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Comparing Across Regions: Parties and Political Systems in Indonesia and the Pacific Islands¹

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Abstract

In contrast to Indonesia, politics in the Pacific Islands seems at first sight more parochial, more fluid and less party-centred. Yet although party systems play a much more robust role at the national level in Indonesia, at the local level, Indonesian politics bears some similarity to those in the Pacific, especially in Melanesia. This paper seeks out patterns of similarity and difference in political competition in Indonesia and the Pacific Islands. We survey five major factors shaping the nature of the party systems in the two regions: 1) broad context (size, geography and economic prosperity); 2) the role of electoral systems and the rules governing parties; 3) ethnic and religious identities; 4) ideological issues or their absence; and 5) how patronage shapes political allegiances. Despite obvious differences, we find some similar patterns of loose and fluid political party allegiances at the local level.



How do we begin to compare the political party systems of Indonesia and those of the Pacific Island states? At first glance, the differences appear immense. Indonesia is a single country, with (barring a few exceptions in special regions) a unified set of rules governing political parties, elections and parties. Its party system is relatively robust, with a moderate number of effective parties and considerable continuity between electoral cycles. Some of the major parties have

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organisational histories that stretch back four decades or more, to the early period of authoritarian rule; a few can trace their roots, albeit less directly, back to the early and mid-twentieth century, to the era of anti-colonial politics and the early years after independence in 1945. Although there is relatively little differentiation between the major parties on policy grounds, many of the large parties are identified with more-or-less distinctive cultural communities, giving the party system a degree of social ballast missing in less institutionalised party systems. At the same time, over the three electoral cycles since the downfall of the authoritarian leader, President Suharto, in 1998 (with national legislative elections held in 1999, 2004 and 2009) there has been a general trend of parties increasingly appealing to the political centre, and the strengthening of catch-all moderate parties (with the current President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's Partai Demokrat being the chief exemplar of this trend).

By contrast, the Pacific Island states were decolonised much later, and have no singular political history nor any unified institutional framework. Samoa, the first to decolonise in 1962, eventually established a reasonably robust hegemonic party system, while Fiji, New Caledonia and French Polynesia developed political party cleavages that reflected either ethnic polarisation or fissions over the issue of independence from France. Elsewhere, party systems proved either weak or non-existent. Nauru, Tuvalu, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Niue and Palau have no political parties at all. In Western Melanesia, parties of a sort exist, but allegiances are highly fluid, and side-switching in search of ministerial portfolios is frequent. Whereas Indonesia has a long history of authoritarian rule, most of the Pacific Island states have had regular elections, retain relatively independent judiciaries and have a more or less free press. The exception is Fiji, with coups in 1987, 2000 and 2006, although the Solomon Islands witnessed the forced removal of an elected government in June 2000.² Indonesia was a nation forged in the midst of the global polarisation engendered by the Cold War, whereas most of the Pacific states achieved independence only in the 1970s and 1980s. Many of the Pacific territories are still not fully decolonised, but remain closely linked either to France (New Caledonia, French Polynesia, Wallis & Futuna), New Zealand (Tokelau) or the USA (Guam, American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas) or else have special 'free association'

² This was not strictly a 'coup', if only because the courts later ruled that the constitution had not been breached. Twenty five days after the 5 June removal of the government of Bartholomew Ulufa'alu, parliament sat and elected a new Prime Minister (the story is told in Fraenkel, J. 2004. *The Manipulation of Custom; From Uprising to Intervention in the Solomon Islands*. Canberra: Pandanus, pp. 87-94).

agreements with a metropolitan power (Republic of the Marshall Islands, FSM and Palau with the USA, and Cook Islands and Niue with New Zealand).

Despite those historical and contextual differences, there exist some similarities in the patterns of party contestation and political leadership in parts of Indonesia and the Pacific Islands, especially as regards the western Pacific. Although party systems play a robust role at the national level in Indonesia – as in most countries of Southeast Asia – at the more local level, where list proportional representation (PR) thresholds are inapplicable³, politics bears some resemblance to that in the western Pacific Islands. Particularly in the eastern part of Indonesia, but also in remote and rural districts more generally, electoral contestation tends to focus on small-scale and highly personalised factors. Commenting on the gubernatorial election of 2006 in the Indonesian part of the island of New Guinea, for example, Mietzner notes that ‘the role of political parties in the elections in Papua was as insignificant as in the rest of the archipelago’.⁴ Chauvel comments that ‘in the competitions between indigenous Papuan candidates, it appears that local ethnic and tribal identities have been more important than the policies of political parties the candidates formally represent’. He also notes that ‘among the most senior Papuan politicians, there is considerable flexibility in party allegiance’ and that for many ‘party allegiance is a matter of short-term pragmatism and a product of the legal requirement that candidates must be nominated by a national party’.⁵ Similarly, in gubernatorial elections in Maluku, Tomsa points to the ‘almost complete irrelevance of political parties as effective vehicles for campaign support and voter mobilization’.⁶ Fluidity of allegiances and prominence of personalized loyalties are also hallmarks of Melanesian politics.

While Melanesian styles of political contestation are most apparent in the eastern part of Indonesia, similarities do not abruptly halt at the Wallace line, which divides eastern from western Indonesia. The introduction of *pilkada* (direct elections of local government heads) since 2005 has weakened national-level

³ In Indonesia, parties that do not obtain 2.5% of the vote do not obtain seats at the national parliament, and there exists political pressure to further raise that threshold (*Jakarta Globe*, 12 March 2012).

⁴ Mietzner, M. 2009. “Autonomy, Democracy and Internal Conflict; the 2006 Gubernatorial Elections in Papua.” In *Deepening Democracy in Indonesia?: Direct Elections for Local Leaders (Pilkada)*, edited by M. Erb & P. Sulistiyanto, 259-82. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, p. 276.

⁵ Chauvel, R. 2010. “Electoral Politics and Democratic Freedoms in Papua.” In *Problems of Democratization in Indonesia: Elections, Institutions and Society*, edited by E. Aspinall & M. Mietzner, 307-29. Singapore : Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, p. 321, p. 323, p. 324.

⁶ Tomsa, D. 2009. “Electoral Democracy in a Divided Society: The 2008 Gubernatorial Election in Maluku, Indonesia.” *South East Asia Research* 17 (2): 229-59, p. 230.

parties. As Buehler and Johnson Tan observe 'Indonesia's system has gone from one in which parties were seen to have a stranglehold on politics to one in which, at least in the regions, they were significantly weakened, reduced to service providers for local power-holders'.⁷ Locally popular candidates attach themselves to the party offering them the best deal, and parties choose candidates with the greatest financial muscle.⁸ Especially in more remote areas of the archipelago with complex ethnic compositions and the presence of locally influential strongmen who mobilise support through clan, village or other personalised networks, this pattern has given rise to local party systems that are weakly institutionalised and deeply fragmented.

This paper examines the roles played by political structures and social cleavages in determining the party structures of Indonesia and the Pacific Islands, focussing both on areas of similarity and key contrasts. We survey five major factors shaping the nature of the party systems in the two regions: 1) broad context (size, geography and economic prosperity); 2) the role of the electoral system and rules governing political parties; 3) the influence of ethno-linguistic and religious identities; 4) the extent to which ideological issues underpin cleavages; and 5) the role of patronage in shaping political allegiances. Despite the obvious differences, we find some similar patterns of fluidity in political contestation at the local level.

Size, Geography and Economic Prosperity

How do the basic features of the two regions' economic and physical geography affect their party systems? Indonesia is the fourth most populous country in the world, with approximately 240 million people, giving it a population that is far larger than the entire Pacific Islands region. Indonesia has over 17,000 islands, of which just under 1,000 are inhabited, with a total land area of 1.9 million square kilometres, (most of which is concentrated in the five biggest islands of Sumatra, Borneo, Papua, Sulawesi and Java). Large size prompts a degree of cohesion in the political system that is absent in smaller and less populated states. In such a sizable country, political actors have incentives to create strong parties if they wish to be able to coordinate political identities, interests and actions on the national stage. Historically, the strongest mechanism linking Indonesia's size and

⁷ Buehler, M. & P. Tan. 2005. "Party-Candidate Relationships in Indonesian Local Politics: A Case study of the 2005 regional elections in Gowa, South Sulawesi Province." *Indonesia* 84: 41-69, p. 65.

⁸ Ufen, A. 2008. "From Aliran to Dealignment: Political Parties in Post-Suharto Indonesia." *South East Asia Research* 16, (1): 4-41, p. 26, p. 33.

diversity to the strength of its national political system has been a negative one: anxiety about disintegrative tendencies. Since the earliest years of the Indonesian nationalist movement in the first part of the twentieth century, political leaders have been preoccupied with the importance of maintaining national unity and pre-empting or repressing disintegrative forces. In the period since the collapse of the Suharto regime, these concerns have led, as we shall see, to features of party and electoral system design that have been deliberately intended to foster strong national parties.

