Labor Movements and Party System Development: Why does the Caribbean have stable two-party systems, but the Pacific does not?

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ABSTRACT: Party system development is often said to be essential for democratization. But if this is a necessary precondition, why do two of the most successful developing regions in terms of democratization, the Caribbean and the Pacific, which are composed similarly of small (island) developing states, display such extreme divergence in their experiences with party democracy? The former has the most stable and pure two-party systems in the world, while in the latter political parties are either weakly institutionalized or absent. Since both have attitudinally homogenous societies and similar institutions, conventional explanations that highlight the importance of social cleavages and electoral systems cannot explain this difference. Employing the framework of a most similar systems design incorporating twenty-three countries, we challenge dominant assumptions about the causes of party system development (PSD) and subsequent institutionalization (PSI) by focusing on their distinctive post-colonial political-economic settlements. Specifically, we process trace the role of labor movements and their manifestation as political parties and argue that this provides the strongest explanation for why the Caribbean has stable party systems, but the Pacific does not. By emphasizing the importance of pre-existing social organizations for the development of parties, our analysis foregrounds the otherwise largely neglected literature on early European party organization and the role of political economy in PSD.

Keywords: party system development; trade unions; small states; Caribbean; Pacific; historical institutionalism

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Introduction

The Caribbean and Pacific regions share many similarities—comprised mostly of small island developing states (SIDS) with an analogous colonial legacy, Westminster-style institutions and a notably strong record of democracy—but they represent extreme cases when it comes to the development of party systems.[1] Anglophone Caribbean countries have the most stable and "purest" two-party systems in the world (cf.

[1] Not all Caribbean territories are, strictly speaking, islands. But even those on the mainland—i.e. Belize, Guyana and Suriname—are generally considered SIDS within the small state literature, and enjoy membership of bodies such as the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) as their development predicament is analogous.

Lijphart 1999, 27-30), with the same two parties contesting and winning elections over and over again. Despite their relative youth, these systems are not plagued by the widespread volatility and instability that have been common in other new democracies, especially in neighboring Latin America (see Roberts & Wibbels 1999). Indeed, Caribbean two-party systems are generally *even more* stable than those of "advanced" democracies like Australia, Canada or the United Kingdom, where third parties have increasingly been able to gain significant parliamentary representation. Alongside the United States, the Caribbean island states therefore appear to offer the strongest confirmation of Duverger's Law (1954), which predicts that plurality-rule elections will result in two-party systems and single-party governments (Payne, 1993; Sutton, 1999; Barrow-Giles & Joseph, 2006).

A diametrically opposite pattern can be observed in the Pacific. Their shared British or "Commonwealth" colonial legacy means that most Pacific Island nations adopted similar institutions to the Caribbean.[2] In this sense, the Pacific is considerably more similar to the Caribbean than any other part of the world. However, in this world region, party systems tend to be either fragmented or completely absent (Anckar & Anckar, 2000; Rich, Hambly, & Morgan, 2006). Consequently, Pacific Island states not only challenge Duverger's Law, but also the widely shared assumption—most famously formulated by Schattschneider—that "modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of political parties" (1942, p. 1; see also Veenendaal, 2015). Pacific Island states are consistently ranked as among the most democratic countries in the world (Freedom House 2019), as a result of which the region is regarded as an "Ocean of Democracy" (Reilly 2002), even though some states have experienced considerable political instability.

[2] The "Commonwealth" colonizers include Australia and New Zealand, which also share a Westminster heritage by virtue of being former British colonies themselves. The remaining independent Pacific Islands have an American colonial history—which also implies, for the most part, the bequest of majoritarian political systems—so that the region as a whole can reasonably be described as "Anglo-American" in this regard (see Diamond and Tsalik, 1999; Anckar and Anckar 2000).

The two dominant explanations for party system development (PSD) or institutionalization (PSI) in new democracies (Mainwaring and Scully 1995) foreground the impact of electoral formulas (Duverger 1954) and social cleavages (Lipset and Rokkan 1967).[3] Yet neither of these factors can explain the extreme variation of PSD between the Caribbean and the Pacific. Duverger's Law potentially does so in the former, but enjoys little empirical support in the latter (Rich et al., 2006). Theories based on social cleavages struggle in both regions as the smallness of these states typically results in attitudinally homogenous societies, in which politics primarily focuses on personalities and face-to-face interactions rather than ideologies, political programs, or policies (Corbett & Veenendaal, 2018; Sutton, 2008). Some studies highlight the impact of the length of democratic rule (or ''democratic maturity") as a key explanatory factor for PSI (Diamond, Lipset, & Linz, 1987), and this is often linked more broadly to debates about how development sustains democracy (Lipset, 1959; see also Przeworski, 2014; Bishop, 2016, 2018). Yet Caribbean and Pacific democracies are among the youngest in the world, attaining independence only in the 1960s, 1970s, or 1980s, and they also generally do not enjoy high levels of development. Table One provides an overview of both the similarities and differences between Caribbean and Pacific SIDS.

-Table One about here --

In light of the weakness of existing explanations, this article foregrounds a new explanation to account for this puzzling, and diametrically opposite outcome. By comparing the political-economic settlement of both regions, we conduct a historical institutionalist analysis, employing a process tracing approach (Collier, 2011; Bennett & Checkel, 2015). Building on the framework of the most similar systems design (MSSD; cf. Mill 1843; Lijphart 1971), we aim to isolate the key independent variable that can explain the difference

[3] While this article primarily highlights the historical origins and development of Caribbean and Pacific party systems, much of the literature in this field focuses on the concept of party system institutionalization (PSI; Mainwaring & Scully, 1995). The latter concept refers less to the historical origins and more to the consolidation and stabilization of inter-party competition. Since we are interested in explaining both the origins and, to a certain degree, the subsequent stabilization of party competition, we use both concepts at different times in this article.

between these otherwise largely similar small states and regions. We find that the presence of strong organizational and administrative structures, created by powerful labor movements, is key to explaining why stable two-party systems have developed in the Caribbean but not the Pacific.

The centrality of labor movements is underscored by the fact that, despite having entrenched two-party systems, *both* major parties in Caribbean states tend to have been formed out of trade unions or workers' movements that emerged alongside the postcolonial political-economic settlement. That is, because two-party politics in the Caribbean was primarily a competition between one branch of the labor movement and another, there is very little in the way of a distinct social cleavage or ideological competition between these parties. As a result, we cannot subsume trade unions into a social cleavage explanation of party formation as per the literature on Western Europe. What is more, even where the industries from which these unions emerged have declined or collapsed entirely, long-calcified party structures have remained, with all pursuing essentially the same ideological objectives, grounded in an enduring Fabian-style social contract. The Pacific, by contrast, is more heterogeneous in terms of its colonial legacy, electoral systems and party formation, but the pattern here does not conform to the prevailing theoretical explanations either. Those Pacific states that are institutionally most similar to the Caribbean—i.e. with a British colonial heritage and first-past-the-post (FPTP) elections—do *not* have two party-systems. Elsewhere, variation in colonial power or electoral system does not affect the party system. The only Pacific country that is even remotely analogous to the Caribbean is Fiji, which is also the only one to have a strong trade union movement.

To flesh out these arguments, this article makes the following moves. We start with an overview of the existing literature on party organization, PSD and PSI. Subsequently, we pay attention to some conceptual and methodological issues, and explain our case selection and comparative method based on the logic of the MSSD. In the empirical sections, we employ a process tracing strategy to examine political development and party formation in the Caribbean, paying attention to three critical junctures: the colonial era, the post-independence period of political emancipation, and the contemporary period in which the longer-term

legacies of decolonization processes are evident. This is followed by a similarly-structured analysis of institutional development in the Pacific, which explains the absence or weakness of parties in this region on the basis of the same kinds of historical and societal developments. We conclude by highlighting the implications of our findings for the broader literature on PSD: we stress, in particular, the enduring relevance of studies that foreground the importance of party organization, and the crucial role that deeply rooted logics of political economy play in long-term processes of party system development and institutionalization.

