conflict-prone’ societies. In all these countries, unlike countries such as Rwanda, Serbia, or even India and Pakistan, the two major racial (or ethnic) groups were transplanted from other countries. In the case of the African-descended population from the African continent and the East Indians were migrants from the continent of India. Fiji was the only country under discussion where the indigenous population assumed a major role in the decision-making process. In the case of

the countries of Suriname and Guyana and to a lesser extent Trinidad and Tobago, the indigenous groups were small. In these countries, then, border disputes were non-existent.

Arriving in a host society, then, as the various historical overviews tried to illustrate, the transplanted groups, because of how they assimilated, did not mix. In the case of Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana, for example, the African-descended population resided mainly in the urban areas while the East-Indian descended population segregated in the rural areas. To a large extent, as well, there was a measure of distrust among the various groups. As all these countries attained independence, however, it was evident that the groups were not only vying for equality but were also actively striving to attain political power. The equation was simple. The group that attained state power would have access to state resources as well as the ability to distribute these resources.

In all the countries, differing modes of accommodation were employed. In the case of Fiji, for example, care was taken to have the local chiefs involved in power sharing arrangements. In the case of Guyana, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago, it was not simple. Each country adopted and modified systems and institutions from its former colonial masters. In the case of Suriname, a consociational arrangement was introduced. In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, a modified Westminster system of government, the Westminster Whitehall model of government was established; while in the case of Guyana, a mixed system of government comprising an executive president as well as voting system, proportional representation was introduced.

In trying to answer the question of how well these systems of government worked, it was evident in all the countries, where such data was available, that one of the majority group, which may be referred to as the 'minimal' group felt disenfranchised and was critical of the governing group. They alleged that there was under-representation of one group in key governmental positions, at the level of state boards and in the allocation of state resources. In a bid to minimize such claims, many countries embarked on a number of legislative measures. In the case of Guyana and Suriname for example, constitutional amendments were introduced to allow for the clear expression of freedoms along with the establishment of rights. In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, the introduction of Equal Opportunity Legislation and later the establishment of an Equal Opportunity Commission and Tribunal were clearly measures intended to investigate and address charges of discrimination.

Yet, while these measures, both legislative and institutional were introduced, it was evident that the fear of dominance by a group could not easily be dispelled. However, in all the countries under review, the election results, which were painstakingly intertwined within the text of this book, revealed a new phenomenon. While it was found as early the 1960s in Britain and in the United States, that many of the traditional voting patterns had undergone a shift, in the case of these transplanted societies, the shift came much later. This is understandable since it should be recalled that it was only in the latter half of the 1960s and indeed much later in some countries, that they attained independence. Thus, during the early elections, what emerged from the election data was firstly the large number of political parties contesting these elections and then the tendency for ethnic or racial groups to congregate around a political party which was representative of their group. As the countries developed, however, in terms of the expansion of educational opportunities which resulted in a widening of the middle class, it was found that voting trends had become unpredictable. Thus, by the 1980s, traditional parties seemed to no longer be able to commandeer a strong tribal base.

By the 1980s then, in nearly all the countries under review, the election data indicated that attempts were made to form alliances in order to contest the General Elections. Yet, in all these countries, such alliances failed. In nearly all four countries, such government ruled for one term or even less. In the case of both Fiji and Suriname, this instability was largely responsible for the coups that were attempted overtime and later the takeover of the government by military commanders. In the case of Guyana, the elections were often accompanied by violence and sometimes death. The exception to this was Trinidad and Tobago (although the Black Power Revolution took place in 1970 and an attempted coup in 1990. These incidents, however, were unrelated to the General Elections).

To date there has been no analysis of why coalition attempts have had limited success. Yet, some accounts and interviews have indicated that the partial explanation lies in the lack of brokering in these arrangements beforehand. Indeed, in the majority of the cases, the alliances are formed immediately before the elections merely as a tool for contesting the elections. The actual ramifications for power sharing arrangements are neglected. Thus in nearly all the power sharing arrangements, immediately as the government assumes office, the wrangling for state boards or ministerial position by members of the coalition become heated

discussions and are often aired in public spaces. In such cases, then, these alliances or arrangements are doomed to fail.

Yet, while many of these discussions of ‘who gets what, where and how’ prevail, at the same time, behind the scenes, it is obvious that such societies are merely puppets and that the ‘puppet masters’ the global players really manipulate the strings. For example, in the case of Guyana in the 1950s, the British as well as the United States ensured that the Cheddi Jagan was deposed from office because of his communist ideologies. It is alleged too that in many countries, campaign financing is under the control of the ‘big’ businesses who are major stakeholders in the economy. The long and short then in examining these fractured societies, what is necessary, and perhaps should be addressed in another forum, is that apart from the population, there are numerous actors who have a stake in ensuring that fractured societies remain fractured.

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