If Indonesia is viewed not merely as a single unit, but disaggregated into its constituent parts, the country is as diverse in geographical and economic terms – if not politically – as the Pacific region. Most Indonesian provinces are larger both in terms of land area and population than the majority of Pacific Island states (see table 1 below). While the western part of New Guinea comprises the largest land mass in eastern Indonesia, Papua New Guinea (PNG) is the most sizable of the Pacific Island states (see figure 1 below). Whereas PNG is also the Pacific Islands' most populous state, the western part of the island has a considerably smaller population than densely populated islands like Java and Sumatra. Indeed, both PNG and Papua/West Papua are relatively sparsely populated, at least by comparison with central Indonesia.⁹ Economically, Indonesia is extremely varied, ranging from the highly developed urban centres of Jakarta and several of the other major cities, with their sophisticated manufacturing and service sectors, to the economically backward and rural provinces where much of the population survive on subsistence agriculture or fisheries, as in North Maluku or West Nusa Tenggara. Several provinces such as Papua and East Kalimantan are endowed with great oil, gas and minerals wealth, though the high regional GDP figures are not matched by high human development index measures (in which Papua and West Papua continue to score at or near the very bottom). PNG is easily the most resource-rich of the Pacific Island states, but is lowest on the Pacific ladder as regards GDP *per capita* and the human development index. Earnings from successive mineral resources and logging booms have been squandered by political elites, while average standards of living remain relatively stagnant.

The extent of national integration in Indonesia far surpasses that in PNG, Solomon Islands or Vanuatu. In Jakarta and other major cities, highly politically literate populations are avid consumers of political news and critical observers of the doings of the parties and politicians. People in many of the provincial capitals

⁹ For figures on population density, see UNESCAP. Indonesia: Country Report on Local Government Systems, available online @ <http://www.unescap.org/huset/lgstudy/new-countrypaper/Indonesia/Indonesia.pdf>.

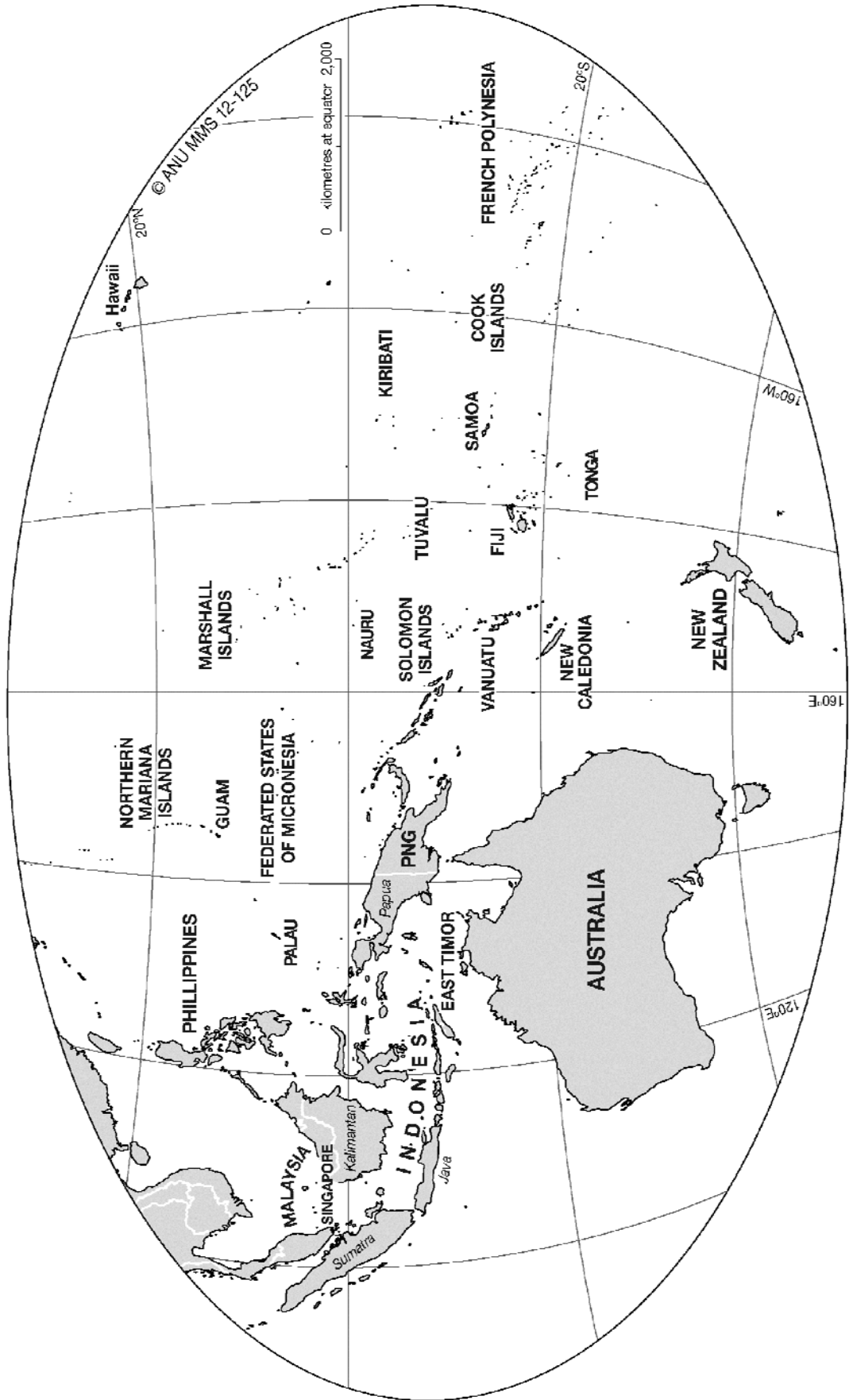


Figure 1 | Indonesia and the Pacific Islands

Table 1 | Population and GDP Per Capita; Indonesia and the Pacific Islands Compared

	Land Area Sq Km (1)	Population 000s (2)	GDP <i>per capita</i> Current \$US (3)
Indonesia	1919,440	239,870.9	2,400
Selected provinces:			
Jakarta	12,786	9,588.2	8,200
Aceh	57,956	4,486.6	1,900
North Sumatra	72,981	12,985.1	1,200
East Kalimantan	204,534	3,550.6	11,300
West Java	35,377	43,021.8	1,600
Central Java	40,800	32,380.7	1,200
East Java	47,799	37,476.0	1,900
Bali	5,780	3,891.4	1,600
West Nusa Tenggara	18,572	4,496.9	900
East Nusa Tenggara	48,718	4,679.3	500
West Papua	97,024	760.9	1,900
Papua	319,036	2,851.0	2,900
North Maluku	31,982	1,035.5	400
Pacific Island States			
Fiji	18,273	839.3	3,200
Vanuatu	12,281	233.0	1,900
Solomon Islands	30,407	517.5	1,100
Papua New Guinea	462,840	7,059.7	1,100
Cook Islands	237	15.5	10,000
Tonga	650	102.7	1,900
Samoa	2,935	179.6	2,900
Tuvalu	26	9.7	1,600
Niue	259	1.5	5,900
Palau	444	20.2	8,400
Nauru	21	10.1	2,800
Micronesia, Fed. States	701	110.4	2,200
Marshall Islands	181	53.2	2,900
Kiribati	811	97.2	700

Sources: UNDP, *Pacific Human Development Report*, 2008, Suva, unpublished; <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL>; land area from SPC, PRISM website, <http://www.spc.int/prism/>. PNG population figure updated to take account of the 2011 census, reported in *Post-Courier*, 4 April 2012. Indonesia figure is for *GNI per capita*, 2010, <http://data.worldbank.org/country/indonesia>. Indonesia per capita GDP figures are for 2008 and are derived from the Badan Pusat Statistik website: Indonesian population figures are based on the 2010 census: http://dds.bps.go.id/eng/download_file/SP2010_agregat_data_perProvinsi.pdf Land area for Indonesian provinces is from the Department of Internal Affairs: <http://www.depdagri.go.id/pages/data-wilayah>

are no less politically attuned, especially given the emergence since the fall of the Suharto regime of a lively regional media landscape, much of which is focused on corruption scandals and development policy failures in local politics.¹⁰ However, approximately 55% of the population still lives in rural areas and about 40% are employed in agriculture. In some parts of the country (especially Java) where the physical and social distance between urban or peri-urban populations and villages is relatively close, it is difficult to find evidence of any significant distinction between rural and urban politics (with one chief exception being that the National Awakening Party [PKB], which is strongest in Central and East Java as well as in South Kalimantan, and is predominantly rural, being rooted in the traditionalist Islamic sub-culture base of the rural Islamic boarding schools or pesantren).

Once one goes to more remote parts of Indonesia, where societies are dominated by agriculture and where roads and other physical infrastructure are undeveloped, there is a tendency toward weaker and more fragmented party systems. In many of the more remote districts, especially in Papua and other parts of eastern Indonesia, but also in provinces such as North Sumatra in the far west, there are almost as many parties represented in districts' parliaments as there are seats in those parliaments. Some parties are better able to sustain a homogeneous presence in rural Indonesia than others. One of the most consistent patterns in the post-Suharto political party system has been the relative strength of the Golkar party, the party of the old Suharto regime, outside of Java. That party is particularly strong in relatively underdeveloped parts of Eastern Indonesia. Other parties, especially the major national-secular parties, Partai Demokrat (the party of the current president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono) and PDI-P (Indonesia Democracy Party – Struggle) of former president Megawati Soekarnoputri, have broad national spread.