The Development of Parties and Party Systems: Existing Debates

The academic literature on the origins of political parties and party systems primarily focuses on Western Europe, where parties initially emerged in parliament as coalitions between independent MPs (LaPalombara & Weiner, 1966). In subsequent phases, after the extension of suffrage, they developed into mass organizations with extensive societal links that successfully mobilized their supporters by acting as "catch-all" institutions that attracted a larger share of the electorate (Duverger, 1954; Kirchheimer, 1966). Explanations of the development and consolidation of parties and party systems commonly emphasize the composition and salience of social cleavages (Bartolini & Mair, 1990; Lipset & Rokkan, 1967) or the design of electoral systems (Duverger, 1954). According to the former explanation, parties and the competition between them emerge as a consequence of persistent social divisions and conflicts, which in turn create sociological patterns such as class awareness. By representing the interests of voters on one side of the division, parties create powerful and enduring bonds with voters (a phenomenon known as voter alignment) and become societally entrenched, solidifying a pattern of inter-party competition (Sartori, 1968; Mainwaring & Scully, 1995). Once established, the resilience of social cleavages thus contributes to the

development of stable party systems in a process commonly known as party system institutionalization (or PSI; Mainwaring & Scully, 1995; Dalton & Weldon, 2007; Casal Bértoa, 2014).[4]

West European party systems remained intact even as the original cleavages on which they were formed have gradually faded, as captured in Lipset and Rokkan's "freezing hypothesis" (1967, pp.134-135). The emergence of new "post-material" cleavages in the 1960s and 1970s resulted in some electoral success for new parties, but only in the last two decades has the rise of new social divisions (or a new values-based cleavage, cf. Kriesi 2010) produced major party system reforms. Although some party systems remain relatively stable, virtually all Western European countries witness increasing electoral volatility, generally dwindling membership and declining party identification, generating worries about unraveling party systems and rising political instability (see, inter alia: Katz & Mair, 1995; Dalton & Wattenberg, 2000; Farrell & Webb, 2000; Mair & Van Biezen, 2001; Van Biezen, 2004).

Based on the Western European example, PSI—or the presence of a stable party system—is often regarded as a key premise of democratic consolidation in new democracies. However, the literature on African, Asian, East-European, and Latin-American democracies regularly highlights the limitations of the classic literature and Western European models for this set of cases (Mainwaring & Torcal, 2006; Randall & Svåsand, 2002; Grugel & Bishop, 2013). Some new democracies have developed stable party systems with

[4] Conceptually, a distinction can be made between party institutionalization (Randall & Svåsand, 2002) and party *system* institutionalization or PSI (Mainwaring & Scully, 1995). Since this paper focuses on PSI, and party institutionalization can be regarded as a prerequisite of PSI, this section simultaneously discusses both concepts. In Mainwaring and Scully's (1995) influential formulation, there are four dimensions that denote high levels of PSI: regular electoral competition and system stability; strong attachment to parties with deep roots in society, which in turn limits electoral volatility; legitimacy accorded to political actors; and developed party organisations which exist independently from their leaders. Although these dimensions do not necessarily imply cleavages as the key variable, all four—and especially the second, which arguably underpins the other three—can only really be satisfied when parties reflect distinct, substantive, material-cultural interests in society, and these generally reflect social cleavages of some kind. As such, we characterize the broad literature as a whole as "cleavage-based" and deploy this as a shorthand, even though we recognize specific formulations of it may not have explicitly foregrounded cleavages in their explanation. Moreover, this adds weight to the research gap we have identified since the Caribbean, despite having strong parties with deep roots, has no substantive electoral cleavages.

parties representing organized labor emerging to contest existing oligarchic elite interests (Collier & Collier, 2002). Yet virtually all of them are affected by high electoral volatility, which tends to be explained by the weak societal links of parties and the superficial nature of cleavages (Bielasiak, 2002; Coppedge, 1998; Mainwaring & Zoco, 2007; Mainwaring, 1998), as well as the often-devastating consequences of neoliberal reform (see Roberts, 2007, 2014). In explaining differences between various new democracies, scholars have, for example, pointed to the moment at which democracy was inaugurated (Mainwaring & Zoco, 2007) or diverging economic and institutional performance (Tavits, 2005). Yet in virtually all new democracies, party systems developed rapidly without emerging organically out of preexisting social divisions, with seemingly profound consequences for their stability. This pattern is mirrored in the Pacific where the parties created to contest early post-independence elections are now predominantly defunct. Parties in the Caribbean, by contrast, have tended to be remarkably stable.

The second conventional explanation for PSD is grounded in electoral system design. While the initial selection of electoral systems can be linked to the composition of cleavages and the relative strength of parties (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967; Colomer, 2005), once established, they may either facilitate or limit the possibilities for new parties to enter, thereby determining the degree of system "openness" or "closure" (Casal Bértoa & Enyedi, 2016). The link between electoral rules and party systems is most famously expressed in Duverger's Law (1954), which stipulates that majoritarian electoral systems produce two-party systems, while proportional electoral formulae tend to generate multi-party systems (cf. Riker 1982; Taagepera & Grofman, 1985; Blais & Carty, 1991; Taagepera & Shugart, 1993; Clark & Golder, 2006). Although some continue to regard it as one of the very few "laws" in political science, over the years it has attracted considerable scrutiny and criticism (see, inter alia: Da Silva, 2006; Dunleavy et al., 2008; Curtice, 2010; Blais, 2016; Li and Shugart, 2016), not least because some two-party systems in countries with majoritarian electoral systems increasingly seem to be transforming into multi-party ones (e.g., Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom). Some scholars, such as Shugart and Taagepera (2017: pp.117-118) have argued that it is "too vague" to enjoy law-like status because FPTP does not always lead to two-party

systems and not all two-party systems emerged from FPTP, although they also suggest that it nonetheless remains "a useful tendency" because it still helps us consider the importance of electoral effects on PSD.

While it no longer enjoys strong empirical support in many places, Anglophone Caribbean countries remain some of the "purest" examples in the world of majoritarian electoral systems appearing to produce institutionalized two-party systems. But if such systems do not always result from FPTP, and Duverger's Law cannot fully explain fragmentation where it *is* identified, should we unquestioningly trust that it still explains an *absence of* fragmentation and high level of institutionalization? Indeed, if we were to accept it as the key reason for continuing two-party politics in the Caribbean—which, at first glance, it intuitively seems to be—then we should expect analogous systems in the Pacific. However, as this is not the case, we are compelled to consider alternatives because the two dominant explanations for PSD and PSI posit that the combination of cleavages and electoral systems can explain variations across countries and eras, but neither can truly explain the extreme variation between the Caribbean and the Pacific. Indeed, if Duverger's Law is inherently falsified by endemic fragmentation in the Pacific, and we also cast doubt on it as an explanation for the conversely well-institutionalized party systems in the Caribbean, then it is reasonable to posit that there may be another factor that simultaneously explains *both* the lack of PSD—and therefore PSI—in the former and their extremely high levels in the latter.

To explain this remarkable divergence, we turn to the more historical literature on the emergence of the first party organizations in Europe. This scholarship highlights the coordination challenges that early parties overcame and argues that the bureaucratization of party machines is central to their longevity. In his landmark volume on party organizations, Angelo Panebianco (1988) highlights that the first cadre parties which formed in Western European parliaments during the 19th Century mostly emerged as a result of center-controlled "penetration" or spontaneous germination by means of which local parties were integrated into a national party organization (a process labeled "diffusion"). While most conservative and liberal parties were centrally created, confessional and socialist parties commonly emerged as a result of such diffusion processes (Panebianco, 1988, pp. 50-51).

