

ANALYSING AND CATEGORISING POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

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ACCORDING TO DIAMOND, 'political parties remain an indispensable institutional framework for representation and governance in a democracy.'¹ If so, many Pacific Island nations labour under a political disadvantage in the construction of their democracies because local political parties are generally weak and ineffective.² They tend to have little by way of policy platforms and therefore do not discharge the roles of aggregating interests, deliberating on policy or mediating between the policy interests of various social groups. Most political parties in the South-West Pacific lack systematic grassroots organisation and so cannot be expected to be active in civic education or consensus-building. In Melanesia, most political parties are organised around one or more powerful political leaders, with the consequence that personality tends to override policy importance in the decisions of parties. Even the task of getting the vote out on election day is usually delegated to the candidate who must draw on extended kinship or patronage networks for scrutineers, drivers and general cajolers, not to mention ballot-stuffers, intimidators and enforcers. Political parties are therefore a particularly tenuous link in the chain holding together democratic governance in this region.

Comparisons, classifications and coherence

Given that the bulk of our analysis in this collection is fixed squarely on addressing the implications of the lack of established party systems across the Pacific, this chapter seeks to illuminate the underlying assumptions and suppositions behind the importance of coherent and effective parties to overall democratic functioning.

The problem of Pacific Island political parties needs attention and the purpose of this chapter is to help provide the tools for analysis by looking for common themes,

hazarding some comparisons with other regions and attempting to apply general taxonomies. In doing so, there is an immediate problem. Even putting to one side half the polities in the Pacific Islands that do not have political parties, as well as several other nations so small that personalisation dominates systematisation,³ the seven political systems covered in this volume nevertheless are as noteworthy for their differences as for their similarities. The convenience of lumping them together under the heading 'South Pacific' or 'Pacific Islands' should be seen as simply that, a convenient category, not one that necessarily implies wide commonality.

If the colonial model is accepted as broadly influential in the development of systems of governance in post-colonial contexts, then the fact that the seven polities covered in this volume have had at least five and possibly up to seven colonial influences⁴ emphasises the reality of distinctiveness. Apart from variations flowing from colonial history, each of the subjects has a unique mix of constitutional and legal regimes, as well as institutional designs and electoral systems, influencing the formal environment in which political parties must operate.

The particular political cultures of the countries under examination in this collection are equally relevant determinants of difference. Arguably, the differences in political styles, behaviour and expectations between highland, coastal, island and urban areas of Papua New Guinea may be greater than differences that exist within any Western nation that has been politically 'homogenised' by civil war, state conquest, industrial revolution or, more recently, national political parties delivering national messages through nationally available media. Among the nations of the Pacific Islands, these differences are further magnified because of linguistic, ethnographic and environmental variations as well as significant differences in leadership cultures.

Regional comparisons

Having accepted the reality of diversity, it is nevertheless necessary to focus on the common aspects of democratic functioning in the region for the purposes of comparison and generalisation. While expansive and diverse, there exists a geographic and ideological Pacific community, derived from an understanding of the island states as linked contiguously by the Pacific Ocean; as 'a sea of islands', to use Epeli Hau'ofa's appealing terminology.⁵ One could even argue that a sense of Pacific-ness is growing in the various urban centres of the Pacific Rim. In Los Angeles, Auckland, Sydney or Brisbane, the other-ness of Pacific heritage might promote conceptualisations of a broader Pacific identity, beyond specific national identifications or ethnic classifications of Melanesian-ness or Polynesian-ness.

There is a foreign relations community, formalised in regional architecture such as the Pacific Islands Forum and informally sharing the carriage of Australian influence, as well as alternately bridling at the world's neglect or complaining about the bewildering impacts of globalisation. Built on the principles of self-determination, the establishment of the South Pacific Forum in 1971 was 'the most sophisticated institutional expression of a post-colonial vision of regional community'.⁶ Most directly, there is a development community, in which the various countries share aspirations and frustrations, deal with a

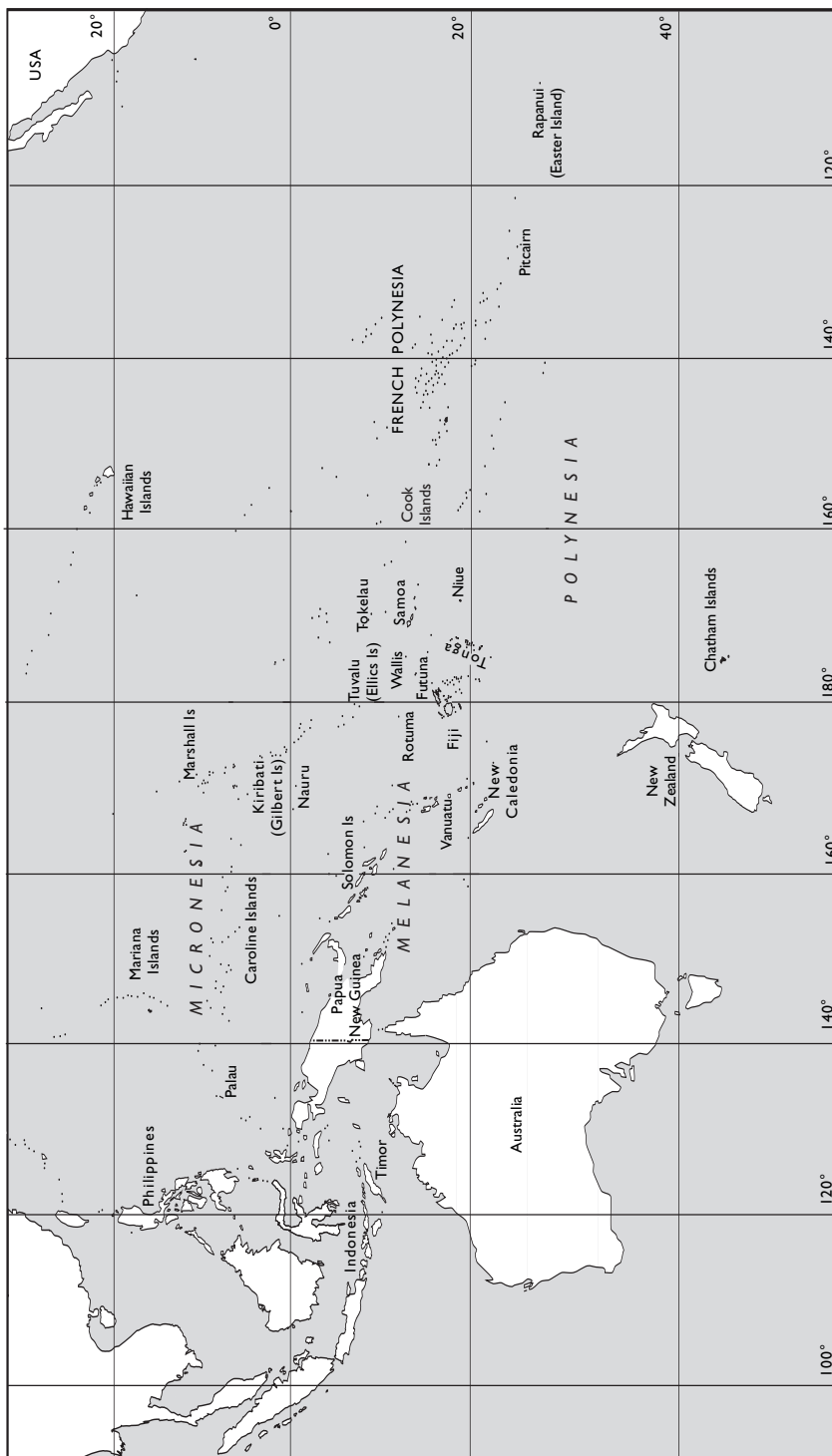


Figure 1.1: Pacific Islands

similar array of donors, merchants and adventurers and face a similar struggle to establish the institutions of governance and free markets. As members of these communities, the leaders follow developments in the other countries assiduously and freely borrow ideas from each other. It is particularly the membership of this imagined policy community that justifies the grouping of these countries for the purposes of this study. Yet even behind the latest iterations of Pacific community are a myriad 'contending visions of regional community, and of community-building', based on pragmatism, alliance, dominance and resistance.⁷

For the purposes of this collection, fault-lines are also in evidence. Clearly, Timor-Leste is an outer planet on the fringes of this system, while New Caledonia is centrally located but tenuously linked within it. Sāmoa will often consider itself distinct from the others while many Pacific states tend to put PNG into its own category because of its size and complexity.