The larger Pacific Islands polities show no tendency towards more robust party systems than the smaller states.¹¹ The region has tiny micro-states like Tuvalu, Nauru and Niue with populations of 10,000 or less, as well as more sizeable states, like Fiji (837,000), Solomon Islands (553,000) and PNG (7.1 million). The smallest states – such as Niue, Tuvalu and Tokelau – lack even nominal parties.

¹⁰ Sen, K. & D.T. Hill. 2000. *Media, Culture and Politics in Indonesia*. South Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

¹¹ Anckar and Anckar suggest that small size is the explanation for the lack of political parties in Palau, FSM, Kiribati, Marshall islands, Nauru and Tuvalu, but they offer no explanation as to why some larger neighbouring states have either very weak political parties or lack any political parties (see Anckar, D. & C. Anckar. 2000. "Democracies without Parties." *Comparative Political Studies* 33 (2): 225-47).

Many of the Polynesian and Micronesian countries are not only minute but also spread across huge areas of sea. Kiribati and French Polynesia, for example, have Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) of 3.55 million sq km and 5 million sq km respectively.¹² Even for the larger Pacific states, internal dispersion – that is, having numerous scattered outer islands separated by sea – influences national cohesiveness, and limits scope for political communications. The interior, too, can comprise a formidable barrier. Although it has the largest land area, PNG has a rugged mountainous interior and a poor road system, both of which tend to entrench localism. In PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, the state has only a very weak presence in many rural parts of the country.

Improved communications in the post-colonial Pacific Islands have strengthened the influence of national politics. Particularly in the richer Pacific nations or near the capital cities, television and radio, as well as the print media, have made urban politics accessible to many Pacific Islanders. Mobile phone communications have spread even in the poorer nations, with new networks established by companies such as Digicel, B-Mobile and Vodafone. Yet the penetration of communications technologies remains limited in parts of the region. At most only a third of households in PNG have radios.¹³ In Pacific urban areas, interest in politics is often considerable, and turnout at elections more generally – if measured accurately – is high.¹⁴ Away from capital cities or main islands, interest in national politics remains acute, but communications are often much weaker. One exception is Kiribati, which has a national radio system that reaches across the scattered group, despite the vast distances involved.¹⁵ In contrast, television has become an important mechanism for obtaining information for 83% of the Indonesian population. Jakarta-based political parties have considerably sharpened techniques for reaching villagers through mass media since the 1950s.¹⁶

There is little evidence of any correlation between economic prosperity and the character of Pacific Islands' party systems. Of the more prosperous independent states, the Cook Islands has a party system (though shifts of allegiance are commonplace), whereas Palau has not. Nauru has slipped dramatically in

¹² Since French Polynesia remains a French territory, its EEZ contributes to France's total area of 7.2 million sq km.

¹³ Government of Papua New Guinea & UNDP. 1999. *Sustainable Human Development*. Port Moresby, p. 12.

¹⁴ Official turnout figures tend to be biased downwards by the usually poor state of the electoral rolls, which often include many deceased or departed residents. If accurately measured, turnout would probably be above 90% in rural areas.

¹⁵ See Fraenkel, J. 2009. Legislative Needs Assessment Kiribati. UNDP, April 2009.

¹⁶ Ufen, A. 2008. "From Aliran to Dealignment: Political Parties in Post-Suharto Indonesia." p. 37.

prosperity due to the depletion of phosphate resources on that island, but political parties have never formed.¹⁷ In Polynesia and Micronesia, countries are frequently resource-poor without that necessarily entailing low GDP *per capita*. Samoa and Tonga have large shares of their populations overseas – in Australia, New Zealand or North America – who send sizable remittances back to their kinsfolk. Others, like the Marshall Islands, rely on strategic assets, such as the Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile Testing Range on Kwajalein, or on tourism (Cook Islands, Tahiti).¹⁸ In the smallest states, where politics is usually highly personalized, politically dominant factions tend to be able to prevent their political opponents from establishing rival parties. Where such parties do form, often very temporarily, these are usually short-lived vehicles aimed at switching which faction holds office. Often after a single election, at which the rival faction either succeeds or fails, political party cleavages again become less salient.

Prosperity has greater influence on party systems when combined with close linkages with a metropolitan power. The United States (US) territories of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas have party systems that reflect the American mainland's Republican-Democrat cleavage, and Guam's linkages with the US are being strengthened by a large expansion of the US base on the island to cater for a relocation of American servicemen from Okinawa (Japan). The main loyalist parties in New Caledonia each have affinities with one or other of the conservative parties in France, and Paris underpins economic activity in this overseas territory with large aid subventions. The Australian and New Zealand political parties have no such Pacific counterparts but nor do they have such closely integrated territories amongst the island states.

The Role of the Electoral System

The Pacific Islands defy conventional political science reasoning about the impact of electoral systems on the number of political parties. Duverger's law, which suggested that first-past-the-post (FPTP) systems tend to produce two-party systems while PR systems were more loosely associated with multi-party settings, does not fit the Pacific Islands experience.¹⁹ FPTP using countries, like PNG and Solomon Islands, have highly fragmented party systems, while list PR-

¹⁷ Brief exceptions were Naoero Amo (Nauru First) in 2003, and the Democratic Party of Nauru in the 1980s.

¹⁸ See Bertram, G. & R. Watters. 1985. "The MIRAB Economy in South Pacific Microstates." *Pacific Viewpoint* 26 (3): 497-519.

¹⁹ Okole, H. 2005. "The 'Fluid' Party System of Papua New Guinea." *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 43 (3): 362-81; Fraenkel, J. 2006. "Political Consequences of Pacific Island Electoral Laws." In *Political Parties in the Pacific Islands*, edited by Rich, R., L. Hambly & M. Morgan, 43-68. Canberra: Pandanus.

using New Caledonia during the civil conflict of the 1980s saw a two camp polarisation between pro-independence Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front (FLNKS) and the French loyalist Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la République (RPCR). Elsewhere the impact of the choice of voting system has still less obvious consequences for party systems: Kiribati has a multi-member two round system; Nauru has a unique simultaneously tallied preferential system and Tuvalu uses a two-member block voting system. All three states have bitter battles between parliamentary factions, but no political parties (though Kiribati's factions sometimes describe themselves as 'parties'). Whereas a considerable political science literature focuses on the impact of key variables – such as electoral system design and ethnic heterogeneity – on the *number* of political parties²⁰, there has been less research devoted to the impact of such variables on the presence or absence of parties.

Changes in proportional electoral laws in Vanuatu and New Caledonia have had important repercussions for party systems. At independence in 1980, the Anglo-French Condominium of the New Hebrides (Vanuatu) adopted the single non-transferable vote system (SNTV). At the time, the country was bitterly divided between an Anglophone majority, which largely backed Walter Lini's Vanua'aku Pati (VP), and a Francophone minority, which came together behind a Union of Moderate Parties (UMP). The Santo Rebellion in 1980 threatened to break-up the emerging Vanuatu state, but was suppressed by the deployment of British, French, and Papua New Guinean troops. The SNTV voting system was introduced because of its crudely proportional features, and its simplicity. Voters simply had to tick next to a single candidate, though the system is used in multi-member constituencies. Thus a francophone minority with say 30% of registered voters in a four-member constituency should be able to elect a single candidate, if it avoids splintering the vote among multiple candidates. Under FPTP, the VP probably would have gained a clean sweep (except in areas of heavily geographically concentrated francophone support, like the islands of Tanna and Santo). Such an outcome would, in the early 1980s context, have encouraged secessionist tendencies. By allowing some francophone representation, SNTV helped keep the country unified.

²⁰ Sartori, G. 2001. "The Party Effects of Electoral Systems." In *Political Parties and Democracy*, edited by L. Diamond & R. Gunther, 90-105. Baltimore & London: John Hopkins University Press; Lipset, S. 2000. "The Indispensability of Political Parties." *Journal of Democracy* 11 (1): 48-55; Neto, O. & G. Cox. 1997. "Electoral Institutions, Cleavage Structures and the Number of Parties." *American Journal of Political Science* 41 (1): 149-74; Ordeshook, P. & O. Shvetsova. 1994. "Ethnic Heterogeneity, District Magnitude, and the Number of Parties." *American Journal of Political Science* 38 (1): 100-23; Taagepera, R. 1999. "The Number of Parties as a function of Heterogeneity and Electoral System." *Comparative Political Studies* 32 (5): 531-48.

SNTV worked reasonably well for the first eleven years after independence – as long as the political contest was a two-party battle between VP and UMP. From the late 1980s, however, breakaway parties split away first from VP and then from UMP, usually generated by top-level conflicts between party leaders.²¹ As a result, Vanuatu entered a period of chronically unstable coalition governments. With repeated schisms amongst the main parties, the SNTV system became ever more difficult for the new splinter parties to handle, and votes/seats disproportionality increased.