The extension of the suffrage in the early or mid-20th Century created the first European mass parties. In contrast to loosely structured cadre parties, these required permanent and sophisticated organizational structures. While some pre-existing cadre parties managed to make a successful transition into mass parties, other mass parties were created by external actors or "entrepreneurs" (Sartori, 1995, p.17). They often emerged out of extant societal groups and organizations, and relied heavily on the structures of those antecedent associations for internal organization. Confessional parties, for instance, had strong ties to the church and religious organizations, and could rely on their expansive networks. For left-wing parties, trade unions often constituted key political and societal allies, but the sequence in which they originated differed from country to country (Allern & Bale, 2017, pp.1-2; Duverger, 1954; Poguntke, 2015). Where unions predated the formation of parties, their organizational resources and networks provided a fundamental infrastructure that socialist and communist parties could use to mobilize voters. In the case of the British Labour Party, for instance, members of pre-existing trade unions automatically became party members, and in the initial decades after its formation it retained a deeply symbiotic relationship with the unions (Taylor, 2000). Regardless of the order in which party development occurred, the critical issues are that, firstly, they emerged at a specific historical juncture—i.e. the expansion of industrial capitalism—and, secondly, as Chris Howell (2001: p.8) has noted, "*from the start* [they] enjoyed close organizational, personal, and ideological ties to organized labour" and were, in essence, "parties of the industrial working class" (emphasis added).

In addition to their electoral functions and those in office, the organizational role of political parties continues to be highlighted in the literature (Key, 1958; LaPalombara & Weiner, 1966; Sartori, 1995). As professional associations, to a varying extent parties allow their members to participate and decide on issues like party manifestoes, policy proposals, and the selection of candidates for office. The strength of party organizations is directly linked to their longevity and consolidation, as organizational structures allow them to accumulate resources, to recruit and train candidates for office, and to run election campaigns

(Mainwaring, 1998; Randall & Svåsand, 2002). The importance of party organization becomes evident when looking at the experience of many new democracies, where weak societal links and superficial organizational structures are reflected in high levels of electoral volatility and a poorly institutionalized party system (cf. Bielasiak, 2002; Coppedge, 1998; Mainwaring & Zoco, 2007). This is particularly so in the case of trade unions, which were often suppressed under authoritarianism, have remained weak since the transition to democracy, and even where they were closely associated with parties the relationship has decayed, either "decisively" so in the case of much of Eastern Europe, or more slowly in Southern Europe and Latin America (see Van Biezen, 2005).

As new democracies, we should therefore expect to observe unstable patterns of party competition in Caribbean and Pacific countries. However, both regions actually diverge from this trend dramatically, and in completely opposite directions. By reflecting on the emergence of European parties, we argue that, to understand the extent of PSD in the two regions we have to consider the distinctive conditions under which parties themselves developed. In the Anglophone Caribbean, there are no confessional parties: despite widespread religiosity and deep ecclesiastical penetration into society, there is also a marked separation of church and state. There were never any cadre parties, either: the overweening authoritarian dominance of the plantocracy during colonialism and the peculiar bifurcated class structure that emerged in its dying days rendered them unnecessary. In fact, most Caribbean parties or their antecedents emerged during the half-century either side of decolonization, between the labor riots of the 1920s and 1930s and the era of independence in the 1960s and 1970s. They did so in a similar way to the Labour Party in the UK—to which they often had links, as they did the Socialist International (Reddock 1994: pp.124)—via the trade unions as representatives of working people. This is still the case: most Caribbean parties are tied, in one way or another, to a section of the labour movement, as broadly conceived.

So, the primary difference with other new democracies is that unions remain extremely important politically, and the primary difference with Western Europe is that effectively *all*—rather than just some—

of the "mass" parties have their roots in Fabian-style social democracy of some kind, and this is, we argue, the key to understanding the framework of political competition in which high levels of PSI prevail in the Caribbean and, by implication, its near absence in the Pacific. We say *near* absence because some Pacific states have, or have had, parties. But, with the partial exception of Fiji, which was a plantation economy with a labor movement, they tend to be weakly institutionalized and have little impact on election campaigns. Instead, when they do exist, they largely function as a label for ambitious politicians with prime ministerial aspirations seeking to assemble a post-election coaltion capable of capturing the executive. They therefore rise and fall on the strength of their leaders, have little organizational apparatus—effectively failing Mainwaring and Scully's (1995) dimensions of PSI—and advance generic and broadly similar policies (most are in favour of 'development') rather than represent distinct ideological cleaveages (Rich et al., 2006).

Case Selection and Research Design

In mainstream comparative politics, Caribbean and Pacific countries are generally excluded (Veenendaal & Corbett, 2015). The omission of these two world regions not only biases supposedly ''global" analyses of democratic transition and consolidation, but also more specific studies of PSD and PSI in new democracies (Mainwaring, 1998; Kuenzi & Lambright, 2001; Mainwaring & Torcal, 2006; Mainwaring & Zoco, 2007; Randall & Svåsand, 2002). This is both regrettable and indefensible: there is a ''gigantist" bias in much existing work, yet the Caribbean and Pacific—which comprise, along with other SIDS, approximately a quarter of the world's countries and are arguably more common than the fewer, larger countries that dominate research agendas—have exceptional trajectories of democratic development and therefore great analytical value (cf. Bishop, 2012; Veenendaal & Corbett, 2015; Sharman, 2017). Experts have regularly lamented the lack of comparative analysis on them, despite them being described similarly as ''natural laboratories" (Reilly, 2002: pp. 355–356) or ''the richest laboratories for social scientists" (Payne & Sutton, 2001: p.1). There exist, in our view, substantial intellectual payoffs for comparing hitherto

understudied cases (cf. Sharman, 2017). This first attempt to compare the development of party systems in these two places is thus triply significant: it brings previously neglected cases into the mainstream study of political parties; it compares between understudied regions; and, on that basis, seeks answers to questions of general theoretical relevance.

The many similarities between the regions, but variation in terms of the nature of party competition, allow us to isolate the causal factors that explain divergent outcomes by means of a most similar systems design (Mill, 1843; Lijphart, 1971; Eckstein, 1975). In service of this MSSD, as scope conditions we only examine countries in both regions with populations of less than 1.5 million who are UN members (see Table 1). This means we exclude some of the larger states (Jamaica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Papua New Guinea) as well as numerous non-independent territories. Importantly, our cases rank similarly on variables that are commonly employed to explain PSD, meaning that these factors cannot explain variation on that dependent variable. All are classified as electoral democracies in the Freedom House dataset, and although they are among the youngest democracies in the world, they have been variously hailed for the success and resilience of democracy (cf. Payne, 1993; Diamond and Tsalik, 1999). Reflecting their primarily Anglo-American colonial legacy, almost all employ majoritarian electoral systems such as FPTP, alternative vote, or the two-round runoff. Finally, all are small societies with homogenous populations, meaning that profound ideological cleavages are lacking and politics is primarily person-oriented in nature (Corbett & Veenendaal, 2018; Veenendaal, 2013). As a result, while MSSD is not normally used to compare entire regions, in our view the remarkable similarities between Caribbean and Pacific countries justify such a comparison.

Where cleavages do exist, they tend to either be ethnically based, as in Belize, Trinidad, Guyana, Fiji and Suriname, or predicated on island geography, as in some archipelagic Pacific states or the handful of multi-island Caribbean countries with seccession movements (Corbett, forthcoming). Like all real-world MSSDs, the two regions are not seamlessly similar. Our Caribbean sample, for instance, also includes Suriname,

which is a former Dutch colony on the South American mainland that holds proportional elections and has a (relatively stable) multi-party system. Its neighboring country, Guyana, also employs proportional elections, but still has a two-party system that is largely based on the dominant ethnic cleavage between the Afroand Indo-Guyanese population segments (see Hoefte, Bishop, & Clegg, 2017). However, none of the differences outlined in Table One can be explained by the two dominant theories outlined above. The Pacific has a more varied colonial legacy than the Caribbean, for sure, but in nearly all cases the most recent colonizer was Britain or, as noted above, a Commonwealth country. The three exceptions—Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI)—were formerly part of the US Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, with the latter adopting a Westminster-inspired system (Underwood 2006), and yet this institutional difference has not strengthened PSD. As a result, the overwhelmingly similar British or "Anglo-American" connection ensures a family resemblance that enables our comparison. Moreover, these two regions are themselves "more similar" than any other possible comparators, not least since they are the only two distinct regions of the world that consist almost entirely of SIDS. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine a more comparable laboratory of cases out there in the "real" social world.