The problem of comparing like with like can be resolved partly if those being compared believe they are alike in certain ways and see themselves as unlike the rest of the world in many other ways. Comparisons are thus useful if the group under study is distinct from other groupings. Its own diversity notwithstanding, politics in the Pacific Islands is a distant relation to politics in Europe or Australia. Oral tradition dominates over electronic communications. Personality completely swamps policy in voters' perceptions. Ascriptive allegiances continue to be decisive in the Pacific whereas in European politics voters behave far more as atomised individuals. In the spectrum of political culture and behaviour, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America might be slightly closer to the Pacific, but are nevertheless at the opposite end of the spectrum. Perhaps most comparable with the Pacific would be politics in the Caribbean and Africa, though even the latter comparison draws criticism from some Pacificists.⁸ Once again, the views of the actors themselves become critical. Michael Morgan points out in his chapter on Vanuatu the influence of the writings of African nationalists Julius Nyerere (Tanzania) and Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana) in shaping the emerging discourse on 'the Melanesian Way'. In his autobiography, Michael Somare recalls that the name given to the Pangu Party was inspired by Kenyan political party names KANU and KADU.⁹ And Joao Saldanha notes in his chapter on Timor-Leste the decisive influence of the returned Mozambique expatriates.

Nevertheless, the questions to be asked in relation to regional comparisons need particular care. Common colonial heritage might allow for certain comparisons. Historical intersections might do likewise. Reliance on similar institutional designs might be worthy of study. But in all processes of comparison, generalisation and attempts at cross-regional 'lessons learned', the ultimate reality of distinctiveness remains prominent.

Temporal comparisons

The problem of attempting regional comparison is compounded when temporal calibrations are added. It is certainly not the contention of this chapter that processes of representative democracy follow an inevitable path, well trodden by the early adherents to democracy and slavishly pursued by those who follow. The variation in the design and workings of democratic institutions in established democracies puts paid to any

teleological temptation. Choices between presidential or parliamentary systems, unitary or federal states, and unicameral or bicameral assemblies had to be made by Pacific countries just as they were made by long-established democracies. Nor is there anything inevitable about the type of political culture each nation will evolve. Politics in the Pacific Islands is less secular than the politics practised by the former colonial masters, and debate in Pacific parliaments is less robust than is the practice in Australia, the regional power. At the same time, gender problems in Pacific Island politics are even more acute than in neighbouring regions.

While there is no inevitable path, there has nevertheless been a dynamic evolutionary path of institutional development. By tracing the point reached by a Pacific Island country on that path, comparisons are possible with progress made by other polities at similar periods. In most parts of the Pacific Islands, people have now enjoyed an entire generation of institutional representative democracy.¹⁰ Young people voting for the first time in the most recent elections in PNG, Sāmoa or Vanuatu will have known no other system in their lifetimes. There is even a small handful of political parties in the Pacific Islands that came into being at the time of independence and that still exist even though most political parties in this region tend to have a short life span. Comparisons might therefore be attempted with the early period of democratic development in Western countries and with the post-independence period of political development in Africa.

A telling feature of the earliest development of political parties in the United States and the United Kingdom was the tactic of cooperation on certain issues among individual legislators of like mind.¹¹ Another early development, according to Duverger, was the creation of the 'party of notables'.¹² With the adoption of universal suffrage and the involvement of 'the masses' in elections, mass parties developed in the 19th century from the social and political pressures of the day and evolved to become powerful features of the political landscape in the 20th century.¹³ When applying this brief history to the Pacific Islands, it would seem that the point of comparison should be somewhere between the creation of loose clubs of legislators and the early period of outside mobilisation of political passions. We can also find an echo of Duverger's 'parties of notables' in the Pacific context in the creation of parties based on local interests and led by local 'big men'.

When examining key features of post-independence political party development in Africa, two aspects stand out starkly: the emergence of many single-party systems flowing from the results of the national liberation struggle; and the 'primordial loyalties' of adherents to parties in multi-party systems.¹⁴ The relationship between the independence movement and the formation of political parties in the immediate post-independence period in the Pacific Islands will be instructive, as will recognition of the continuing effects of familial, ethnic and kinship relationships.

Classifications of political parties

The next question that presents itself concerns the various methods that have been employed to classify political parties. Mair provides a useful summary of the formative literature by focusing on the principal criteria used in the classifications.¹⁵ Duverger was content in 1954 to simply count the number of parties. By 1966, Dahl had added the

important consideration of the competitiveness of the opposition. Blondel in 1968 looked beyond mere numbers of parties and asked questions about their relative size. Rokkan in 1968 also sought a level of analysis beyond mere numbers and included criteria concerning the likelihood of single-party majorities and the distribution of minority party strengths. In 1976, Sartori added an important new criterion concerning the degree of polarisation of the party system through an examination of ideological distance between parties. Measurements can thus be devised to calculate the numbers of parties, their size and strength, their potential to enter into government and the choices they offer the electorate.

The level of sophistication of the measurements has increased commensurate with the levels of complexity of party systems in the world. Sartori transformed the simple counting of numbers into a six-part categorisation:¹⁶

- Monopoly;
- Hierarchy;
- Unimodal concentration (i.e., prevalence without alternation);
- Bipolar concentration;
- Low fragmentation;
- High fragmentation.

Sartori pointed out, however, that the counting of parties was interesting only insofar as it explained aspects of the mechanics of the party system.¹⁷ His classification establishes a spectrum of systems from monopoly to fragmentation. It is only in the midpoints of that spectrum that one finds party systems that allow for alternation as well as relatively even concentration encouraging system stability. In examining political parties in the polities in the Pacific Islands, a question to be posed is where they fit in this spectrum and whether any are near or approaching the midpoints.

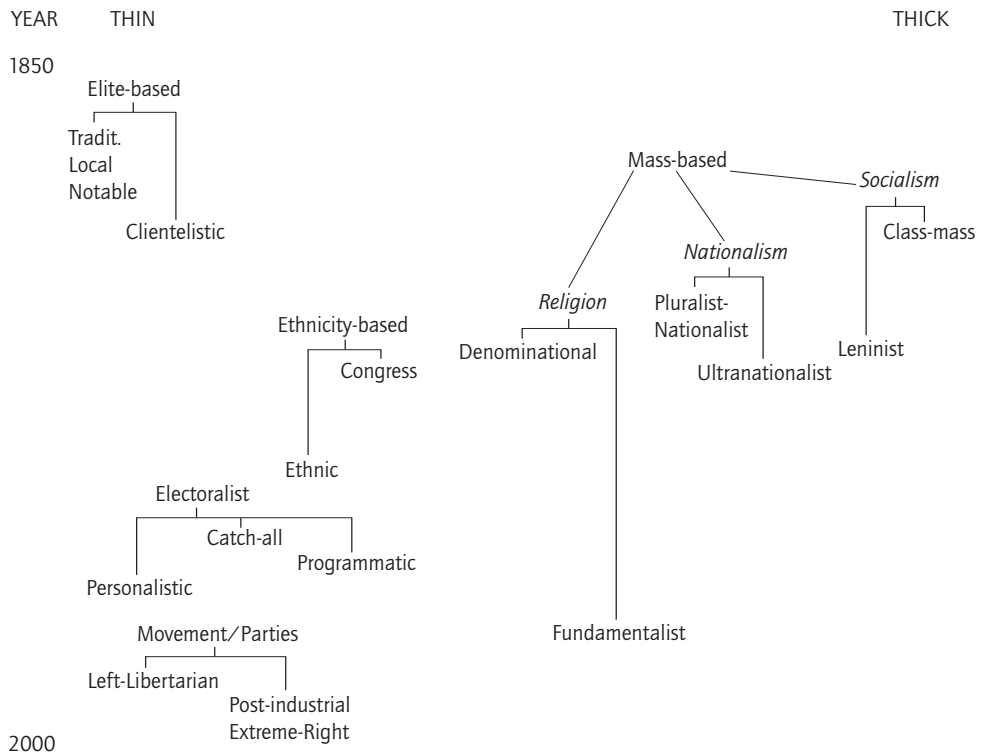
Sartori also introduced another measurement spectrum, the ideology-to-pragmatism continuum.¹⁸ Are political parties motivated by policy outcomes in the interests of their supporters or are they vehicles for politicians to pursue the accumulation of wealth and power? In applying this concept to Pacific Island political parties, it will be useful to distinguish between the two concepts. While pragmatism as an end in itself can be motivated by simple self-interest, it can also be applied in the interests of the group. This aspect will be of particular relevance in Pacific Island political culture in view of the tightness of kinship and *wantok* loyalties and because of the perception of most voters that the role of their representatives is to deliver concrete benefits to their support base.