In New Caledonia, which uses an Indonesian-style PR system but with closed lists, the raising of the threshold required to secure seats in the territorial assembly to 7.5% in the late 1970s was aimed at excluding the pro-independence parties (such as the Parti de Libération Kanak, with 6.5% of the vote in 1977). Instead, it encouraged a coming together of the Kanak groups behind a newly formed Front Indépendentiste which obtained 14 seats in 1979 as compared to the French loyalist RPCR's 15 seats. There followed a decade of severe social conflict, until agreement was reached on the 1988 Matignon Accord, which put off the vote on independence for ten years. In the meantime, 're-équilibre' ('re-balancing') was to entail greater funding for impoverished Kanak areas in the Northern province and the Loyalty Islands. A decade later, the parties agreed on a further delay before an independence vote in the 1998 Noumea Accord, and also introduced provisions for power-sharing in cabinet. Under the two accords, the pro- and anti-independentists have felt less pressure to each combine into single parties, or to back unified tickets at election-time. As a result, divisions have emerged on both sides²², a diffusion of the earlier bi-communal polarisation that usage of proportional representation assists.

In the countries that use majoritarian electoral laws, the character of the underlying cleavages proved a more decisive influence shaping political divisions than the electoral system. In Fiji, debates about the political repercussions of electoral laws have been an important part of political discourse at least since the 1960s.²³ The introduction of the alternative vote (AV) in 1997 was urged as a means of diminishing ethnic antagonism and reshaping the party system by encouraging more moderate parties, with the objective of triggering a shift

²¹ See Van Trease, H. 2005. "The Operation of the single non-transferable vote system in Vanuatu." *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 43 (3): 296-332.

²² Chappelle, D. 1999. "The Noumea Accord: Decolonisation without Independence in New Caledonia?" *Pacific Affairs* 72 (3): 373-91.

²³ See Lal, B. 2011. "Common Roll, Communal Roll, Proportional Representation: Historical Documents Related To The Search For A Suitable Electoral System For Fiji, 1968-1975." *State, Society & Governance in Melanesia Working Paper No. 1.*

towards the centre akin to that achieved since 1998 in Indonesia. Instead, a growing polarisation was witnessed over the three elections under the AV system in 1999, 2001 and 2006. Contrary to the expectations of its architects, AV proved compatible with a 'hollowing out' of the centre, with moderates losing support to more radical parties.²⁴ Fiji's system produced some highly erratic outcomes. Invalid or informal ballots stood at 9% in 1999, 12% in 2001 and 9% again in 2006, largely due to usage of an elaborate party ticket segment of the ballot paper (another downside of which was to ensure that party officials rather than voters controlled the movement of transferred ballots). Fiji's first coup had occurred in 1987, after an election under FPTP that yielded a largely Fiji Indian-backed government. Under the alternative vote, the country witnessed a further two coups, in 2000 and 2006, followed by the establishment of a military regime.

PNG adopted a simpler form of the AV system known as the limited preferential vote (LPV) in the wake of the 2002 elections (the voter must mark three preferences on the ballot paper). Here, the objective was to strengthen the party system. Under FPTP, the country had witnessed a rising number of candidates and a weak party system. By aggregating preferences, it was hoped, victor's majorities would increase and political parties would appeal across ethnic communities. General elections were held under the new system in 2007 and 2012. Although victors' majorities did increase, the number of candidates continued to rise, from twenty five in 2007 to thirty one in 2012. The party system remained as hyper-fractionalised as previously, with forty six parties registering to contest the 2012 elections and twenty one gaining seats in parliament. In fact, there was no logic to the expectation that AV would strengthen the party system. Even in Australia, where the system was introduced at federal level in 1918, the objective was to permit the non-Labor parties (Nowadays Liberal and National) to run separately but combine preferences.²⁵ In other words, AV makes easier the emergence of multiple parties in settings where, under FPTP, they might feel greater pressure to combine. In PNG, there was no trend towards a two party system under either electoral system because there was, and remains, no dominant political cleavage around which politicians or parties arrange themselves.

Indonesia, in contrast to the Pacific Island states, has produced an outcome that is more in line with what we would expect from Duverger's law. Usage of proportional representation has encouraged emergence of a multi-party system.

²⁴ See Fraenkel, J. & B. Grofman. 2006. "Does the Alternative Vote Foster Moderation in Ethnically Divided Societies? The Case of Fiji." *Comparative Political Studies* 39 (5): 623-51.

²⁵ Graham, B.D. 1962. "The Choice of Voting Methods in Federal Politics, 1902-1918." *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 8 (2): 164-81.

In the early discussions that accompanied the transition to democracy, the adoption of a single-member district system was considered but rejected because political leaders feared it could lead to the exclusion of significant minority groups. At the national-level, the country has developed a strongly institutionalized party system because only candidates who are members of registered political parties (which must in turn fulfil rather strict national presence requirements in order to register: see below) can stand for legislative elections at both national and sub-national (provincial and district/municipality) levels. At each of these levels, members of legislative bodies are elected using PR by voters in multi-member constituencies.²⁶ Opinion polling consistently shows widespread public disappointment with the political parties, yet the party system as a whole has remained relatively consistent and stable over the years since the first post-Suharto democratic elections in 1999.²⁷ There has been a gradual decline in the vote for established parties, as well as the emergence of important new entrants (the most significant of which has been President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's Partai Demokrat which won 7.45% when it first ran in 2004 and 20.85% in 2009). Overall, the decline in the established parties and the rise of new players has produced a relatively fragmented political system. No single party is able to dominate, and the number of reasonably large parties has tended upwards: the largest five parties accounted for 87% of the vote in 1999; the largest seven for around 80% in 2004; and the biggest nine for just over 80% in 2009.²⁸ Fragmentation of the party system has ensured cross-party alliance-building, and thus required the emergence in national political affairs of a focus on flexibility, opportunism and deal-making.²⁹ While not productive of effective government, this style of politics does preserve pluralism and prevent the escalation of communal tensions.

The degree of fragmentation has also been considerably constrained by the use of the post-2009 2.5% parliamentary threshold. In 2009, about 18% of valid votes were cast for parties that did not meet this threshold and therefore did not go on to be represented in the Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat (DPR). However, the parliamentary threshold is not applied at the provincial and district level, with

²⁶ District magnitudes were between 3 and 10 in 2009, down from 3-12 in 2004 for elections to Indonesia's People's Representative Council (DPR), the main law-making body in the country.

²⁷ Tomsa, D. 2009. "The Indonesian Party System after the 2009 Elections: Towards Stability?" In *Problems of Democratization in Indonesia: Elections, Institutions and Society*, edited by E. Aspinall & M. Mietzner, 141-59. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies; Mietzner, M. 2009. "Chaos and consolidation." *Inside Indonesia* 97, Available online @ <http://www.insideindonesia.org/edition-97-jul-sep-2009/chaos-and-consolidation-05071221>

²⁸ Aspinall, E. 2010. "Indonesia: The Irony of Success." *Journal of Democracy* 21 (2): 20-34, p. 26.

²⁹ Slater, D. 2004. "Indonesia's Accountability Trap: Party Cartels and Presidential Power after Democratic Transition." *Indonesia* 78 (October): 61-92.

the result that there is a significant disjuncture between representation at the national level and in the provinces or districts. For example, while the number of parties represented in the national parliament is nine, in the provincial parliaments the number varies from nine to eighteen (with much smaller legislative bodies).³⁰ Party fragmentation in the district parliaments is even higher (see further discussion below).

Indonesia's electoral system has been repeatedly modified by the national parliament since the first post-Suharto elections in 1999. The most dramatic change in the political party system, however, came in December 2008 as a result of a decision by the Constitutional Court to move Indonesia from a semi-open to a fully open PR list system. In Indonesia's first democratic election after the fall of the Suharto regime in 1999, a fully closed list operated, with members of the public simply voting for the party of their choice, and members of the legislature being elected in accordance with the order they were placed on the party list. This changed in the second election in 2004, when a semi-open list was introduced: voters could vote *either* for the party of their choice or for one of the individual candidates nominated by that party in their electoral district. There was a catch, however: to be elected, the individual candidate had to win a proportion of the vote equivalent to, or greater than, the entire quota necessary to elect one representative in that electoral district (for example, 10% of the entire vote in a district with ten members). Where this figure was not reached, the party list determined who was elected. In the end, only two candidates passed this very high bar and were elected in this way. A decision by the Constitutional Court before the 2009 election changed the system again, eliminating the requirement for candidates to win part of a quota (the law had already been changed reducing the benchmark for individual candidates from 100% to 30% of a quota) and instead determining that, if a party achieved a large enough overall vote in a district to have one of its candidates elected, then it would be the candidate with the largest individual vote who would take the seat.³¹

As might have been predicted by electoral theorists, the result was a much more candidate-focused election, with individual candidates devoting considerable resources to promoting their own candidacy and to competing against candidates from their own party in order to secure a larger individual vote (as it turned out, however, most winners were anyway candidates who were placed

³⁰ Tomsa, D. 2009. "The Indonesian Party System after the 2009 Elections: Towards Stability?" p. 155.