To explain divergent patterns of party development, we trace the formation and development of political parties across both regions using an historical institutionalist approach (cf. Hall & Taylor 1996; Thelen 1999). This entails that our analysis focuses on so-called "critical junctures" that affected party system development, highlighting how historical factors and processes explain contemporary institutions through a process of path dependency (Steinmo et al., 1992; Hall and Taylor, 1996; Pierson and Skocpol, 2002; Lowndes and Roberts, 2013). In doing so, we employ the qualitative method of process tracing (Collier, 2011; Bennett & Checkel, 2015), meaning that we aim to detect the causal processes that link specific historical events and circumstances to the (diverging) development of party competition. We emphasize the roots of party systems in the colonial project and the resistance to it, outline how this has shaped political developments immediately before and during the post-independence period, and explain subsequent

variations, both between countries and regions. This analysis reveals that the presence of powerful trade unions provides the strongest explanation for the emergence and stability of parties in the Caribbean, while the weakness or lack of unions explains the absence or instability of parties in the Pacific. By pointing to the significance of pre-existing social organizations, our analysis reinforces historical studies of the development of party organizations in Western Europe.

The Caribbean: dominant two-party systems

It is impossible to overstate the extent to which the Caribbean has been formed by its post-1492 history of settlement, colonization and decolonization. There are few elements of contemporary society—aside from the existence of a handful of First Peoples and traces of pre-colonial cultural expression from Africa and Asia—that are not a product of these encounters. In no other region of the world was pre-existing society effectively wiped out and an entirely new one transposed. The Caribbean was, as Gordon Lewis (2004: pp. 3-4) suggests, quite literally created *"de novo"* as "a tabula rasa on which the European colonisers … put their imprint as they wished". Every society in the region, he argues, has ''been shaped throughout by the same architectonic forces of conquest, colonisation, slavery, sugar monoculture, colonialism and racial and ethnic admixture". This has, in turn, influenced subsequent patterns of political and economic development to a staggering degree (Bishop, 2013). The elimination of indigenous peoples, the establishment of slavery and the plantation as the mode of production—in which sugar dominated entire islands to the effective exclusion of all other activity and decisively shaped their peculiar social structures—caused the region to be subsumed within the dynamic of European capitalism well before any other part of the world (Mintz, 1974).

The societies of the Caribbean thus continue to exhibit certain creolized ways of functioning that are reflective of their shared colonial inheritance. These include: the generalized dominance of merchant activity over production (Marshall, 2002); a narrow range of export sectors, largely in commodities that are

subject to preference erosion and declining terms of trade (Heron, 2013) or unstable service industries dependent on foreign capital, such as tourism and offshore finance; and pronounced social stratification that reflects colonial hierarchies of race and power. In the 1970s, scholars at the University of the West Indies described this as a "plantation" society, in which the legacies of an entire economy geared towards colonial extraction reproduced those pathologies (Best & Levitt, 2009; for a review, see Bishop & Thompson, forthcoming). Although some other places—notably Mauritius in the Indian Ocean, and, as we discuss further below, Fiji in the Pacific—also experienced a similar plantation history, this was not as totalizing as in the Caribbean.

Democracy in the Post-Independence Caribbean

We might reasonably expect, therefore, inherently unstable politics in Caribbean countries, but quite the opposite is true. In fact, there are few examples of derogations from constitutional, liberal-democratic rule since independence, such as the 1979 revolution in Grenada (see Payne, Sutton & Thorndike, 1985), Suriname's military dictatorship in the 1980s, or the short-lived 1990 coup in Trinidad. Guyana has suffered the most serious instability—especially during the authoritarian Burnham regime of the 1970s and early 1980s—but this reflects a uniquely challenging ethnic settlement in which the Indo-Guyanese majority, who are descendents of indentured laborers brought in to work the sugar plantations after slavery, outweighs the smaller Afro-Guyanese group (Hintzen & Premdas, 1983). However, even in this case, there has been a relative degree of recent political tranquility: constitutional innovation facilitated a peaceful transfer of power from the Indo-Guyanese People's Progressive Party (PPP) which had dominated the entire post-Burnham era to a rainbow coalition under the APNU-Alliance for Change banner in 2015 (see Quinn, 2017) though a constitutional crisis during 2019 has potentially undermined this settlement.

It is perhaps remarkable that Trinidad has not experienced similar turmoil: after slavery, indentureship led, as in Guyana, Fiji, Mauritius and Suriname to substantial ethnic diversity, but without extra-constitutional

political contestation. This is due to: balance in the size of the two major ethnic groups and some changes of government between the dominant ‘‘Afro” party, the People’s National Movement (PNM) and the main Indo-Hindu party, the United National Congress (UNC), albeit with the latter often in coalitions; the generation of economic rent from a burgeoning energy sector that could be distributed, in somewhat clientelist fashion, to key supporters of the governing party (see Auty, 2017); and, alongside the consequent development of an increasingly industrialized, urbanized society, a high degree of ethnic intermarriage, such that around a fifth of the—often-middle class—population consciously self-identifies as ‘‘mixed” (i.e. explicitly neither ‘‘Afro” nor ‘‘Indo”) and is generally not aligned with either party (Bishop, 2011). Moreover, notwithstanding the enduring kaleidoscopic complexity of race, class and gender politics (see Thompson, 2019b), there is widespread buy-in to ‘‘Trinbagonian” national and cultural identity. Even the coup of 1990 was not an ethnic dispute: it was rather perpetrated by a disaffected faction of the Muslim minority—and, within that, the urban Afro-Muslim minority, whereas most Muslims are actually Indo-Trinidadian— in response to a protracted economic crisis. As such, some have even questioned whether ethnic rivalry can explain anything meaningful about politics in the country (Meighoo, 2008).

Instances of counter-constitutional political contestation are indeed exceptional in the Caribbean. Consequently, these stable forms of democratic governance are themselves exceptional in relation to the expectations of the wider literature on political development, particularly given the region’s generally poor levels of economic performance (Bishop, 2011, 2013). So, what explains this relative success, and why has two-party rule, with regular changes of government, broadly prevailed? There is good reason to doubt the expectations of conventional literature on PSD. In most countries, the only social cleavage is between the tiny white elite caste that descends from the plantocracy and the wider (mixed, but predominantly Afro-Caribbean in most countries) population. Yet this is not reproduced politically, because there has been an implicit social bargain since independence: the former retain control over their rentier economic activity which is generally insulated from political challenge (see Marshall, 2002); the latter control the political and governing sphere on behalf of the population at large. As such, every political party serves only this

latter constituency, which is broadly homogenous in terms of class interests and ideological attitudes. This pattern even holds—with the partial and unique exception of Guyana—where there is also an ethnic cleavage.

Moreover, while appearing to support Duverger's Law, the answer cannot be found in the causal power of electoral systems either, since our MSSD analysis would imply the same should be true in the Pacific. The survival of Guyana's two-party system under proportional electoral rules provides further evidence that electoral formulas cannot explain—and certainly not fully or by themselves—PSD in the Caribbean. Our argument is that it is, instead, the distinctive post-colonial settlement itself, particularly in terms of the political economy of the islands, that influenced the institutions that subsequently emerged. These collectively structured the context in which distinct patterns of incentives came to shape the contours within which political action—and therefore PSD—could occur.

Cleavageless Competition: Over Resources, not Ideas or Interests

A well-rehearsed critique is that Caribbean politics is bereft of meaningful competition over ideological differences and therefore grand strategies for the improvement of a given country, and it is consequently reduced to technocracy and petty personalization. This is, of course, something frequently levelled at many polities, large and small, in the neoliberal era (see, inter alia Hay, 2007; Stoker, 2006; Mair, 2013). But the Caribbean is distinctive in at least three ways. First, because of small size, the state itself lacks the capacity to set out a strategic direction and execute it. Development effectively becomes the management of external dependence by a hopefully-competent Prime Ministerial coterie (Payne, 2006). There is, to put it mildly, little room for ideological differentiation when statecraft is inherently and perpetually reactive. Second, the fundamental rationale of domestic politics is resource distribution to favored groups. In such a small context, where the state is employer of last resort and government contracts are the primary facilitator of private economic activity, some clientelism is an almost-inevitable feature of the system (Stone, 1986;

Bishop, 2013; Veenendaal & Corbett, forthcoming). Third, and crucially, nonexistent ideological differentiation does not reflect an *absence* of contestation, but rather the *presence* of a consensus. Most Caribbean countries are, at root and in political terms, Fabian social democracies, in which there are enduring tripartite structures, strong unions, and a broadly uncontested, key economic role for the state. Once we recognize this, it is clear that cleavage-based explanations of PSD have little purchase since *all* parties are fundamentally "of the left" and therefore the defenders of this settlement, with politics taking place entirely within its contours.