The ideological classification can be difficult to apply in established democracies and is particularly problematic in the Pacific Islands. Commentators note the current process of ideological convergence in established democracies.¹⁹ But this phenomenon follows a century of cleavage politics with political parties representing fundamental divisions in society. Lipset and Rokkan argue that political parties in Europe established their mass bases from the results of two major social and economic revolutions — the national revolution associated with the emergence of modern nation-states and the industrial revolution leading to urbanisation and the identification of economic classes within society.²⁰ The class cleavage established the left-right dimension in descriptions of political parties. The national revolutions created regional parties, religious parties and ethnic parties. The task this suggests, for

the purposes of this volume, is to identify the Pacific Island social bases for ideological orientations. Ideological comparisons with other polities are possible but problematic: there is clearly no comparison, for example, between the absence of ideological debate in a Pacific Island nation and the convergence of ideological positions in Western democracies.

The most recent, and least Western-centric, typology of political parties comes from Gunther and Diamond, who elaborate a sophisticated matrix with 15 segments.²¹ The matrix usefully incorporates time and organisation axes. At one end is the earliest manifestation of political party organisation based on local elites with minimal organisational structure. The matrix evolves through time to mass-based, ethnicity-based and electoralist parties and movements. The matrix also plots the evolution of party structures from thin to thick, beginning with the Duverger’s amateurish party of notables all the way to the highly professional Leninist party. Positioning Pacific Island political parties within this graph thus has the advantage of enhancing comparability with other regions and systems. It also adds an element of dynamism to the classification process by providing an indication of where the parties might be headed. Even if the parties discussed in this volume are clumped together in one corner, the Gunther and Diamond chart nevertheless allows them to be situated and thus better understood.

Figure 1.2: Gunther and Diamond: Species of Political Parties



Source: P. 173, Gunther, Richard and Larry Diamond. 2003. 'Species of Political Parties – A New Typology.' *Party Politics*, Vol. 9, No. 2. pp. 167–99.

Institutionalisation of parties and party systems

The final issue of classification requiring application to the Pacific Island context concerns the degree to which the system in which the parties operate has become institutionalised. A necessary corollary to this question is the level of institutionalisation of the parties themselves. The issue was first suggested as critical to democratic practice by Huntington, who identified four dimensions of political party institutionalisation: adaptability and the capacity to survive setbacks; organisational complexity as measured by the number of sub-units; autonomy in relation to other institutions and groups; and, coherence within the party and the ability to resolve differences.²² In relation to institutionalisation of the party system, Mainwaring and Scully in their study of Latin American systems set out four criteria: regularity of party competition; whether parties have 'stable roots in society'; the extent to which the major players accept election results as 'determining who governs'; and the level of organisation of parties.²³ Clearly, the two processes of institutionalisation are linked and, indeed, it would be expected of one to reinforce the other.

Recent work has been done on applying some of these concepts to Africa. Randall and Svåsand²⁴ make a number of points that might have some applicability to the Pacific Islands. They point to the origins of the party as a significant factor, focusing in part of the role of the movement or party in the struggle for independence. They argue that the relationship of the party to the leader is critical in the institutionalisation process, with a key test being whether the party can survive the initial leadership transition. They list the overriding advantages of incumbency as possibly destabilising to the process of institutionalisation. They identify clientelism as undermining rules and regularised procedures necessary for institutionalisation to take place. And they note that cleavage in the form of ethnic exclusivity might not be able to serve the same purposes as class cleavage served in the institutionalisation of European political parties.

In relation to party systems, Kuenzi and Lambright²⁵ applied the methodology utilised in the study of party system institutionalisation in Latin America to the African situation. They found the level of institutionalisation in Africa to be generally lower than in Latin America and that an important factor was the length of time a country has had experience of democracy. Only five of the countries reviewed fell into the institutionalised category. While it is not the intention of this volume to attempt a statistical analysis, a conclusion will be hazarded as to the relation of degree of institutionalisation of Pacific Island party systems in comparison with Africa.

Applying Classifications to the Pacific Islands

Attempts to apply the classic literature on political party taxonomy to the developing world are notoriously difficult. Sartori expressed great caution in applying criteria designed for 'modern political systems' to 'polities whose political process is highly undifferentiated and diffuse, and more particularly to the polities that are in a fluid state, in a highly volatile and initial stage of growth'.²⁶ Rakner and Svåsand accept that Sartori's typologies might not be applicable to African political parties, but nevertheless argue that

criteria concerning party systems may yet be applicable.²⁷ Even in relation to the large and often strong nations of East and South-East Asia, Sachsenröder argues that Sartori's typologies 'appear rather difficult to apply'.²⁸ They are even more difficult to apply to the Pacific Islands. There might well be an inverse relationship between the applicability of such criteria and the level of development of the polities in question.

Apart from the development impacts affecting literacy, education and the emergence of a politically engaged middle class, Pacific Island polities are also affected by small size, isolation and poor communications, each of which contributes to placing these polities in Sartori's undifferentiated and diffuse category. Counting the numbers of parties in itself will explain little about the political system other than the likelihood of its fragmented nature. Ideological distance between political parties will rarely be a telling factor in the Pacific Islands because this measure is based on the presumption that the parties are speaking a common language concerning issues of economic growth, trade and service delivery. There might be a common rhetoric under these headings but it could not be dignified with the label of ideology or policy prescriptions. The measurement most applicable in the Pacific Islands in this regard is simply to ask whether a political party has a meaningful policy agenda.

The Gunther and Diamond taxonomy is more useful in relation to developing countries. Its identification of personalistic parties and clientelistic parties is of considerable assistance in gaining a better understanding of the formative motivations of Pacific Island political parties. While there might be some overlap in the classification into categories, and there is also likely to be considerable bunching in the group of parties in early formation with thin organisational capacity, this taxonomy is relevant and useful.

The method that might produce the most interesting results is to ask a series of questions about these political parties, the answers to which will aid in classification and understanding. While some questions might be posed generally in relation to political parties anywhere in the world, others are specific to developing countries and lend themselves in particular to parties in Africa and the Pacific Islands.

Does the party trace its origins to an independence movement?

This question might well point to the most important distinction to be drawn between the political parties under review. Beginning political life as an independence movement is a sure means of obtaining the popular legitimacy and developing the substance, organisation and critical mass to sustain a successful transformation into a ruling political party.²⁹ Africa is teeming with examples; SWAPO in Namibia, ANC in South Africa, ZANU-PF in Zimbabwe, Frelimo in Mozambique, MPLA in Angola, UNIP in Zambia up to 1991 and KANU in Kenya up to 2002. The independence struggles in Africa also saw the genesis of prominent opposition parties such as Renamo in Mozambique, UNITA in Angola and the Inkatha Freedom Party in South Africa. Decades after independence and, in most cases, after the passing of the independence leader, having been the national liberation movement that took over the reigns of power from the colonial power is probably the most important single factor for success as a political party in Africa.