³¹ Sherlock, S. 2009. "Indonesia's 2009 Elections: The New Electoral System and the Competing Parties." Centre for Democratic Institutions Policy Paper: 1/2009.

first or second on party lists). In this respect, legislative elections have followed the direction of elections for executive government posts: early in Indonesia's 'reformasi' period governors and district heads/mayors were elected by legislative assemblies in the relevant regions, a system that led to considerable vote-buying and other forms of money politics. This system of indirect election was replaced by a system of direct elections. Initially candidates were required to be endorsed by political parties, or coalitions of political parties, that had won a minimum percentage of the vote or number of legislative seats in the relevant regional legislature at the previous election; this was overturned by the Constitutional Court in 2007, which ruled that independent candidates would also be allowed to run. These elections (known by the Indonesian abbreviation *pilkada*) are accordingly contests between individual candidates, in which the political party role is often minimal, though most candidates continue to be party nominees.

Another development has been the emergence of presidentialised parties, a by-product of the presidential system adopted by Indonesian constitution makers in the aftermath of the democratic transition and, especially, the introduction of direct presidential elections in 2004. The first and most important party to emerge along these lines was President Yudhoyono's Partai Demokrat, which was formed as a personal political vehicle for the former general, and draws into its membership and leadership a rag-tag collection of former bureaucrats and military officers, provincial businesspeople, and former student and NGO activists. In the 2009 legislative elections, when two other former generals, Wiranto and Prabowo Subianto, had presidential ambitions of their own, they headed parties with an equally heterogeneous social composition: respectively, Hanura (People's Conscience Party) and Gerindra (Movement for a Greater Indonesia Party). Respectively, these parties won only 4.6% and 3% of the vote nationally, insufficient to allow them to nominate their leaders, both of whom were forced to run as vice-presidential candidates alongside leaders of larger parties (Wiranto was the running mate of the Golkar party's Jusuf Kalla, Prabowo paired up with Megawati). At this point, however, the personal charisma and popularity of President Yudhoyono far outshone the other candidates, and he won an easy second term victory. At the same time, the much older PDI-P (see below) is also largely based on the personal authority and family appeal of its leader, former president Megawati Soekarnoputri (though this party does also have a distinctive social base). Despite this trend, however, the presidentialisation of the party system is far from complete, with significant parties still drawing on distinctive social constituencies (see below).

The Influence of Ethnic and Religious Identities

Indonesia and Melanesia both have a high degree of ethnic diversity. Indonesia is reported as having 719 living languages (276 of which are in Papua's two provinces), PNG 832, Vanuatu 109 and Solomon Islands 69.³² Taken together, Indonesia and Melanesia account for 25.6% of the world's total living languages, whereas Polynesia and Micronesia are much more ethno-linguistically homogeneous. This diversity in Melanesia, unsurprisingly, extends across the porous border that separates the island of New Guinea, and PNG from Indonesia. The 1.7 million indigenous people of the provinces of Papua and West Papua were estimated in the 2000 census to be divided amongst 312 ethnic groups. The biggest are the Lani and Dani/Ndani, who largely inhabit the interior, and the Biaks, who reside in coastal areas (together around 150,000 people), but the population is highly heterogeneous, with numerous smaller groups.³³ This pattern of a densely populated interior is also true of PNG, but not the other Melanesian Islands. The Polynesian and Micronesian islands are so small that proximity to the coast scarcely matters. In the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Fiji, colonial influences tended to encourage migration towards the coasts, and the interior became less densely populated. Nevertheless, the distinction between 'saltwater' and 'coastal' peoples, as seen in West Papua³⁴, also prevails across Melanesia.³⁵

In the Pacific Islands, ethno-linguistic identity generally does not directly influence party formation. *Wantok* (literally 'one-talk', that is common language-based) groups tend to be too small to provide a basis for party formation, and where larger identities are mobilised – such as 'Malaitans' in Solomon Islands or 'Highlanders' in PNG – these tend to be avoided as direct vehicles for electoral contestation or government formation. In Solomon Islands, for example, it would be politically contentious to forge a government without at least some representation from Malaita, Guadalcanal or the Western Province. Similarly in PNG, any government would be precarious without some representation from Papua, the Highlands and the islands region. Although secessionist movements have emerged in Melanesia, these have rarely formed the basis for robust

³² Data from Lewis, M.P., ed. 2009. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*. 16th ed. Dallas: SIL International. Available online @ <http://www.ethnologue.com/>.<http://www.ethnologue.com/>.

³³ McGibbon, R. 2004. *Plural Society in Peril: Migration, Economic Change, and the Papua Conflict*. Washington: East-West Center, Policy Studies 13, p. 31.

³⁴ Mietzner, M. 2009. "Autonomy, Democracy and Internal Conflict; the 2006 Gubernatorial Elections in Papua." p. 267; Chauvel, R. 2010. "Electoral Politics and Democratic Freedoms in Papua." p. 319.

³⁵ See Corriss, P. 1973. *Passage, Port and Plantation: a History of Solomon Islands Labour Migration, 1870-1914*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press.

political parties.³⁶ More usually political parties that aim to assume control of government office seek to forge cross-island or region balanced tickets (as we shall see below, careful ethnic balancing of tickets is also a feature of local executive government elections in Indonesia). Poorly constructed island-centric political parties can potentially be an obstacle to the construction of such cross-regional alliances, constraining flexibility in contexts where politics is dominated by nothing aside from the logic of putting together winning coalitions.

In Fiji, ethnic identity became central to electoral classifications, initially as a British legacy. The *Vola ni Kawa Bula* (VKB), or 'Register of Native Births', was originally a colonial invention to ease the way to acquisition of 'waste lands' (that is, where one could demonstrate that a *mataqali* [clan] was 'extinct', the land owned by that clan could be appropriated by the state as 'crown land').³⁷ Ironically, the VKB was to become the ethno-nationalists' rallying cry in defining true 'indigenous Fijian' identity. The British also left an electoral system classified by race. Under the 1970 independence constitution, Fiji had a complex system in which citizens had four votes – one in their own communal constituency, and another three in constituencies where candidates had to be Fijian, Indian or 'General' voters (so called 'cross-voting' or 'national' seats). This system was supposed to encourage emergence of candidates with a multi-ethnic appeal. It did not succeed, but it did encourage ethnically-based parties to become more adept at fielding multi-ethnic slates. In 1987, the victory of the largely Fiji Indian-backed Fiji Labour Party (FLP) precipitated a military coup, Fiji's first. Three years later in 1990, Fiji adopted a new constitution that reserved the positions of President and Prime Minister for ethnic Fijians and entailed adoption of an entirely communal basis for electoral organisation, with thirty seven seats reserved for indigenous Fijians and twenty seven for Fiji Indians.

Until 1987, the Fijian electoral rolls had included 'Other Pacific Islanders' (mostly the descendents of indentured labourers from PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu and peoples resettled from the island of Banaba [Ocean Island] in Kiribati). After the 1987 coup, the VKB became a more puritanical basis for the indigenous Fijian communal rolls. What the 'cross-voting' system did achieve was to assist communalist parties to become more adept at finding candidates from other communities willing to contest on their slates. As a result, ethnic voting in Fiji came to entail voting for communally identified political parties, regardless of

³⁶ In 1973, Papua Besena opposed Australia's grant of independence to a unified Papua New Guinea, and set out to resist perceived domination by New Guineans (from the northern part of the mainland). It drew most of its support from Port Moresby, and the Central Province. It won some seats at the first post-independence elections in 1977.

³⁷ See Scarr, D. 1984. *Fiji, a Short History*. Sydney: George Allen & Unwin.

the ethnicity of the candidates, and not voting for candidates simply on ethnic grounds. Fiji's Indian population had no difficulty supporting an indigenous candidate as long as he contested for the Fiji Labour Party, and largely Fijian parties generally likewise faced little trouble getting their Fiji Indian candidates elected on the basis of the indigenous vote. In other words, ethnic politics critically became party-centred as opposed to crudely individual identity-based, and in the process it became more sophisticated than often appreciated by Fiji commentators.

Fiji has also witnessed concerted efforts to overcome ethnic cleavages as expressed through electoral contests, though with limited success. The Fiji Indian population was deeply alienated by the 1987 coup, and around 80,000 officially left Fiji between 1987 and 2004, though actual numbers of Fiji Indians migrating during 1987-2004 were probably over 100,000.³⁸ Without out-migration, Fiji Indians would plausibly have numbered around 580,469 (50.9% of a total population of 1.14 million) rather than 298,180 (34.7%).³⁹ The 1990s also proved economically depressed for reasons other than out-migration, with investment particularly weak. In an effort to rescue the country, 1987 coup leader turned civilian Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka reached a compromise with Fiji Indian opposition leaders over a new constitution. The 1997 constitution brought the seat distribution back more closely into line with ethnic population shares, and introduced twenty five open seats where all citizens vote together. Nevertheless, the communal basis of electoral organisation remained, with forty six seats still disbursed along ethnic lines (twenty three to ethnic Fijians, nineteen to Fiji Indians, three to 'General Voters', and one for the people of the island of Rotuma). In elections held in 1999, 2001 and 2006, voting was sharply along ethnic lines. Fijian parties appealed to the indigenous electorate, but could get negligible support in the Indian electorates. Of the two largely Indian-backed parties – FLP and the National Federation Party (NFP) – the FLP had some Fijians among its leaders in the 1990s, but averaged only around 3% of the vote in the Fijian communal electorates. The failure of efforts to transcend cleavages through electoral politics was one of the reasons given by the military for orchestrating Fiji's third coup in December 2006.