This in turn reflects the unique history of the region. Workers in the major sectors—primarily sugar, but also heavy industry in Trinidad, and, from the 1950s, bananas in the Eastern Caribbean—became unionized along the lines of the British labor movement. As Gordon Lewis (1968: p.390) notes, "the West Indian trade union movement" emerged alongside the labor struggles of the 1930s, and, over the next forty years, "passed from the status of a social pariah to that of a 'sacred cow'". In many places, this process had deep roots: in Trinidad, for example, women and men came together to establish a "Free Labourers Society" soon after the end of slavery in 1844 (Reddock, 1994: p.121). Although their power has diluted as some sectors declined while new service industries emerged, unions have remained markedly influential. This is partly due to the pervasiveness of the state and the concomitant importance of the public-sector unions.

Furthermore, there has also never been any ideological resistance to organized labor from a Caribbean equivalent of Reagan or Thatcher, since few parties of "the right" ever emerged in the region. Their natural constituency—the plantocracy—is tiny, it had no need for parties to represent its interests once its economic hegemony was assured, and, worried about provoking greater radicalism in a period of ideological ferment, it deliberately shunned overt political activity as the end of colonialism neared. Post-independence leaders thus generally fitted the social democratic mould, and, subsequently, neoliberalism was never accepted willingly in the region but rather imposed by hostile external forces (Payne and Sutton, 2001; 2007). Caribbean economies are underdeveloped, and their welfare states provide meagre support. But it is striking

just how much of those economies—despite structural adjustment—remains in overt or quasi-public control, and consequently how formidable syndical power still is today, with governments perpetually fearful of mass mobilization.

Consequently, the parties that developed in the pre-independence period and became institutionalized afterwards did so in tandem with these distinct political economies. Sometimes, the party that led the country to independence was tied most closely to the primary sector: in many of the small Eastern Caribbean islands, the fortunes of those most associated with the maintenance of the banana sector—such as the United Workers Party (UWP) in St Lucia (see Joseph, 2011)—waxed and waned as it rose and declined. So, where some parties represented rural communities linked to those major export-agricultural sectors, and even today link enduring claims for substantive political freedom to wider questions of sovereignty (see Thompson, 2019a), others emerged in the urban settings—often self-described "labor" parties that primarily represented public sector workers—as states developed and modernized. But to describe these as cleavage-based would be a misrepresentation: party formation did not exemplify the same kind of elite vs labor, right vs left divide that exists in Europe; both groups of parties represented all kinds of workers via union linkages; they accepted, supported and defended the tripartite consensus; and, although at times nominally linked to rural or urban constituencies, drew wide support from across a generally homogenous society.

Barbados represents an apposite example: it has long been famed for its tripartism while also having the most marked distinction between the mass black population and the anachronistic white elite caste. After the plantocracy vacated the political arena during the late colonial period, the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) drove unprecedented social reform alongside the Worker's Union in the two decades before independence in 1966. Lewis (1968: pp.241-2) describes this process as truly remarkable: some policies were so radical that Barbados "led the way in the British Empire". He argues that every category of worker, no matter how tricky to classify, was unionized, such that "all came under the general umbrella of the most remarkable of all West Indian trade unions", and mass organization and protest "finally served notice on the Bridgetown

mercantile oligarchs that the days of easy victimization were over". In 1955, the BLP actually split, with the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) emerging, and power has alternated between these two dominant "leftist" parties, with no party of "the right" even existing, ever since. This itself appears remarkable—and it is in a comparative sense—but it is typical within the contours of the Anglophone Caribbean's post-colonial settlement. Consequently, the destabilizing effects of major social dislocations, like the economic crises of the 1980s and post-2008 period, have been consistently assuaged by deeply institutionalized negotiation between business—both the now-defunct sugar estates of the past, and the tourism sector more recently, in which workers have generally remained highly unionized (see Drummond and Marsden, 1995)—the state and labor, regardless of which party is in power (Maingot, 2015, Ch.11; Hinds and Stephen, 2016).

The Institutionalization of Two-Party Rule

This general pattern is obviously complicated by the different development experiences of territories: the situation in the banana islands was analogous—to the extent that the sector's collapse in the late 1990s saw the "labor" parties come to govern in St Lucia, St Vincent and Dominica for a decade or more (see Payne, 2006)—but in the larger, more industrialized and diverse countries these processes unfolded in distinct ways. In Trinidad, the PNM "was the creation of a group of middle-class professionals, mainly but not exclusively black, who rallied around the dominant personality of Eric Williams … to establish a party that could take the Creole middle class into power" (Brereton 1981: p.233). It has dominated for much of the post-independence era, often on minority shares of the vote, partly because of fragmentation among opposition forces, but also because of its intimate association with the industrialization process initiated and overseen by Williams during the 1960s and 1970s. This was despite substantial antagonism with both the Oilfield Workers Trade Union (OWTU) and the (predominantly Indo-Trinidadian) sugar unions, something repeated at various junctures, such as the closing down of the sugar sector in the 2000s (see Richardson & Richardson-Ngwenya, 2013) and the more recent shutdown of the national oil refinery in

2018. Arguably, the contemporary PNM remains an elitist vehicle—in the sense of being dominated by political insiders, not in terms of representing plantocratic interests—dispensing patronage to the urban, predominantly Afro-Trinidadian working classes and its supporters in the business community, rather than a deeply institutionalized working-class party (Vincent, 2016).

Nonetheless, the parties that shepherded Caribbean countries to independence were generally broad-based, as were their unions which, although nominally sectoral, frequently took members from across society, even including—in contrast to "proper" (i.e. more liberal, conformist) practice in much of Europe—the unwaged (Reddock 1994: p.253-255). Parties were well-schooled in the British constitutional tradition (see Lewis, 1968) and perpetuated a national identity to which the wider population could subscribe in the absence of a competing pre-colonial identity. Again, the only real exceptions to this rule were Guyana, Suriname and Trinidad. In the latter case, the PNM—which was consciously designed as an all-encompassing ''national movement" rather than, in the first instance, a labor party as elsewhere (see Brereton, 1981: pp. 234–235)—could have remained a genuinely rainbow party after independence in 1962. This was undermined when Williams gave an infamous speech four years earlier where he described the IndoTrinidadian population as ''a hostile and recalcitrant minority", something still regularly lamented today. Equally, though—and despite longstanding PNM dominance—Trinidad does still fit the general pattern of institutionalized two-party competition, although historically the second party has been a mixture of fragmented coalitions and, at times, third parties have won large vote shares with these generally only translating into seats if they are part of the oppositional coalition (Bishop, 2011). In the case of Suriname, which is the most ethnically heterogeneous of all Caribbean countries, a multi-party system emerged in which three major parties catered to the country's dominant ethnic groups (Creoles, Hindostanis, and Javanese). Analogous to the Anglophone Caribbean countries, and reflecting the absence of meaningful ideological competition, in the run-up to independence these parties together formed a grand coalition that incorporated all major groups and interests in society (Veenendaal, 2019).

While cleavages, therefore, cannot explain the extremely stable forms of party competition in the Caribbean, at first glance it appears that electoral rules—and more specifically Duverger's law—do have some explanatory power. In nearly every one of the Anglophone small states, a deeply rooted two-party system became embedded with regular changeovers of government, and in Suriname proportional elections seem to be at the root of the country's multi-party system. However, if we dig a little deeper, we can see that Duverger's law only holds superficial explanatory power, and that the deeper currents of Caribbean history—in particular, the colonial experience and postcolonial political-economic settlement—provide a much stronger explanation. Reflecting the length and intensity of colonial rule, the entire Westminster system, including FPTP elections but also two-party competition and executive-legislative fusion, has come to be regarded as autochthonous (Sutton 1999, pp.68-72).