The transformation from a national liberation movement to a political party presents great difficulties. Baregu describes 10 challenges: the need to set new goals; the change in tactics from radicalisation to consensus-building; eschewing armed conflict; reversing-mindsets from that of a destroyer of the system to its defender; the need to cater to voters beyond one's immediate support base; the change from merely making promises to being held accountable for actions in government; the move from secretiveness to openness; the requirement to move to more open internal debate after the habit of suppressing internal dissent; the harmonisation of internal and external wings; and the need to forgo democratic centralism and Leninism in favour of decentralisation and checks and balances.³⁰ The challenge is thus to carry forward the strengths of the national liberation movement into the self-denying disciplines of multi-party democracy. A lesson from Africa, and southern Africa in particular, has been the preponderance of the old strengths over the new disciplines resulting in single-party or dominant-party systems.

This phenomenon of transformation from national liberation movement to political party repeats itself in the Pacific Islands, though on a more muted and modest scale. As Morgan points out, the Vanua'aku Pati situated itself as the party of independence and had a difficult relationship with the Condominium Administrators. Its reward on being tested in elections was 15 years of government in the first 24 years of independence. As Donald Kalpokas, one of the founders of the party, noted recently, party members were in no doubt about the self-interested nature of the Colonial Administration and refused to enter into pliant compromises, thus strengthening the party's reputation among voters.³¹ The party was unable to sustain a predominant role in the Vanuatu party system as it became subject to island politics and conflicting personal ambitions, leading to splits and loss of influence. The end of its predominant role in Vanuatu began in 1991 when its independence leader, Walter Lini, split with the party he helped found.

In Ron May's chapter on PNG, the early success of the Pangu Party is described, as is its slow demise into just another of the fractious political parties in PNG's fragmented party system. Its first leader, Michael Somare,³² traces the emergence of the party to a small study group including members of the House of Assembly in the 1960s, the 'Bully Beef Club',³³ and their increasing impatience for independence. May notes that once the issue of independence was settled, there was very little by way of policy differentiation between the various PNG political parties.

Similarly, Alaine Chanter's chapter on the politics of New Caledonia situates the FLNKS as the party of independence, describing the difficulties and tactical compromises it had to face over the years as its goal became increasingly difficult to achieve. While FLNKS was able to achieve considerable support among the Melanesian population, it was not able to translate this into incumbency in a society where the Melanesian population is in a minority. FLNKS became subject to the commonplace splits of Melanesian politics.

The independence party of the region most closely resembling the African precedents is Fretilin in Timor-Leste. Joao Saldanha describes Fretilin's dominant position gained through the first post-independence elections and plots Fretilin's path from a revolutionary movement to the main resistance organisation in the struggle against Indonesian occupa-

tion to a predominant party holding 55 of the 88 seats in the National Assembly. Fretilin used its reputation as the primary resistance party to reach down to the grassroots level and establish an invincible political position in the formative first elections.³⁴

In the three remaining nations dealt with in this volume, the establishment of political parties was not based on the independence process. Asofou So'o in his chapter on Sāmoa shows how the first eight years after independence were characterised by a form of consensus politics during which time political parties had not yet been formed. Tarcisius Tara Kabutaulaka notes that parties, in any case of little significance in the first years of the Solomon Islands, did not emerge from the small and scattered independence movements. Alumita Durutalo's chapter on Fiji describes the curious situation in which colonial economic interests and Fijian nativist interests saw a common problem in the growing political demands by the Indo-Fijian community and thus worked together to maintain a large part of the status quo in the immediate post-independence period. The issue for Fiji was not the usual whether and when questions about independence but the more difficult question of how to manage it through democratic institutions without leading to majoritarian results seen as likely eventually to favour the Indo-Fijian community.

A comparison between the African and Pacific Island cases suggests that some conclusions might be drawn from the contrasting experiences. While the transformation of an independence movement into a political party would seem to be the surest path to success in Africa and parts of the Pacific Islands, the differing fates of such parties in the two regions are worth noting. In Africa, many of the parties born from independence movements went on to dominate the political stage in their nations. The popularity and legitimacy gained from the independence struggle facilitated their entry into the electoral process. The strengths and habits built up from resistance days made them reluctant to share power. The result has been a number of single- or dominant-party situations, increasingly the subject of criticism by the international community.

A similar story can be told in some of the Pacific Island states under study in relation to the transformation of independence movements into political parties, but whereas in many of the African cases a position of power has been sustained over several decades, in the Pacific Islands, the political momentum slowed after a decade or so. The reason might flow from the differing experiences in the struggle for independence. Where it took the form of armed struggle, the independence movements had to be organised, disciplined and motivated. They needed leadership, good internal communications and, if possible, national reach. These attributes were put to the test in the sternest manner and thus hardened the fighting independence movements. These are also admirable qualities in a political party. To begin political life with a tried and tested leadership able to communicate with followers who are hierarchically organised throughout the country and exhibit the discipline of a military force is a good recipe for political success. Perhaps the hardest aspect of the transformation is, as Baregu notes, the abandonment of the weapons and techniques of war, both physically and psychologically.

With the exception of some skirmishes in New Caledonia and Vanuatu as well as those problems flowing from the Dutch and Portuguese withdrawals from the region, independence processes in the Pacific were and are political, not military. Leading figures

of the local elites, native and expatriate, demanded independence from the colonial rulers. The debates took place in colonial offices and tertiary education colleges. The focus was invariably the capital. Excepting Vanuatu, none of the Pacific Island countries had a national independence movement similar to those in Africa. Almost none had a national organisation, partly for the reason that in some cases the nation was to be forged from an archipelago or from disparate groups only by the flimsy means of a document granting independence and partly because village life remained largely divorced from the urban elites. And so the Pacific Island political parties were not tested in the same way as their African counterparts. They tended to be small groups of committed people with little by way of an organisation to back them up. They benefited from the popularity of having been seen to confront the colonial power, but this tended only to have opened the path to political power in the immediate post-independence period. Thereafter, the Pacific Island parties could not fall back on much by way of organisation, partisans or resources.

Fretilin might eventually challenge this rule. Its struggle for independence was of African proportions but it was directed not at the colonial administration but at the subsequent occupation. Indeed, this struggle might be considered even more daunting than a struggle against British, French or Portuguese colonialism because, having been occupied by a Third World neighbour, the people of Timor-Leste had little by way of support from progressive forces in the colonial capital. A quarter of a century of guerrilla warfare and international agitation against a powerful occupying force might well be the sort of background that helps establish a very strong political party.

Has the party emerged from cleavage politics?

Lipset and Rokkan developed a seminal description of the cleavage basis of many European parties flowing from the nationalist revolutions and the industrial revolution.³⁵ These events established large identity groups based on unifying factors such as language, culture, religion and class. With the granting of universal suffrage, the basis for mass political parties was established. While not frozen for all time, the cleavage basis of political parties was sufficiently enduring to assure those parties the longevity they required to establish themselves as part of the political bedrock of their societies. Social Democrat, Christian Democrat and regional political parties can be seen as cleavage parties and, in view of their prominent role in European politics, they demonstrate the critical importance of cleavage in politics.

Can we find comparable situations in the Pacific Islands? Fiji provides the starkest example of cleavage politics in the Pacific Islands. Durutalo makes clear the racial basis of party development in Fiji. Beginning with the handover of power to Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara's Alliance Party, Fijian politics has had at its core the issue of how to deal with Indo-Fijian political mobilisation. The first attempt was through the Alliance Party itself, which had Fijian, Indian and general elector wings. This was an attempt to build a Fijian-dominated consociational party along the lines of the Malay-dominated Barisan Nasional of Malaysia.³⁶ The experiment was to last 17 years before it was cast aside after Alliance lost the 1987 elections. It suggests that consociationalism has a certain logic for

a ruling party but not in opposition. It also points to the problems of asymmetrical consociationalism as a basis for enduring national leadership. Malay dominance through UMNO continues to be acceptable to the Chinese and Indian members of the Barisan Nasional because of fears of the Islamist alternative.³⁷ Fijian domination of the Alliance Party, which is described by Durutalo as 'unbalanced and unequal', ultimately was unable to satisfy any of the cleavage bases of its component parts. The racial, regional and class cleavages of Fijian society eventually demanded expression in parties catering to specific nativist, Indo-Fijian, economic class and regional sentiments. A telling example of the racial basis of Fijian politics can be seen in Yash Ghai's description of the 1995 submissions from the political parties to the Constitutional Review Commission concerning electoral systems.³⁸ Ghai's analysis confirms the racial basis of the political parties' objectives and concerns.