³⁸ Mohanty gives the figures for declared emigration, but the figures for net Fiji Indian out-migration (departures minus arrivals) are considerably larger. Many Fiji Indians migrate without declaring themselves as migrants. See Mohanty, M. 2006. "Globalisation, New Labour Migration and Development in Fiji." In *Globalisation and Governance in the Pacific Islands*, edited by S. Firth. Canberra: ANU EPress, p. 112, and Fiji Bureau of Statistics, net migration data.

³⁹ Author's calculation based on extrapolation from 1976-1986 Fiji Indian growth-rates for the period 1986-2013.

In New Caledonia, the influence of ethnicity on political parties has been less direct than in Fiji. The major loyalist parties have been able to rely on some degree of Kanak support, as well as considerable backing from other settlers, including those from the territory of Wallis and Futuna. Under New Caledonia's 1998 Noumea Accord, a referendum on independence was to be held within fifteen to twenty years, with powers gradually devolved from Paris to Noumea in the intervening period. At the same time, new criteria for the right to vote entail a novel definition of 'citizenship' (breaching Gaullist doctrines of the 'indivisible republic') which excludes those who have resided for only a short period in New Caledonia.⁴⁰ The new basis for the electoral rolls (which does not apply for elections to the French Presidency or National Assembly) is not strictly ethnic, but it has the impact of excluding a substantial portion of the more mobile French citizens. The Nouméa Accord required a nationwide referendum in 1998, held across mainland France and in the overseas departments and territories.

Indonesia has a high degree of both religious and ethnic diversity. The 2000 census identified 1,072 distinct ethnic groups.⁴¹ However, only the religious cleavages are represented in the party system. This outcome is in large part a product of deliberate party system design: when Indonesia made its transition to democracy a decision was made to stop ethnic or regional parties establishing a foothold. The intention was to prevent the 'disintegrative' tendencies that were then evident in local politics in many regions from being represented in the party system. Nevertheless, since Indonesia's independence (though with considerable modification during the years of the authoritarian New Order regime), the party system has significantly reflected socio-religious cleavages. In the 1950s, during Indonesia's first period of open parliamentary contestation, the term 'politik aliran' ('stream' politics) was introduced to describe this pattern. The major parties developed networks of affiliated mass organisations that penetrated, and were closely associated with, broad socio-religious constituencies.⁴² Masyumi was the party of the modernist Muslims, who were especially strong in urban areas, in West Java and in islands outside of Java, especially Sumatra; Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) represented traditionalist Muslims, who were especially numerous in East and Central Java and South Kalimantan; the two major secular-nationalist parties the Indonesian National Party (PNI) and the Indonesian Communist Party

⁴⁰ See Maclellan, N. 2010. "Under a New Flag. Defining Citizenship in New Caledonia." State, Society & Governance in Melanesia Discussion Paper No. 2.

⁴¹ Van Klinken, G. 2003. "Ethnicity in Indonesia." In *Ethnicity in Asia*, edited by C. Mackerras. London & New York: Routledge, p. 69.

⁴² A classic discussion can be found in Geertz, C. 1959. "The Javanese Village." In *Local, Ethnic and National Loyalties in Village Indonesia*, edited by G. William Skinner. New Haven: Yale University Cultural Report Series, p. 34-41.

(PKI) drew on the syncretic Javanese 'abangan' peasantry and non-Muslim minorities.

Indonesia's PR system was adopted in large part as a means to accommodate this multi-cultural setting. The party system has continued to retain an 'aliran' aspect, with elements of the old identities and cleavages of Indonesia's first democratic elections in the 1950s finding an echo in the post-Suharto elections. Thus, for example, Megawati Soekarnoputri's PDI-P, which is in large part a direct descendent and heir to the Sukarnoist PNI, obviously draws on a similar social constituency to its predecessor, appealing mostly to nominal and secular-oriented Muslims and members of religious minorities. PKB is an heir to NU, while the National Mandate Party (PAN) is associated with the modernist organisation Muhammadiyah; most of the other seven Islamic parties that contested the 2009 election can also be placed at particular points on the modernist-traditionalist spectrum, or represent coalitions of these forces. However, the social-religious map of Indonesia is now much more complex than it was in the 1950s, with widespread societal Islamisation and diversification in modes of Islamic piety meaning that there is far from an exact match between the old aliran map of the 1950s and that of contemporary Indonesia.

Moreover, two significant trends have been evident over the last two elections. On the one hand, there has been an overall decline in the share of the vote taken by explicitly Islamic-identified parties, dropping from 37% of the total in 2004 to around 24% in 2009.⁴³ On the other hand, there has also been a diminution of the degree to which the party system is polarised along the Islamic-secular cleavage, with movement toward the centre of the spectrum from both ends, driven by major parties' attempts to appeal to the median voter. Significant Islamic parties (most notably the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), a party that was inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood in the Middle East and other Brotherhood-linked parties such as Turkey's Justice and Development Party), have increasingly de-emphasised religious aspects of their party image, expressed strong commitment to pluralism and openness, and stressed their capacity to deliver public goods in the form of better economic development, greater social welfare, and cleaner government.⁴⁴ Major secular-nationalist parties, notably Golkar and Partai Demokrat, but even (though to a much lesser extent) PDI-P have at the same time increasingly expressed support for Islamic causes and relied more on Islamic

⁴³ Sukma, R. 2010. "Indonesia's 2009 Elections: Defective System, Resilient Democracy." *In Problems of Democratization in Indonesia: Elections, Institutions and Society*, edited by E. Aspinall & M. Mietzner, 53-74. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, p. 64.

⁴⁴ Tomsa, D. 2011. "Moderating Islamism in Indonesia: Tracing Patterns of Party Change in the Prosperous Justice Party." *Political Research Quarterly* 64 (1): 1-13.

symbols and figures in their campaigning. Taken together, these two trends mean that the party system is increasingly converging around a moderate centre that combines some expression of conservative Islamic social values with a broad commitment to Indonesia's national symbols and essentially plural social order and political system.⁴⁵

The Pacific Islands were sites of fierce religious struggles in the 19th century, for example in Tonga, Kiribati and Rotuma⁴⁶, but religious faith nowhere in the region became a basis for post-colonial confessional political parties. Vanuatu's francophone/Anglophone party cleavages tended, initially after independence, to awkwardly mirror Catholic/Anglican or protestant divisions, but the salience of those cleavages tended to diminish with time. The Methodist Church in Fiji came to be strongly associated with indigenous coups in 1987 and 2000, and with calls for Fiji to become a 'Christian state'. Around 85% of Fiji's indigenous Fijians are Methodist, whereas 95% of Fiji Indians are either Hindu or Muslim. Fiji's Indian minority has tended to avoid using religious associations as a direct basis for political organisation, preferring to back parties that uphold secularism as the basis for the state. Prominent Catholics, including Archbishop Petero Mataka, became closely identified with Bainimarama's coup in 2006, generating hostility from those ethnic Fijian Catholics who were associated with the overthrown Qarase government. In the smaller micro-states, the Christian churches tend to work strenuously to avoid religious identities becoming the basis for political conflict.

Although ethnic diversity is not reflected in the Indonesian party system directly at the national level, it does figure, if only indirectly, in the party system at the provincial and, especially, district level, despite the proscription on regional and therefore ethnic parties. The only exception to this regulatory framework is in Aceh where local political parties were allowed as a result of the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding. This ended a long-run separatist conflict there. As a result, the Partai Aceh (formed by supporters of the former Free Aceh Movement - GAM) did very well in legislative elections in 2009, winning just under 50% of the vote in the provincial election and winning absolute majorities in seven of the twenty three district legislatures and pluralities in another nine.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Sukma, R. 2010. "Indonesia's 2009 Elections: Defective System, Resilient Democracy."

⁴⁶ Langi, J. 1996. "The Wars of Religion." In *Island Churches: Challenge and Change*, edited by M. Finau, T. Ieuti & J. Langi, 31-44. Suva: Pacific Theological College; Rutherford, N. 1971. *Shirley Baker and the Kingdom of Tonga*. Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii.

⁴⁷ Palmer, B. 2010. "Services Rendered: Peace, Patronage and Post-conflict Elections in Aceh." In *Problems of Democratization in Indonesia: Elections, Institutions and Society*, edited by E. Aspinall & M. Mietzner, 286-306. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, p. 291.

Aceh is not the only area where the removal of central restraints has entailed some flourishing of a more ethnic style of politics. In elections in Papua, the special autonomy law provides that candidates for election as governor have to be 'native' Papuans, with this defined as including those of 'Melanesian race, comprising native tribes in the province of Papua' and those 'accepted and acknowledged by the *adat* community as being native Papuan'.⁴⁸ However, there is no equivalent prescription regarding candidates for elections to Papuan legislatures, where the parties are the key players.