In fact, the main contemporary criticism of Caribbean political systems is not that they suffer from fragmentation and instability, but that they are *too* rigid, embodying a lack of flexibility that provides for stable electoral practice without genuinely democratic governance. The litany of complaints is endless, such that the political model has even been described as a ''Westmonster" (see, inter alia Payne, 1993; Ghany, 1994; Ryan, 1999; Bishop, 2011; Quinn, 2015). They include especially a form of ''winner-takes-all" politics that regularly provides for dominant governments rather than oppositional politics. In St Vincent and the Grenadines, the Unity Labour Party (ULP) of Dr Ralph Gonsalves has won every election for two decades, despite the country being fairly evenly split between the two major parties in terms of popular vote share. In Grenada, the New National Party (NNP) of Keith Mitchell won all 15 seats in the 2013 and 2018 elections—each time with around 58 per cent of the popular vote—and is a rare example of an avowedly center-right party in the region (a legacy of the country's unique post-independence revolutionary experience, not the result of a meaningful social cleavage). Similarly, in 2018, Mia Motley's BLP won all thirty seats in Barbados, albeit with 74.6 per cent of the popular vote. All these cases, though, are still highly competitive two-party polities; it is just that small FPTP constituencies can produce highly skewed seat distributions. Even in the very few cases that have experimented with institutional innovation— such as the

adoption of a hybrid constitution and PR elections in Guyana—this culture of two-party competition and winner-takesall politics survives. In sum, therefore, Caribbean PSD and the extent of its institutionalization has much deeper historical origins than an explanation that exclusively focuses on electoral rules could plausibly offer.

The Pacific: single, multi or no party systems

Compared to the Caribbean, the Pacific was colonized by Europeans relatively late. When it did occur, colonial administration had little influence beyond administrative capitals, in part because of the archipelagic nature of many Pacific states, the distance from the colonial powers and the limited wealth apparently available in the islands (Firth, 1997). This is the key to explaining the distinct political-economic settlement and the absence of PSD in most Pacific states. The vast Austronesian migration from west to east across the Pacific Ocean began between 2000-1000 BC. Portuguese and Spanish explorers first navigated the ocean in the 1500s, while Britain's James Cook undertook the first of his three voyages in 1768. But, for much of the region, colonization did not begin in earnest until the 1800s by which time slavery had already been abolished by colonizing states. Consequently, the form of forced labor that was so central to the creation of planation societies in the Caribbean was not available to Pacific colonists. The main exceptions are Fiji where, as noted, the British recruited indentured labor from India to develop the sugar industry, and 'blackbirding' in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. The latter contributed to the formation of plantations but they did not leave a legacy of unionism as colonization was shorter and of limited penetration across each archipalego.

Europeans attempted various forms of agriculture in the early colonial period, including tobacco, rubber, coffee and cacao, but disease and a shortage of labor rendered most attempts unprofitable (Firth 2000). The only real success was copra, used to refine coconut oil, which relies on native trees and is less labor intensive than other forms of agriculture—the industry was highly profitable from the mid-1800s but disintegrated

from the 1950s (Crocombe 2008, p. 313). Some islands had vast phosphate deposits, including Nauru and Banaba, that generated substantial profits for foreign-owned companies (see Macdonald 1982). However, while colonial-era wages were low, and most profits left the islands, a union movement did not emerge in the Pacific in the same way it did in the Caribbean, in part because employers, supported by colonial governments, made every effort to suppress labor activism (Firth 2000). That is not to say trade unions do not exist—public sector unions in particular are still active in many countries (Moore et al 1990)—but rather that they have not tended to be affiliated with successful political parties. The main exception is Fiji which had public sector unions from the 1920s and sugar and mining industry unions from the 1940s (Hince 1971). In 1985 trade unions would initiate the formation of the Fiji Labor Party, whose electoral success was a key factor in the 1987 coup (Hagan 1987; Durutalo 2000). In which case, while Fiji is an exception in the Pacific, the post-colonial political-economic settlement is analogous to the Caribbean states of Trinidad and Guyana.

The second distinction between the two regions is that, while colonists in the Caribbean quickly destroyed the small indigenous population that did exist, in the Pacific the impulse was to leave alone or in some cases even protect traditional ways of life by discouraging white settlers and disallowing land claims (Firth 2000). This was not necessarily enlightened—many administrators believed that Pacific peoples would naturally die out in time (Firth 2000)—but it did mean that, when combined with the remoteness of the region, much of the Pacific remained relatively untouched by colonization, evidenced by the continuation of communal land tenure and subsistence agriculture. The cooperative movement, which was encouraged by colonial governments from the 1950s, could in theory have formed a similar organisational function to trade unions in Pacific states, but most of these ventures were unsuccessful (Crocombe 2008, p. 314).

The distinct political-economic settlement that this created continued into the post-independence period. In most cases, independence was encouraged rather than colonization resisted, in part because the islands were not profitable and so metropolitan governments were glad to be rid of them (Larmour 2005; Connell 2013). Pacific countries therefore tend to be even poorer than those in the Caribbean. Most land is still held communally. Economies vary, with the smallest relying on revenue from a combination of fishing rights, remittances, foreign aid, and other niches (i.e. sovereignty sales, see Van Fossen 2007) to support basic services (Bertram and Watters 1985). The public sector dwarfs the private sector as an employer in the small Pacific states. Tourism is important for Fiji, Vanuatu, Palau and to a lesser extent Samoa and Tonga, but, much like the Caribbean, this sector tends not to be unionised. The two largest countries—Fiji and Solomon Islands—have mining and forestry industries, with the latter also developing a palm oil sector. Tonga and Fiji have attempted manufacturing while Vanuatu and Nauru dabbled with financial services. These ventures have had limited success (for discussion see Connell 2013). They are also rarely unionized, largely because of the later time in which they emerged and the dominance of private financialized capital. In this sense, the type of industry—mass organized agricultural and/or industrial labor in the Caribbean—is central to the formation of union-based party formation. In its absence, the most common movement of labor in the Pacific is outward migration, usually to Australia, New Zealand, or the United States (Connell & Corbett, 2016).

The upshot of this political-economic settlement is that, unlike the Caribbean, there is considerable variation between the trajectories of political parties across the region, and the function they serve. But, crucially, none of these variations can be explained by theories that emphasize the causal power of electoral systems or social cleavages. We therefore highlight this variation to evidence our broader comparative claim about the importance labor movements for PSD. Trade unions have only been an active political force in Fiji, although the system is now fragmented. Elsewhere there is a generic "traditionalist-modernist" cleavage,

but, as we shall see, it has not led to anything like a party system, although it may eventually do so in Tonga. We can roughly divide the varying trajectories of Pacific party systems into three categories: stable one-party systems (Samoa); [5] fluid multi-party systems (Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu); and countries without formal political parties (Nauru, Kiribati, Tuvalu, FSM, Palau and the Marshall Islands).

One-Party Systems (Samoa)

Samoa is the one Pacific state with a stable party system. At independence, there were no political parties but after more than a decade of self-rule the Human Rights Protection Party (HRPP) emerged in the early 1980s and has held government, virtually uninterrupted, ever since (So'o 2008; Iati 2013; Corbett & Ng Shiu, 2014). The HRPP combines economic liberalization and modernization with traditionalist policies that uphold the position of traditional leaders (*matai*) and the church (Samoa had matai suffrage until 1990 and retains *matai* candidacy, Fraenkel and So'o 2005). The party has had a succession of long-serving leaders—Tofilau Eti and the current prime minister, Tuilaepa Malielegaoi—but since the late 1980s has never looked like being seriously challenged despite the rise (and fall) of several opposition groupings. For the most part, these groupings have been made up of a combination of disgruntled former HRPP ministers and urban elites.