New Caledonia provides a further example of possible cleavage-based political parties. Chanter describes the basis for such cleavage in the component parts of New Caledonian society: the original Melanesian Kanak people; the early French settlers now dominant economically; the *Broussards*, who, though French, work the land and identify themselves as less privileged than the urban settler elite; the *Metros* who are more recent arrivals from the metropole and who are concerned about their rights and prospects; and the migrant minority communities including Wallisians and Futunians, Polynesians, Indonesians, Vietnamese and ni-Vanuatu. Political parties have been established to respond to the demands of these distinct communities. The FLNKS and its later offshoots represent the Kanak people and agonise over issues of native rights, land ownership, independence and autonomy. The RPCR is the party of the establishment and the status quo and as such attracts support from the urban elite and the minority migrant groups concerned about their fate under a future native administration. Insofar as *Broussard* and *Metro* interests do not converge with the establishment, new political parties such as Front Caledonien and the Front National have sprung up to cater to these political needs. As Jon Fraenkel notes in his chapter analysing electoral systems, there might be evidence of an emerging trend in the 2004 election success of Avenir Ensemble of shifting the political agenda away from ethnic issues to common issues of concern such as corruption.

Vanuatu also displays some elements of cleavage politics, though Morgan counsels caution in seeing some of the colonial distinctions as enduring. Geographic distinctiveness is the most obvious fact of life in the Vanuatu archipelago and it is reflected in the political system. Identification on the basis of the island of origin is probably now the first fact of national life. Political groupings have sprung up in some islands without much ambition of seeking a national audience. The Jon Frum Party from Tanna and Namangki Aute from Malaluka are examples. The next distinction flows from the condominium nature of colonial government. British and French influence competed, often pettily, in the New Hebrides and it has left its mark on Vanuatu. The francophone and anglophone distinction was deepened by corresponding Catholic and Protestant allegiances and found political expression in differing views on the pivotal question of independence. In their formative periods, the Vanua'aku Party and the Union of

Moderate Parties, generally speaking, gathered together the nation's opposing political persuasions, the former representing anglophone, Protestant and pro-independence interests, the latter standing up for francophone, Catholic and pro-autonomy views. Thus were the origins of the Vanuatu party system influenced by cleavage. In succeeding decades, however, party splits, leadership ambitions and new ideological questions have weakened the original basis of Vanuatu cleavage politics, leaving personality and island politics as more dominant themes.

PNG sets an analytical dilemma in relation to cleavage politics. As May makes clear, ascriptive allegiance is the dominant theme of PNG politics yet the groups to which the allegiance is owed do not fit within the concept of cleavage as developed by Lipset and Rokkan. Allegiance is owed to a person's *wantok*, those who speak the same language. As there are more than 820 living languages in PNG,³⁹ the allegiance group tends to be rather small, often no larger than 10,000 people. Though PNG voters continue to vote on the basis of this linguistic affiliation, the diversity of the nation combined with an inappropriate electoral system has not established the conditions for political stability or economic growth.⁴⁰ For cleavage politics to influence PNG politics by being reflected in political party formation, voters would need to imagine themselves beyond their *wantoks* as members of wider groups, such as Papuans or New Guineans, or Highlanders, coastal or island people, or people from distinct regions such as the Sepik or Morobe. May notes some hints of this, but, for the moment, PNG politics remains resolutely personalistic and narrowly based on *wantok* loyalty.

Solomon Islands politics follows a similar model. As Kabutaulaka discusses in his chapter, the violence that erupted in the early 1990s in the Solomon Islands had as one of its causes simmering ethnic frustrations and rivalries based on land and resource issues. The frustrations were sufficiently acute to lead to the formation of militias with ethnic names and membership. Yet those same frustrations did not lead to the formation of political parties based on ethnic cleavage. One can only conclude that political parties were seen as an ineffective way of tackling the key problems facing society.

So'o argues in relation to Sāmoa that political parties emerged because of differences of opinion among the elected leaders who had begun political life without the benefit of parties. While island and village distinctions remain important in Sāmoa, they are not such as to create the sort of cleavages that might lead to the process of forming political parties that respond to their members' needs. Distinctions in Sāmoan politics flow from whether one is a *matai*, a family leader or nobleman, from whether one has a foreign education and from issues of opinion, age and friendships. We can conclude that Sāmoan political parties have no cleavage basis.

The situation in Timor-Leste is complex. While distinctions exist between localities and between the urban and rural people, these are not sufficiently deep to be the basis for political party formation. There are, however, a number of important dividing lines based on recent history: those who supported Indonesia and those who did not; those who speak Portuguese and those who do not; and among the resistance movement, those who fought from the mountains and those who fought from abroad. Even within the last category, a distinction can be made among the returning Timorese between those

returning from Portugal, Mozambique or Australia. Yet Saldanha's description of the political scene puts little emphasis on these historical distinctions. The key to the existence of today's political parties in Timor-Leste lies in the politics of the generation that established these parties in the early 1970s in the confusion of the implosion of the Portuguese Empire. The politics of the 1970s is the guide to why the parties were formed and Fretilin's ability to present itself as the party of victory in the struggle for national independence is the key to its success.

To what degree is the party systematised?

The degree to which a party is systematised is a fundamental determinant of its substance and worth. The mass parties of Europe providing 'cradle-to-grave' services to their members and the Leninist parties of Asia that see themselves as above government, must support their ambitions with vast party structures based on deep membership, rules, congresses and hierarchies. They are quasi-permanent institutions of the political life of the nation, though even the mightiest has succumbed, and others yet might, to revolutionary upheavals. No party under review in the Pacific Islands has such ambitions, and, even if it did, as Fretilin might, it would not have the means to implement them. What needs to be looked at in the Pacific Islands are far more modest structures in keeping with the small village-based societies they represent.

The key distinction is whether the party has some structure beyond the present leadership and its parliamentary support. Is a political party simply a term to describe the livery under which parliamentarians have come together for the immediate purposes of parliamentary business? Is it a type of franchise that candidates must purchase in advance of an election because it is seen as a popular brand? Is the political party synonymous with its leader and, indeed, inseparable from him (it is almost invariably a 'he' in the Pacific Islands)? Or does the party have some manifestation beyond the current crop of parliamentarians sitting under its flag? In this regard, the questions to be asked concern autonomy, membership, branches, congresses, party rules, party officials and party finances, in line with the criteria suggested by Huntington.

One could take as the Melanesian norm the situation in PNG described by former minister Tony Siaguru as follows: 'In Papua New Guinea, we have political parties — plenty of them — but they are creatures of parliament not of the people or country ... they form, they grow, regroup, fade and then dissolve all within the context of parliament and with no relevance for what is outside.'⁴¹ The short answer is that the political party with some form of organisation and structure is very much the exception in the Pacific Islands. Neither could one say that the parties are autonomous in the Huntington sense. Either they follow the vacillations of parliament and government or they are in thrall to their leaders. Most political parties are still at the stage of 'parliamentary clubs' akin to the early days of Westminster. Parliamentarians get together usually for the purposes of strength in numbers or sometimes because of a common regional interest. The party is all too often simply livery. There are few party officials, concrete operational party constitutions or separate party accounts. These clubs-cum-parties are often dominated by moneyed individuals or charismatic leaders; the combination of both is rare. These struc-

tures seem to be even less coherent than what Duverger imagined might exist in relation to cadre parties. If one were to seek a precedent for this type of party structure it would be in the colonial assemblies in pre-Federation times in Australia. New South Wales and Victoria had populations of only one million each, parties did not exist, politicians were primarily constituency representatives and alliances in parliament were tenuous and transitory.⁴²

Among the handful of Pacific Island political parties that can be said to have some degree of systematisation are the Fiji Labour Party (FLP), the Vanua'aku Party, the Human Rights Protection Party of Sāmoa, Fretilin and the major parties in New Caledonia, in particular the RPCR and the FLNKS. These parties have, to a greater or lesser extent, established a party structure based on rules, congresses and branches and are run by officials, though most officials have day jobs. For the most part, these are also parties of patronage that rely on incumbency or at least the strong prospect of it for their coherence.