Overall, there does seem to be a strong connection between party fragmentation in regional parliaments and the degree of ethnic fractionalisation. Elections produce a more fragmented party distribution at the local level in the more ethnically diverse parts of Indonesia, especially in Eastern Indonesia but also in regions such as North Sumatra. Thus, for example, in the district of South Nias in North Sumatra, nineteen parties are represented in a legislature of thirty members, in Samosir in the same province, members of fifteen parties take up the twenty seven seats.⁴⁹ Party representation is particularly fragmented in district legislatures in Papua and West Papua provinces. In some places, parties which are not represented in the national parliament are major forces in local legislatures. For example, the Crescent-Star Party (PBB), an Islamist party with historical links to the old Masymi, is insignificant at the national level but gained by far the largest representation in the district parliament in Nunukan in East Kalimantan, with ten of the twenty five seats (its nearest rival won only three). Even so, as a result of the political party rules, these are parties that are in formal terms national in scope and outlook, even if in practice they tend to be highly localised in focus. Loosely institutionalized parties in Melanesia have no similar need to conform to any national regulation of their electoral conduct.

In Indonesia, ethnicity does figure strongly in direct elections of local government heads (where parties are less significant except as pathways to nomination). In ethnically plural regions (most of Indonesia), it has become the standard pattern for candidate pairs (for example, governor and deputy governor) to be drawn from different ethnic, religious and/or regional backgrounds. The ensuing pattern of cross-ethnic coalition building is very complex, but it is also virtually ubiquitous.⁵⁰ At the same time, the mobilisation of ethnic symbols in such

⁴⁸ Mietzner, M. 2007. "Local Elections and Autonomy in Papua and Aceh: Mitigating or Fueling Secessionism." *Indonesia* 84, p. 5.

⁴⁹ From data provided compiled by the University of Indonesia's Centre for Political Studies (Puskapol).

⁵⁰ These issues are discussed at greater length in Aspinall, E. 2011. "Democratization and Ethnic Politics in Indonesia: Nine Theses." *Journal of East Asian Studies* 11: 289-319. An analysis of

election campaigns (for example on election posters of candidates, or in their use of ethnic clothing or traditional performances in campaign events) is also widespread.⁵¹

With some exceptions, ethnic identities have not been dominant influences on party systems either in the Pacific or in Indonesia. In both regions, there are exceptional cases like Fiji and New Caledonia in the Pacific, and Aceh in Indonesia, where histories of migration and/or local independence movements have created party systems heavily inflected by ethnicity. But overall, parties systems across Indonesia and the Pacific are notable for the relatively minimal influence of such identity cleavages. The most striking difference is the salience of religious identity as a basis for party formation in Indonesia, and the strong disjuncture between the national and local party systems and systems of electoral competition more generally in the same country (with ethnicity factoring in much more clearly at the local level than in national politics). Yet in both regions we find that greatly heterogeneous ethno-linguistic social fabrics have highly fragmenting political effects in both Melanesian and some parts of Indonesia. In these highly pluralistic settings ethnic divisions lead not to the formation of separatist political parties, but rather to a high degree of personalisation of electoral contests and a weakening of party institutionalisation.

The Role of Ideological Cleavages

Political parties throughout the Pacific Islands have tended not to be clearly divided ideologically, with the exceptions of Fiji, New Caledonia and French Polynesia. In Melanesia, many parties adopt names like 'United Party', 'National Unity Party', 'Peoples Progress Party' or 'Alliance Party'. Most parties in the region favour rural development programmes, various forms of reconciliation after conflicts and greater local autonomy or local self-government, but none of these can meaningfully differentiate them from their adversaries. As a result, none of these issues can form bases for the emergence of meaningful political parties. In PNG in the 1970s, the Highlands-based United Party opposed speedy independence, while Michael Somare's Papua and Niugini Union Pati (PANGU) Party favoured this. After de-colonisation in 1975 this issue faded in significance,

local elections during 2005-7 showed that 37 of all coalitions forged featured nominees of Islamic and nationalist parties, whereas only 2.4% were exclusively featured Muslim parties (cited in Mietzner, M. 2008. "Comparing Indonesia's Party Systems of the 1950s and the Post-Suharto Era: From Centrifugal to Centripetal Inter-Party Competition." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 39 (3): 431-53, p. 451).

⁵¹ Fox, C. & J. Menchik. 2011. "The Politics of Identity in Indonesia: Results from Campaign Advertisements." American Political Science Association annual meeting.

and PNG's political parties became less clearly differentiated.⁵² This lack of sharp ideological lines of division probably, on balance, encourages corruption, cronyism and nepotism, but it also has some advantages. In the run up to the 2012 election, PNG experienced perhaps its sternest constitutional crisis since independence: deposed Prime Minister Sir Michael Somare (ousted August 2011) had the backing of the Supreme Court for his bid to recapture control of government, while newcomer Peter O'Neill held office owing to a strong parliamentary majority. Over the period December 2011 to February 2012, it looked as if this crisis might spill into a military coup. Yet after the June-July 2012 election, these two leaders settled their differences and forged a coalition government. The lack of ideological polarisation in PNG eases the way for such extraordinary realignments.

A similar lack of strong ideological cleavages prevails in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Upon assuming office in 1981, Solomon Islands Prime Minister Solomon Mamaloni – typified the pragmatic orientation of many Melanesian politicians when he explained that his administration would 'ultimately shift to the left or the right, depending on events or our performance'.⁵³ Government changes have, ever since, been regular, but incoming administrations tend to pursue similar policies to their predecessors. Vanuatu's 1980s schisms over the independence issue, as we saw above, faded after the 1991 commencement of coalition governments. For all three of the western Melanesian countries, the struggle to maintain fractious governing coalitions, in the face of regular threats of 'no confidence' motions, became so central that governments were reluctant to embrace any issue that might alienate the one or two backbenchers on whom their majorities depend.

At times, cleavages have centred briefly and directly on the issue of reform. In Solomon Islands, for example, the 1993 Billy Hilly government defined itself by its opposition to the 'Mamaloni men', a phrase used to describe the followers of 1989-93 Prime Minister Solomon Mamaloni who were closely aligned with Asian logging companies. Within a year, Billy Hilly's government – which had attempted to introduce controls over the logging industry⁵⁴ – had been ousted by Mamaloni in a no confidence vote characterised by heavy usage of cash to solicit MP

⁵² May, R. 2006. "Political Parties in Papua New Guinea." In *Political Parties in the Pacific Islands*, edited by Rich, R., L. Hambly & M. Morgan, 83-102. Canberra: Pandanus.

⁵³ *Sydney Sun*, 2 September 1981, cited in Hegarty, D. 1983. "The Change of Government, 1981." In *Solomon Islands Politics*, edited by Larmour, P. & S. Tarua, 238-50. Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, p. 246.

⁵⁴ Bennett, J. 2000. *Pacific Forest; A History of Resource Control and Contest in Solomon Islands, c. 1800-1997*. Cambridge: White Horse Press.

support.⁵⁵ At the 1997 election, another reformist government led by Bartholomew Ulufa'alu was elected, but this was overthrown in June 2000 by a joint operation between the Police Field Force and a militia group, the Malaita Eagle Forces. In PNG, Sir Mekere Morauta led a short-lived reformist government from 1999-2002, but this proved unable to survive the 2002 election. In Solomon Islands and PNG, and Nauru also, the 'reformist' factions have depended on deals with more flexible coalition partners, and as a result have forged coalitions that are permanently vulnerable to 'no confidence' challenges.

In other parts of the Pacific region, clear ideological differences do determine political alignments. Fiji's polarisation between indigenous and Fiji Indian-backed parties influences party stances on land leasing legislation, and affirmative action policies. Schisms over independence in New Caledonia and French Polynesia inform policy stances towards civil service employment, education, and policing. In Bougainville, conflict over the distribution of revenues arising from the Panguna mine sparked a low intensity civil war over 1988-97. A peace settlement thereafter (like New Caledonia's Noumea Accord) entailed an agreement on delaying a vote on independence. The independence issue figured centrally in the election of 2005, but other issues featured more prominently at the 2008 election (which focussed on reconciliation) and the 2010 election (which focussed on the management of development as a necessary prerequisite in order to achieve independence).⁵⁶ Political parties exist in Bougainville, but they remain weakly institutionalized and personality-centred and there has been no durable split between pro- or anti-independence parties. Issues such as recognition of Taiwan or mainland China have, at times, formed a basis for divisions amongst Pacific Islander politicians, but nowhere has this provided a basis for party formation.

Apart from on issues to do with the expression of Islamic social values, where it is typically relatively easy to predict how Indonesian political parties will line up on controversial issues, Indonesian political parties are not strongly differentiated around any dominant issue cleavage. The lack of strong programmatic differences is a product of the internal structure and political culture of Indonesia's legislative bodies: rather than being bodies which pass or reject

⁵⁵ One of the MPs associated with Mamaloni's faction, Sam Alasia, openly acknowledged that 'cheque or cash lobbying by both camps was at its height during this period' (Alasia, S. 1997. "Party Politics and Government in Solomon Islands." *State, Society & Governance in Melanesia Discussion Paper No. 7*, p. 13. Available online @ http://ips.cap.anu.edu.au/ssgm/papers/discussion_papers/ssgmalasia.pdf).