What makes the HRPP story unique is that, despite its predominance, incumbent turnover has consistently been high (around 50 per cent at each election), which makes it similar to most other Pacific countries. The party stays in office because multiple MPs run under its banner—candidates pick the party rather than the other way around—and, once elected, they face a by-election if they switch sides (HRPP members also face a personal fine if they leave the party, see Iati 2017; cf Fraenkel 2012). There is a core group of MPs that

[5] It is too early to categorize the trajectory of party politics in Tonga, which gained a new and more democratic constitution in 2010. It currently has one political party—the Democratic Party of the Friendly Islands—but whether it survives the recent death of 'Akilisi Pohiva is an open question.

have headed the party and retained government for a long time, but most ministerial posts are regularly rotated. The result is the stability of a "one-party" state combined with the regular rotation of leadership at almost every level (aside from the prime ministership). In this sense, despite the absence of ideological cleavages and the presence of similar institutions, Samoan party politics is unique to both the Pacific and Caribbean (see Iati 2013).

Fluid, Multi-Party Systems (Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Fiji)

A more common Pacific trajectory has been for countries to have strong parties at independence, made up of the leaders who brought about self-government, that have then fractured in the post-impendence era. This has exposed both the absence of ideological cleavages and the seeming irrelevance of electoral systems to the form and function of PSD. The best example of this pattern is Vanuatu where the group of independence leaders—led by Father Walter Lini, an Anglican clergyman—formed the first political party, the Vanua'aku Pati, which spent much of the first decade in government (Van Trease 1995). Since then, however, parties have proliferated, rising on the strength of individual leaders rather than policy platforms or ideologies (Morgan 2006). The Vanua'aku Pati still exists, but like all ni-Vanuatu parties can only govern as one part of shifting coalitions. Vanuatu is thus similar to neighboring Solomon Islands which never had a dominant political party and voters have never paid much attention to party affiliations when casting their ballots at elections (Steeves, 1996; Fraenkel, 2008; Corbett & Wood, 2013); roughly 2% of Wood's (2014) Solomon Islander respondents list political party as influencing their vote, for example. In theory, parties matter when seeking to decide who will govern and in keeping the resultant coalition together between elections. But, in practice, much like the rest of the Pacific where parties are largely absent, in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu considerable time and resources are spent trying to ward off votes-of-no-confidence by bolstering the support of disparate coalitions. In 2014, there was a move to strengthen parties in Solomon Islands via the Political Parties Integrity Act that sought to ensure MPs are members of them. But, at the subsequent election, 80 per cent of the MPs who passed the act ran as independent candidates (Nanau 2016).

The third case in this category is Fiji. For the first seventeen years after independence, Fiji was governed by the Alliance Party, which, although avowedly multiracial, was widely seen as primarily representative of Indigenous-Fijian interests. The main opposition party during this period was the National Federation Party (NFP), commonly seen to represent the Indo-Fijian business community (for discussion of this period see Durutalo 2008). The establishment of the Fiji Labour Party (FLP) in the mid-1980s disrupted this status quo. Rather than an ethnic cleavage, the FLP sought to exploit an economic cleavage in Fijian society, drawing support among Indo-Fijian cane farmers in particular (Hagan 1987; Durutalo 2000). The 1987 coup further fragmented the party system (Durutalo 2008). The Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei (SVT), which represented indigenous Fijian interests, held government from 1991 until it was wiped out in the 1999 and 2001 elections (Durutalo 2008). The Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua (SDL) governed in coalition under the 1997 constitution from 2001 through until the 2006 coup (Durutalo 2008).

When democracy returned to Fiji in 2014, only two of the previous parties—the FLP and the NFP—reregistered. The election essentially became a contest between president and coup leader Bainimarama's newly created Fiji First Party (FFP), and a coalition of opposition parties, including the traditionalist Social Democratic Liberal Party (SODELPA) who won fifteen seats (see contributors to Ratuva and Lawson 2016). In such circumstances, the future of the party system in Fiji is unclear. While Bainimarama dominates the political scene, the FPTP's dominance suggests a one-party trajectory similar to Samoa. FFP draws support across Fiji's main ethnic and economic cleavages, including the growing urban population, and the new open list PR electoral system ensures this translates into seats (it won 32 of 50 seats in 2014 and 27 of 51 in 2018). In such circumstances, including repression of the media and civil rights, it is hard to see how the collection of other parties, including SODELPA's traditionalist, Christian, Indigenous Fijians and the old FLP and NFP, have either enough in common, the resources, or the combined voter support, to pose a significant electoral threat to the ruling regime. In which case, while a combination of ethnic and economic cleavages, and electoral system, clearly matters in Fiji, they have not produced stable

PSD. In this sense, while Fiji is analogous to Trinidad and Guyana, the persistence of communal land tenure and the tendency for the FLP to be removed via coups makes it unique.

Weak or Absent Party Systems (Nauru, Kiribati, Tuvalu, FSM, Palau and the Marshall Islands)

Most Pacific states do not have recognizable political parties—a fact that, according to Schattschneider (1942), should make democracy unworkable (Corbett, 2015; Veenendaal, 2015). These countries tend to be the smallest in the region, although they are of comparable size to most Eastern Caribbean states with two party systems. What makes this group doubly interesting is that attempts to establish them have largely failed despite the presence of electoral systems that should facilitate their emergence. In Palau, the departing American colonial administrators sought to develop ideologically-based parties, but these attempts did not take root, even if a call to reinstate them does resurface from time to time (see Shuster 2009). In Marshall Islands and Kiribati, loose but relatively stable "groupings" have formed in parliament for the purpose of winning office. In Marshall Islands, these have some basis in the traditional chiefly system, inter-island rivalries and family alliances (Fraenkel 2002). Those in Kiribati have historically had some basis in religious differences; Protestant and Catholic (see Van Trease 1993). But, politicians regularly switch sides, partially to secure promotion but also patronage; MPs are more likely to be able to help their constituency (and their re-election) if they are in government. Nauru did not have political parties for the first three decades after independence as the political scene was dominated by High Chief and independence hero Hammer de Roburt. However, after the economy collapsed in the late 1990s and early 2000s, some politicians, particularly among the younger generation, sought to establish the type of ideological representation common among larger states. The party *Naoero Amo* or Nauru First was formed to fulfil this purpose, although it is now essentially defunct. In each case, these states lack both the necessary ideological cleavages *and* the social organizations required to mobilize voters.

The two countries that have never had or even attempted parties—FSM and Tuvalu—are archipelagos in which, following Anckar and Anckar (2000), political competition is largely structured by geography. In FSM the constitution is designed to ensure that one state—Chuuk—cannot dominate the other three (Underwood 2006). As a result, the fourteen seats in the national legislature are divided to ensure that no one state can ever be ascendant (Chuuk has six seats, Pohnpei has four, while Kosrae and Yap have two each). Cross-cutting cleavages exist—many of the MPs went to school and college together and later formed a tight-knit elite—but the federal system ensures that state interests predominate. Indeed, any authority the central government does have is largely contingent on it being the main mechanism through which US Compact Funding is channeled, although, when combined with anti-colonial sentiment, this also has the effect of further entrenching state-based distrust of national institutions (Petersen and Paus 2016).

In Tuvalu, geography has the opposite effect. The fifteen seats in the Tuvauluan parliament are divided among the eight islands: seven of these islands return two MPs while the eighth, Nukulaelae, returns only one. One key factor in forming a government is getting as many representatives as possible from every island, thus enhancing the legitimacy of the coalition (Corbett, 2018). Much like the rest of the Pacific, one effect of this practice is that, aside from FSM, governments formed on the floor of parliament are regularly toppled by votes-of-no-confidence. There have been sixteen governments in Tuvalu since independence, six of which have been toppled as a result of successful no-confidence motions (see Corbett & Fraenkel, 2015). What is especially interesting about these cases, and the other Pacific cases discussed above, is that they completely debunk cleavage and electoral system-based explanations because nearly all operate, or have operated, a FPTP electoral system.