The exceptions to the rule based on the motive of incumbency are the FLP and FLNKS. The unspoken consensus among the Fiji elite is to keep the FLP out of office. When not achieved by electoral means, extra-constitutional methods have been used to that end. Yet, in spite of the coups d'état and the confessionalism introduced into the Fiji electoral system to formalise the Indo-Fijians' permanent opposition status, the FLP continues to function effectively and to insist on its rights under the rules of the game. It could be argued that because of its dim prospect of ever again winning government, the FLP, in its need to benefit its support base, has to compensate by being ever more systematic in its tactics and organised in its approach. Indeed, the need to match the FLP's electoral strategies and parliamentary conduct might be the factor that forces other political parties in Fiji to try to become better organised and more strategically focused. FLNKS has had some experience of provincial government. A moderate line on the issue of independence could, one day, see it share in the spoils of territory government. The reason these parties can succeed beyond the confines of clientelism is that they represent disadvantaged communities and are thus sustained by the logic of cleavage politics.

Does the party have ideology?

Ideology and party platforms are not common currency among Pacific Island political parties. Parties that are clientelist in the narrowest of senses have little use for the encumbrance of policy positions. Parties that are little more than informal clubs of parliamentarians cannot afford to develop firm ideological positions. Candidates who seek support from electorates still influenced by a cargo cult mentality would be wasting their time espousing policy positions when all the voters want to hear are promises of future wealth. Elections in the Pacific Islands are simply not fought over policy positions. Where policies are formulated in the electioneering context, they are more often than not the broadest and crudest form of populism offering unfunded free education or medical care.⁴³

Part of the problem lies in the current global confusion over the breadth of the policy spectrum. The left/right distinction had very little echo in the Pacific Islands even

at the height of the Cold War. These days, leftist politics has some substance only insofar as the FLP represents sugar-cane and textile workers. Bartholomew Ulufa'alu's National Democratic Party in the Solomon Islands had some links with the trade union movement, as did PNG's Pangu Party in its early days. Perhaps Fretilin is today the closest to its leftist roots in that policy postures were largely frozen during the quarter-century of Indonesian rule. Yet Saldanha points out that the realities of government have forced Fretilin to moderate many positions leading it more in the policy direction of a social democratic party.

It is also difficult to identify much in the way of right-wing politics in the Pacific Islands. The French racist Front National party is represented in New Caledonia, but the Pacific version of the party is quite distinct from its parent. It has adopted a more Pacific way of dealing with issues and its main burden is to secure the positions of those arriving more recently from France. Ironically, its main arguments are based on human rights and non-discrimination in voting rights, a position that would have the effect of increasingly marginalising the Kanak population. A number of parties can be identified as pro-business and pro-status quo. Jacques Lafleur's RPCR is probably the most rigorous of these, though in small societies it can sometimes be difficult to find the dividing line between broad principles and individual interests. The RPCR is certainly the party that protects established nickel interests. Laisenia Qarase's Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua (SDL) in Fiji also puts itself forward as pro-business, though it probably should be seen as pro-native business.

To conduct a discussion of policy aspects of Pacific Island politics in terms of left/right distinctions is clearly unsatisfactory as it misses the point. Issues of independence and nation-building dominated the formative stage of Pacific Island politics. Establishing national structures, determining language policy, working out what to do with expatriate experts and learning how to conduct the business of government were the factors dominating the attention of the political leadership in the early years. While it cannot be said that these overriding problems are now resolved, it can be said that the political discourse has gone beyond them. They no longer motivate people the way they did in the first blush of independence.

In many ways, the present political discourse is not policy focused at all. It is about competence and corruption. It is about making government work and having services delivered. Those services, such as roads, schools and clinics, are the issues people worry about and so they become part of the political rhetoric. But it is difficult to describe this discourse in policy terms. The issues being dealt with — teachers and nurses should be paid their salaries, roads should be fixed — are so basic that they defy translation into contested policy positions.

If there is a policy dimension to the public debates in many Pacific Islands countries, it can perhaps be portrayed as being between traditionalists and modernists. As Steven Ratuva makes clear in his chapter, tradition retains considerable rhetorical power in the Pacific. Because tradition has always been an oral and oratorical institution, conceptions of *kastom* (custom) must be recognised as highly fluid and contestable. As Bronwen Douglas noted, one of the paradoxes of nationalism in Melanesia was that

despite its diversity the essential ingredients of nationalism were everywhere the same: 'From Papua New Guinea to Fiji, nation makers play particular tunes on the common motifs of custom/tradition and Christianity.'⁴⁴ In the context of national parliamentary politics, it has always run the risk of simply becoming a form of sophistry for self-serving politicians. Practices represented as traditional or *kastom* continue to be practiced widely in the region in the form of communal support, circle discussions and status positioning, but they run into difficulty when being applied to the processes of national government. Simultaneously, *kastom* alongside Christianity became central to assertions of nationalism. Tradition tends to be a major part of the political rhetoric of the parties supported by Melanesian Fijians, the Vanua'aku Party and its offspring, and Papua New Guinean and Solomon Islands parties, but it is not much contested by other MPs as virtually all politicians wish to portray themselves as emerging from and supportive of local *kastom*.

Where the rhetoric of *kastom* is strongest is in criticising the disappointments of modernisation. There have been some resounding successes in the Pacific Islands in terms of health improvements, tackling illiteracy and establishing profitable tourist industries in several countries. But, at the very least, the benefits of modernisation have fallen far short of the vast expectations placed on it, thus providing powerful ammunition for politicians' rhetoric. The dominance of foreign companies, the lack of job opportunities for locals, the capricious impacts of globalisation and the politically ever-useful sins of colonialism are standard parts of the traditionalist politician's armoury. Those politicians arguing the merits of 'progress' have the harder case to prove in the popular discourse and it is little wonder that progress soon translates into cargo.

Are there any new policy positions capturing the attention of the voting public? Christianity would have to top this list. Several of the country chapters describe the influence of various Christian churches on the political scene. Yet the issue of Christianity in the Pacific Islands goes beyond the question of influence; it has become part of the policy debate, for example in the many policy proposals to 'Christianise' society. In some ways, Christianity has become the largest segment of tradition in these countries by taking over the role of mediating between individuals and the spiritual world, setting social norms and establishing the means of gaining status. Many Pacific politicians have church backgrounds and many more evoke biblical terminology. When the *Fiji Times* expressed some scepticism about the veracity of a German evangelist faith healer, the then Information Minister, Simione Kaitani, labelled the paper 'anti-Christ.'⁴⁵

Tradition and religion aside, there are few other policy issues that have excited the voting public. While there is a Green Party in Vanuatu, environmental protection issues do not present themselves to Melanesian villagers in the same way as urban Westerners see them. The politics of the environment are entangled with the local patronage politics mentioned above. For example, logging is a keenly contested issue in PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu but the contestants tend to be local politicians making quick deals with foreign logging companies against the donor community, responding primarily to the voters in their home countries. Environmental protection has its champions in the Pacific Islands but it has not gained the momentum to become an issue on which political parties can be built.

Gender equality is another issue that has its champions among Pacific Islanders. Traditional Melanesian society is male-dominated. In the Highlands of PNG a 'big man'

will have several wives who will bear his children, tend his gardens and breed his pigs. The PNG Parliament of 109 members currently has one woman member, the widow of the former Chief Justice. The situation is similar in other Pacific Island parliaments, reflecting a traditional view that women are not leaders. Women are becoming better organised and most countries have a formally recognised women's association, though it is difficult to judge at times whether this is an exercise in inclusiveness or tokenism. Women are not sufficiently well organised or committed to elect their own to parliament or to make gender issues politically important. The donor community is a leading proponent for women's rights, often sparring with male leaders extolling the virtues of tradition.

Clientelism generally takes the place of policy or ideology in Pacific Island politics. A candidate who solicits one's vote in PNG and offers nothing concrete in return is considered a 'rubbish man'.⁴⁶ Clientelism tends to take a clan dimension in Melanesia, as Tovua notes: 'Loyalty to the wantoks is much greater than loyalty to broader society and it is greater than loyalty to the law, greater than loyalty to the system of democracy.'⁴⁷ This inescapable feature of Melanesian society is likely to continue to dominate the policy-setting process.