Conclusion

In this article, we have sought to find explanations for the diametrically opposite patterns of PSD and PSI in the Caribbean and the Pacific. Despite their many similarities—including their Anglo-American colonial

inheritance, their inherent comparability as the only world-regions comprised largely of SIDS, and their joint status as the most democratic regions in the developing world— Caribbean small states have developed extremely stable patterns of party competition, while parties in the Pacific Islands are either weak and short-lived or altogether absent. This difference is remarkable: where formerly stable party systems are breaking down elsewhere, both of these ‘‘similar” regions contradict the general tendency, but in completely different ways. The Pacific party systems in our sample tend to be volatile, whether they have weak parties or none at all, and the opposite is true in the Caribbean. Our objective here was not to explain the variation within the Pacific as such, since existing work has already shown how weak institutionalization and an enduring absence of ideology produces hyper-personalized politics that is hostile to PSD (see Rich et al., 2006; Corbett & Veenendaal, 2018). Rather, our primary aim was to explain the striking difference between the stability of two-party systems in the Caribbean—a region which also has highly personalized politics (cf. Corbett, 2015)—and the marked volatility that exists in the Pacific as a whole.

Based on an MSSD that includes twenty-three countries, we found that the two dominant theories of party system development—revolving around social cleavages and electoral system design—cannot explain the divergent trajectories of PSD in these two regions. Regarding cleavages, the smallness of countries in both regions entails that they have attitudinally homogenous societies which prevent the emergence of deep ideological divisions. When it comes to electoral rules, the same electoral system (FPTP) apparently produces stable two-party systems in the Caribbean but unstable or absent parties in the Pacific. However, upon closer inspection, we find that it is not so much the electoral system—because if it were, we should expect the same to hold in both—but rather the post-colonial trajectory and political-economic settlement that can explain the origins and persistence of two-party competition (or, indeed, their absence).

If this finding holds in the Caribbean, then it must also be plausible in the Pacific: the latter’s colonial inheritance was similar in terms of *who* the most recent colonizer was and the broad political architecture

that was ultimately bequeathed, but differed in terms of the timing, nature, and intensity of colonial rule. As a result, outside of Fiji, these countries did not develop plantation economies to the same extent as the Caribbean or a subsequent form of party politics forged out of labor contestation. Our conclusion, therefore, is that dominant explanations of PSD cannot explain the divergent trajectories of these two most-similar regions, and it is rather deeply entrenched legacies of political economy that have both engendered the remarkable level of PSD and PSI in the Caribbean and failed to engender them in the Pacific.

Using a historical institutionalist approach, we have traced the origins of party development in both regions. We found that the key reason why political parties still emerged in the Caribbean is that they originated out of preexisting labour organizations and trade unions, which in turn had formed as a result of the distinctive plantation system established during colonial times and its longer-term developmental consequences. By comparing two regions that, despite their theoretical relevance and empirical similarities, are rarely considered side-by-side, we therefore not only demonstrate important limitations in mainstream theories, but we also foreground an alternative historical explanation rooted in the post-colonial political-economic settlement and the subsequent ability of trade unions to produce and institutionalize party organizations. Put simply: the political economy of labour is absolutely critical for the development of party systems.

This finding is of immediate interest to scholars of both the Caribbean and the Pacific, but it also has more general relevance. We contribute to the literature on PSD in new democracies by highlighting the weakness of conventional theories that revolve around social cleavages and electoral systems. Focusing on a group of cases that are almost always excluded from comparative political analysis, we find that alternative explanations which highlight processes of party formation and organization have much more explanatory power. Our findings support earlier studies of PSD in Europe that emphasized organizational and logistical challenges that new parties overcame (Allern & Bale, 2017, Poguntke, 2015), and our analysis in particular underscores the significance that societal organizations can have for the institutionalization of parties and party systems.

The importance of labour movements for explaining PSD in these two "most similar" regions of small states may not be *directly* replicable to other democracies, new or old, large or small. In which case, while we add empirical weight to the neglected literature on the importance of party organizations for PSD, we concede it may well be the case that this mechanism is *more* significant in contexts in which ideological cleavages are absent. We certainly do not claim that it is the only causal mechanism in contexts other than the Caribbean and the Pacific. Rather our more modest yet fundamental contribution is to highlight that the unique divergence of PSD in these regions encourages us to consider if it should be given greater prominence in explanations of PSD elsewhere. In doing so we provide a rationale to reconsider well-studied cases in a new and penetrating light. Only further research on the mechanism we outline here can parse this out. In either case, we hope that by undertaking this analysis we will encourage other scholars to consider the theoretical relevance of hitherto neglected cases.

Table 1 – Case Selection of Small Caribbean and Pacific Island States

Country	Population	Colonial Power	Status	Constitution	Electoral System	Parliament	Active Trade Unions	Ethnic Cleavages	Political Parties
Caribbean									
St. Kitts and Nevis	51,500	Britain	Independent 1983	Parliamentary	FPTP	Unicameral	Yes	No	Effectively two-party: dominant "labour" party with smaller parties in coalition
Dominica	73,400	Britain	Independent 1978	Parliamentary	FPTP	Unicameral	Yes	No	Two-party: dominant "labour" and "workers" parties descended from unions
Antigua and Barbuda	91,300	Britain	Independent 1981	Parliamentary	FPTP	Bicameral	Yes	No	Two-party: both descended from labour movement
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	103,000	Britain	Independent 1979	Parliamentary	FPTP	Unicameral	Yes	No	Two-party: dominant "labour" and "workers" parties descended from unions
Grenada	110,100	Britain	Independent 1974	Parliamentary	FPTP	Bicameral	Yes	No	Two-party
St. Lucia	163,400	Britain	Independent 1979	Parliamentary	FPTP	Bicameral	Yes	No	Two-party: dominant "labour" and "workers" parties descended from unions
Barbados	289,700	Britain	Independent 1966	Parliamentary	FPTP	Bicameral	Yes	No	Two-party: dominant "labour" parties both descended form unions
Bahamas	321,800	Britain	Independent 1973	Parliamentary	FPTP	Bicameral	Yes	No	Two-party
Belize	340,900	Britain	Independent 1981	Parliamentary	FPTP	Bicameral	Yes	Yes	Two-party
Suriname	579,900	Netherlands	Independent 1975	Hybrid	PR	Unicameral	Yes	Yes	Multiple
Guyana	735,600	Britain	Independent 1966	Hybrid	PR	Unicameral	Yes		One dominant with several minor parties in coalition
Trinidad & Tobago	1,369,000	Britain	Independent 1962	Parliamentary	FPTP	Bicameral	Yes	Yes	Effectively two-party: dominant PNM; occasional large vote share for third party, but no seats unless in coalition with UNC

Pacific									
Nauru	9,500	Germany, Australia	Independent 1968	Hybrid	AV	Unicameral	No	None	None
Tuvalu	10,800	Britain	Independent 1978	Parliamentary	FPTP	Unicameral	No	None	None
Marshall Islands	71,000	Germany, Japan, United States	Independent in Free Association with the United States since 1986	Hybrid	FPTP	Unicameral	No	None	None
Kiribati	104,500	Britain	Independent 1979	Hybrid	Two-round runoff	Unicameral	No	None	None
Tonga	106,400	British protectorate	Never colonised	Monarchical	FPTP	Unicameral	No	None	One
Samoa	196,600	Germany, New Zealand	Independent 1962	Parliamentary	FPTP	Unicameral	No	None	One
Vanuatu	267,000	Anglo-French condominium	Independent 1980	Parliamentary	Single nontransferable vote	Unicameral	No	Hyper-fragmented	Multiple
Solomon Islands	610,000	Britain	Independent 1978	Parliamentary	FPTP	Unicameral	No	Hyper-fragmented	Multiple
Fiji	903,200	Britain	Independent 1970	Parliamentary pre-2006	AV until 1972; FPTP until 1997; AV until 2006; open list PR from 2014	Bicameral	Yes	iTaukei and Indo-Fijian	One dominant and several minor
Federated States of Micronesia	105,500	Spain, Germany, Japan, United States	Independent in Free Association with United States since 1986	Parliamentary		Unicameral	No	None	None
Palau	21,729	Spain, Germany, Japan, United States	Independent in Free Association with United States since 1994	Presidential (with non-partisan congress)	FPTP	Bicameral	No	None	None

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