Is there a party system?

'A party system becomes structured when it contains solidly entrenched mass parties.'⁴⁸ Applying Sartori's definition to the Pacific would simply produce a nil return. 'The success of democratization is in part dependent on the existence of institutionalized parties and party systems of government.'⁴⁹ Applying Smith's description would lead us to conclude that democratisation has failed in the Pacific Islands. But applying Mainwaring and Scully's four criteria — regularity of party competition; whether parties have 'stable roots in society'; the extent to which the major players accept election results as 'determining who governs'; and, the level of organisation of parties — might allow for a more nuanced result.

In spite of all the turmoil and troubles around election time, PNG has held elections regularly and constitutionally since independence. The elections are hard fought and meaningful in terms of winners and losers. So there is regular competition, but the problem is that it is competition primarily between candidates rather than between political parties. The parties can hardly be said to have stable roots in society and, as noted above, the level of party organisation is low. On the positive side, elections are seen as the key to gaining power in PNG but on the negative side, how the election is won is dependent on what a candidate can get away with. Intimidation, violence, encouraging dummy opponents to split the vote of an opposing *wantok*, ballot-stuffing, curious counting and working courts of disputed returns are all known practices. All this suggests that if there is a party system, it is rudimentary. May describes the various attempts to engineer a party system in PNG culminating in 2001 with the *Organic Law on the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates* (OLIPPC). The jury is necessarily still out on OLIPPC, but early indications are that it will be no match for the politicians it is trying to police.

Other political processes reviewed in this volume show higher degrees of systematisation. Vanuatu began its national political life with two broad families of political persuasion competing for power. Based as they were on some notions of cleavage, these two groups suggested a political party system in embryo. Since independence, however, the trend has been towards the PNG end of the spectrum with increasing fragmentation, doubts about party longevity and the dominance of personality politics. The Solomon Islands would also need to be situated at the fragmentation end of the spectrum.

Fiji began independence with what looked like a dominant catch-all party committed to the status quo battling a more narrowly based Indo-Fijian party seeking fundamental reform. Again, this had the makings of a party system of some sort. But, if there is a party system in Fiji, it is probably today best described in a series of negative propositions. No Indo-Fijian party will be allowed to have the dominant say in a government. No single party representing the views of native Fijians appears able to gain a dominant position. Personalities and chiefly title, not political party platforms, will continue to play the most influential role. It is a disquieting reflection on the body politic of Fiji that coups have had more impact than constitutions. The ambitious and idealistic Constitution of 1997 has not engineered the results it sought.

New Caledonian politics can give the impression of being systematised along party lines in view of the racial and economic cleavages that underpin the parties. It also has the advantage of being more rules-based than other systems in the Pacific Islands given the applicability and enforcement of French electoral laws. For example, French law requiring an equal number of men and women on the party lists was a contributing factor to a woman leading the Territorial Government. Yet even in New Caledonia, the tendency towards fragmentation is evident. Vote-splitting among Melanesian Kanaks is one reason why they do not have representation commensurate with their voting strength. But the problem exists on the conservative side of politics as well. Chanter traces the various splits that have affected that side of politics in the territory. Thus even where a cleavage basis for party development exists, it seems that fragmentation is nevertheless the direction in which New Caledonia is moving.

While the Melanesian countries have strong electoral competition without necessarily enjoying the benefits of a strong party system, Sāmoa and Timor-Leste reflect a different problem. One-party dominance clearly militates against the systematisation of political contestation. It cannot yet be said that the dominance of the Human Rights Protection Party (HRPP) and of Fretilin is immutably entrenched. But the likely cause of any future decline of these parties will not be strong competition from political opponents but rather internal splits. Without a party system that attempts to establish a level playing field, the advantages of incumbency will work to entrench the dominance of the ruling party. Sāmoan opposition politicians complain bitterly about the HRPP's dominance of the parliamentary process. The Fretilin Government is already showing ambitions of controlling key aspects of electoral governance.

A persuasive piece of evidence of the lack of party systems in the region is the growing consensus on the need to engineer them. Given the acute nature of the problem in PNG, it is of little surprise that efforts to engineer a party system are most advanced in

that country. One feature of OLIPPC is the anti-party-hopping rule intended to reduce the 'horse-trading' that can go on after the election (or after a no-confidence vote in Parliament) by tying elected members to the party that nominated them and with which that member first votes. The tough penalty for crossing the floor is the declaration of a vacancy for that seat and the fighting of a by-election. A sweetener is offered to the parties in the form of a small subsidy from the State to help defray the costs of the organisational requirements of the law. Fiji's 1997 Constitution has a similar anti-party-hopping rule covering not just resignations from the party but expulsion, provided the expulsion was within the rules of a registered political party and does not relate to the parliamentarians' work in a parliamentary committee.⁵⁰ The Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are studying these initiatives closely.

Engineering party systems can also be achieved through the voting method employed. Fraenkel points out that Pacific Island nations use a variety of electoral systems and some favour political party systems more than others, though he also notes that the eventual impacts might differ markedly from those intended by the designers. There is no doubt that some institutional designs are less appropriate than others. PNG's first-past-the-post system leading to pluralities in the single digits did much to undermine confidence in the electoral process. It follows that reforms in institutional designs are necessary and beneficial. But the record is not positive in relation to the use of institutional redesign to re-engineer political systems. The more ambitious the intention of the redesign, the less likely it is to succeed. In relation to political parties, neither the Fiji Constitution of 1997 nor OLIPPC have yet borne fruit. The Pacific Islands might prove to be so under-systematised as to be impervious to institutional redesign.

Conclusions

Two caveats need to be placed before attempting to pull some of the threads together. The first has already been alluded to: there is no one-size-fits-all description or analysis applicable to the Pacific Islands. The polities differ in their sizes, economies, histories and politics. The case studies in this volume extend from Timor-Leste to Sāmoa, a distance greater than from London to New Delhi, so it is not surprising to find significant political differentiations among them. Having accepted this caveat, it remains that five of the seven case studies are polities with native Melanesian populations. Timor-Leste and Sāmoa act as bookends to the Melanesians and share some of the geographic attributes and development challenges. The region therefore lends itself to political generalisations tempered by the need occasionally to take note of exceptions to the rule.

The other caveat concerns the place of political parties in the broader issue of society. Many problems concerning political parties and criticisms of their conduct appear in this and other chapters. This might lead to the erroneous conclusion that political parties are the fundamental problem plaguing Pacific Island societies. If only it were that simple. Village life might well continue at its normal rhythms in many places in the Pacific Islands, economically sustained by fishing and subsistence farming, and spiritually sustained by church and tradition. Some of these villages might be touched by modernisation and globalisation in only the most tangential of ways and thus have little contact with the insti-

tutions of modern political life. This is often the South Seas idyll imagined by urbanites in their cold Western cities. But world history and the global economy insist that these polities behave as nations and this is where the problems begin. Establishing, managing and sustaining the governance institutions of a nation in the modern world are tasks that Pacific Island polities are finding particularly difficult to achieve. The reasons for this must be left to other publications in this and other disciplines, but the point to be made is that before we even get to the problems of political parties we must traverse a forest of other national problems; before we arrive at Westminster, we must pass through Westphalia.

If national and industrial revolutions stoke the furnace in which so many political parties are forged, then the Pacific Islands have difficulty in raising the temperature to the required intensity. Generally speaking, the Pacific Island nations are pre-industrial. Village life remains the ideal and while the trend to urbanisation exists, it has not led to the formation of organised working classes. In Fiji, there is something of an exception to the rule in that the FLP is built on the bedrock of Indo-Fijian cane workers and has recruited urban textile workers. The level of development in New Caledonia has also had the effect of a quasi-industrial revolution in its creation of segments of society with common economic perspectives and grievances. But these are timid exceptions when compared with the great workers' parties of the developed world.

The story in relation to national revolutions is more complex and varied. Perhaps it can best begin with the only nation in the Pacific Islands not to be colonised, Tonga. The Kingdom of Tonga was certainly influenced by British colonisers but it remained independent and under the stewardship of its monarchy. Tongans share a common history and see themselves as a people distinct from Maori or Melanesians, but it could not be said that they have had any sort of a national revolution. The struggle in Tonga is that of commoners against nobility and it is played out in polite slow motion. Perhaps one day the nobility's excesses will spur commoners to greater action, but until that time, there are no political parties in Tonga. The Solomon Islands, lightly colonised by the British, comprises a number of islands, including the two most prominent, Guadalcanal and Malaita. Friction between these groups contributed to the violence that ravaged the country. The combatants were militia ostensibly representing the interests of their fellow Islanders. To reiterate a point made earlier, it is noteworthy that the system produced militia to take on these grievances but no political parties to do so.

The closest historical parallel to a national revolution has been the process of gaining independence. As in Africa, the elites leading the independence movements reimaged their lands and islands in accordance with the maps drawn by their colonisers. The debate was not about the return to the pre-national existence of pre-colonialism, but rather the demand to take over the local institutions of colonial governance. The national revolution took place by way of this thought transfer. All at once, disparate peoples became ni-Vanuatu or Solomon Islanders or Papua New Guineans. The problem with this conceptual revolution is that it has been restricted to a small band of urban educated leaders. The majority of the people of these nations think of themselves primarily and perhaps at times exclusively in terms of their village, their island or their *wantok*. The nation suggested by map-makers remains a sparsely imagined construct. Little wonder that we do not see broadly based political parties emerging.

It is the struggle for independence that was the primary force in forging the first political parties. In that sense, the Pacific Islands follow African precedent ahead of European models. The comparison with African examples sheds light on a key difference. Decolonisation in the Pacific Islands was more of a debate than a struggle. To continue the blacksmith's analogy, the fires generated by these debates were sufficient to form political parties but perhaps not to forge them strongly enough to withstand the passing of time and memory. While Fretilin might yet prove to be the exception, the decades since independence have seen the bearers of that mantle fall back to the field. Perhaps the conclusion to be drawn here is that the more intense the independence struggle and the greater the need to form strong, broadly based and disciplined national liberation movements, the greater the likelihood that the emerging political party will have the longevity and organisational ability to make a prominent if not dominant place for itself in the newly independent state.

The first generation of leaders has passed or they are on their last political legs in the Pacific Islands. Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, Walter Lini, Matā'afa Fiamē Faumuina Mulinu'ū and Jean-Marie Djibaou have all died. Michael Somare has been politically resurrected in PNG. Peter Kenilorea is the non-elected non-partisan Speaker in Solomon Islands. Mari Alkatiri in Timor-Leste is the exception in that he probably sees himself as the long-term leader of his country. They are all better known than the parties they led, again with the exception of Alkatiri's Fretilin. Ratu Mara's once formidable Alliance Party has disappeared. Matā'afa in Sāmoa always saw himself as above parties anyway. Walter Lini and Michael Somare abandoned the parties they helped form. This is a rather sorry record from the point of view of political parties and suggests that leaders are the more prominent political institution.

The conclusion to be drawn is that personalisation of politics is a more enduring feature of the Pacific Islands than its systematisation. The regrettable corollary is that opportunism generally wins out over policy in such a system. One highly visible manifestation of this situation is the prevalence of party splits, walkouts, revolts and abandonments. Fretilin has so far been spared but its prominence is in part due to the dismemberment of the CNRT, of which it had been a leading member. Virtually all the major Melanesian political parties have been subject to this fissiparous phenomenon. Gelu provides a striking example in cataloguing the splits in the Pangu Pati, starting with the first split in 1985 followed by further splits in 1986, 1988, 1992, 1994 and two in 1997.⁵¹ Melanesian 'big man' concepts seem to militate in favour of rugged individualism and personal ambitions over disciplined membership of a group and broad societal ambitions. There does not appear to be an imminent circuit-breaker for this cycle of splits. Melanesian politics therefore appears to have an almost inevitable trend towards high fragmentation. It is a fragmentation not based on representing the spectrum of policy positions but generated by personal ambitions and narrow small-group interests. This clearly does not augur well for the systematisation of the party system, or for stability in politics. The Pacific Islands region is therefore probably behind Africa in terms of the systemisation of political parties.

Perhaps the most positive comment open is that Pacific Island electoral politics is in its early years and might well mature into a more stable and cohesive framework in which

political parties play the role foreseen by the theorists. This could support an argument situating many of the parties in Duverger's description of the party of notables. This is an early manifestation of the political party with narrow membership and thin organisation. Gunther and Diamond begin their typology at the same spot and this would be the closest point at which Pacific Island parties could be accommodated. But there are hints of other typologies as well. Staying with Gunther and Diamond, the notables or big men have certainly adopted clientelist features into their political philosophy, though the parliamentarian himself is all too often the principal client. There are some suggestions of ethnic parties, especially in Fiji and New Caledonia, but not within the predominantly uni-racial nations. There might well be a trend towards denominational parties with the increasing prominence of the churches in politics. Personalist parties are common but not strong. And there is a hint of a party with Leninist dispositions in Timor-Leste. These classifications are helpful for analysis and comparisons but there is an inevitable degree of artificiality in applying them to a system with such weak party systems.

The comparison with the early parliamentary periods in other polities might be more to the point. Political parties at this point of political development resemble clubs more than disciplined organisations. There might be a concept of club membership and livery but it tends to be loose to the point of interchangeability. The members of these clubs are primarily constituent representatives and ambitious individuals with quite narrow goals and often consumed with the reality that they might have only one parliamentary term in which to achieve them. Eventually, changes in the demands of society, the rules of parliament and the stability and longevity of the political system would lead these clubs to the path of parties. This might be the path down which the Pacific Island polities are currently meandering.

Footnotes

- 1 Diamond, Larry. 1999. *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press. p. 96.
- 2 Rich, Roland. In press. 'Reviewing Democracy in the Pacific: Participation and Deliberation.' In Steven Ratuva (ed.), *A Kind of Civility: Civil Society, Development and Governance in the Pacific*.
- 3 Steven Ratuva in his chapter in this volume lists seven (Micronesia, Niue, Nauru, Palau, Tokelau, Tonga and Tuvalu) of 15 polities as having no political parties, while Cook Islands (three), Kiribati (two) and Marshall Islands (one) might have political parties but have very small populations and thus tend to be difficult to analyse on the assumption of systemisation. Anckar and Anckar in their study of the Pacific Island states without political parties accept that diminutive size is a reason but also point to 'cultural resistance' in the form of tradition, which obstructs political party formation: Anckar, Dag and Carsten Anckar. 2000. 'Democracies Without Parties.' *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 33, March. pp. 225–47. The problem with this argument is that cultural resistance in similar Pacific polities has not stopped political parties from being formed, leaving diminutive size as the dominant reason.
- 4 Australia, France, New Zealand, Portugal and the UK plus pre-World War I German colonisation of New Guinea and Sāmoa, and Indonesian colonisation of East Timor.

- 5 Hau'ofa, Epeli. 1994. 'Our sea of islands', *The Contemporary Pacific*, Vol. 6, No. 1. pp. 148–61, at p. 160.
- 6 Fry, Greg. 2004. 'Whose Oceania? Contending visions of community in Pacific region-building.' *Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Department of International Relations Working Paper*, 2004/03. pp. 6–7; See Fry, Greg. 1994. 'International cooperation in the South Pacific: From regional integration to collective diplomacy.' In W. Andrew Axline (ed.), *The political economy of regional cooperation*. London: Pinter Press.
- 7 Fry, 1994, *ibid.*
- 8 Fraenkel, Jon. 2004. 'The Coming Anarchy in Oceania? A Critique of the "Africanisation of the South Pacific" Thesis.', *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Vol. 42, No. 1. pp. 1–34.
- 9 Somare, Michael. 1975. *Sana — An Autobiography of Michael Somare*. Port Moresby: Niugini Press. p. 51.
- 10 Rich, Roland. 2003. "The Quality of Democracy in the Pacific", *New Zealand International Review*, Vol. 27, No. 6. pp. 10–15.
- 11 Strom, Kaare. 1995. 'Political Parties.' In Seymour Martin Lipset (Editor in Chief), *The Encyclopaedia of Democracy*, Vol. III, London: Routledge. p. 923.
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