⁵⁶ Reagan, A. 2010. "Comparing Three Elections – 2005, 2008 and 2010." 'Elections in Solomon Islands and Bougainville 2010: Electoral Reform, Political Parties and Government Formation' workshop, Australian National University, 3 November 2010.

legislation by majority vote in sittings of all members, most decisions are made in the legislatures' committees, by way of processes of consensus where parties engage in flexible negotiations and there is considerable leeway for individual members of parliament to develop positions that are at variance with official party policy.⁵⁷ This structure has the effect of encouraging a culture of money politics; it also blunts the ability of the parties to project clearly differentiated policy platforms that they then strongly promote within legislative bodies. Most serious divisions between parties within legislatures occur on issues related to the cut-and-thrust of political jockeying (whether to condemn or investigate a particular minister or other senior official) rather than on questions to do with principle or broad policy orientation.

Some parties tend to emphasise a populist commitment to social welfare policies, or to economic nationalism (the PDI-P and, more recently, the Gerindra party of the convicted former general Prabowo are associated with both approaches). Even so, divisions on major economic policy issues, such as the degree of economic liberalisation or opening of the national economy to foreign investment that is desirable, tend most commonly to open up between government ministers (most of whom are non-party technocrats) and the parties; or to open up within the political parties, rather than between them. At times, too, particular parties tend to be strongly identified with particular policy positions; for example, the Golkar party has been especially supportive of the policy of decentralisation of economic and political power to the regions; some of the Islamic parties were especially supportive of special autonomy in the province of Aceh.⁵⁸

Overall, however, it is very difficult to draw clear distinctions between the parties on policy grounds. Thus, when the political parties come to making alliances in the lead up to presidential elections, the mooted permutations and combinations are almost infinitely variable: coalitions are based on horse-trading and opportunity, rather than on alignment on policy issues or along a left-right political spectrum. In both Indonesia and many parts of the Pacific Islands, this extreme variability of potential alliance and coalition formation owes its origin to the lack of any clear ideological spectrum on which parties, or independents, locate themselves.

⁵⁷ Sherlock, S. 2010. "The Parliament in Indonesia's Decade of Democracy: People's Forum or Chamber of Cronies?" In *Problems of Democratization in Indonesia: Elections, Institutions and Society*, edited by E. Aspinall & M. Mietzner, 160-78. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

⁵⁸ See for example Barrett, L. 2011. "Something to Believe In: Ideology and Parties in Indonesian Politics." *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 45 (1/2): 69-94.

Electoral Politics and Patronage

Since independence, most Pacific Islands have witnessed rising numbers of candidates contesting elections, and falling numbers of seats where candidates are elected unopposed. Samoa, for example, had large numbers of uncontested candidates in elections shortly after independence in 1962 (with villages taking it in turns to select the sitting MP), but from the mid-1970s electoral rivalry sharpened. Uncontested seats are nowadays rare, but patronage has become an increasingly significant driving force of electoral politics.⁵⁹ PNG saw the average number of candidates per constituency rise from eight in 1977 to thirty one in 2012, with the highlands constituencies contested by particularly large numbers of candidates. Constituencies in the relatively densely populated but resource-poor area of North Malaita in the Solomon Islands are also the most fiercely contested. Entering parliament, or acquiring control over a ministry, offers a route to economic prosperity, and an ability to provide jobs for kinsfolk.

The composition of Melanesian parliaments has tended to reinforce a personalist style of political leadership. At the six general elections between 1977 and 2002 in PNG, 70.7% of those elected were first time MPs. At the seven elections held between 1980 and 2006 in Solomon Islands, 55.2% of those elected were new MPs. Similarly, in Vanuatu's seven elections held between 1983 and 2004, on average 53.2% of MPs elected were new members.⁶⁰ The 'big men' of Melanesian politics, who tend to survive more than a single term, rally together coalitions consisting of many first-time MPs. Fresh from costly election campaigns, new MPs are often particularly susceptible to financial inducements in Prime Ministerial elections. The characteristic methods of political conduct have been called 'unbounded politics', meaning that affinities were not tied to parties or ideologies, although in practice regional or kinship background remained significant.⁶¹

Over the 1990s and 2000s, so-called 'slush funds' directed towards individual members of parliament have also assumed growing significance, and potentially

⁵⁹ See Va'a, L.F. 1983. "General Elections in Western Samoa, 1979-1982." *Political Science* 35 (1): 78-102; So'o, A. 2002. "Reconciling Liberal Democracy and Custom and Tradition in Samoa's Electoral System." *Development Bulletin* 60: 41-45; So'o, A. & J. Fraenkel. 2005. "The Role of Ballot Chiefs (Matai Pälota) and Political Parties in Sāmoa's Shift to Universal Suffrage." *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 43 (3): 333-61.

⁶⁰ These data compare the results from one general election to the next, and are insensitive to by-elections. A politician elected at a by-election will still appear as a 'new member' if re-elected at the subsequent general election.

⁶¹ Steeves, J. 1996. "Unbounded Politics in the Solomon Islands: Leadership and Party Alignments." *Pacific Studies* 19 (1): 115-38.

helped to personalise Melanesian politics. The Rural Constituency Development Funds (and several similar schemes) in the Solomon Islands and the Electoral Development Funds and now District Service Improvement Grants in PNG are the most notorious of such schemes. These place at the disposal of MPs large sums of cash for usage, at their own discretion, in constituencies.⁶² As in the Philippines, it is not only the formal MP-allocated funds that are spent at the discretion of parliamentarians. In fact, much of the development budget is allocated in a similar, highly personalised way⁶³, while the recurrent budget pays mainly wages and salaries in the ministries. This process has a self-reinforcing logic: the cash-starved ministries deliver less and less in the way of effective services, while the significant gains for rural communities stem from MP-administered projects. The MPs can thus argue that their expenditures are a more efficient method of assisting rural communities than conventional state spending. Access to the state also gives parliamentarians powerful mechanisms of acquiring cash for disbursement from foreign or local resource-extractive companies, particularly in the logging or mining industries.

Similar debates apply in the Indonesian context, where MP turnover is also comparatively high in international terms (in 2009, turnover in the national parliament was about 70%⁶⁴). The electoral system is awash with patronage. Indeed, the prevalence of 'money politics' is one of the major sources of public disillusionment with the political parties and wider political system. Slush funds for members of legislatures are part of this story, but not the most significant one. So-called 'aspiration funds' (*dana aspirasi*), or variants, are available in most provinces and districts (though we do not yet have any studies comparing their dimension, usage or impact); in these places funds are not released directly to MPs' accounts, but instead MPs have the authority to designate particular development projects for funding and administration by relevant government departments and bureaus. The effect is much the same, however, with the projects typically being directed to political allies or the members' core constituencies and parts of the project funds diverted back to the pockets of the legislators, where they are in turn distributed to constituents and clients or used for other political purposes or private consumption. An attempt to introduce a

⁶² See Fraenkel, J. 2011. "The Atrophied State: An Analysis of 'Slush Funds' in Western Melanesia." In *The Political Economy of Economic Reform in the Pacific*, edited by R. Duncan, 303-26. Manila: Asian Development Bank.

⁶³ See Coventry, P. 2009. "The Hidden Mechanics of Solomon Islands Budget Processes - Understanding Context to Inform Reforms." *State, Society & Governance in Melanesia* Discussion Paper No. 3.

⁶⁴ Sulaiman, Y. 2009. "Indonesian Parliament in SBY's second Term." *The Jakarta Post*, 24 August.

similar scheme, pioneered by the Golkar party, at the national level, was abandoned in the face of significant public opprobrium.

A much more potent source of the money politics that infuses legislatures at all levels, however, is their role in budgeting. The budgeting process at both the national and local levels operates on the basis of kickbacks and brokerage, with, for example, regional government officials or local contractors lobbying the relevant parliamentary commissions, with the fees typically varying between 7% and 10% of the project cost. At the local level, legislators likewise lobby and are lobbied to promote particular projects, taking fees and/or directing projects into the hands of political allies or relatives. Accordingly, the construction sector is one of the most politicised, and also one of the most corrupt in Indonesia.⁶⁵ But it is not only the disbursement of the government's development budget that is subject to predation in this way: virtually every act of parliamentary law-making can be commodified. Thus, in the national parliament, every government department or agency that seeks to have a law passed or amended will need to pay huge success fees to the members of the relevant parliamentary commission. At the same time, when political party operatives or their allies gain access to government office – for example by becoming governor, mayor or district head (*bupati*), or by gaining a ministerial appointment – then the executive office becomes an even greater source of informal political funds that can be used to build political networks and win over constituents. In PNG too, under the 2002-10 government of Sir Michael Somare, large sums of money became necessary to avoid no confidence challenges or even at times to secure the passage of legislation on the floor of the house. Nowhere else in Melanesia or the Pacific Islands has experienced this degree of monetisation of parliamentary conduct.

With political office itself in Indonesia being highly rewarding in material terms, winning a legislative seat is accordingly also expensive. There is considerable evidence of vote-buying and other variations of money politics to manipulate the electoral process, though we have little sustained research to explain exactly when, where and how it happens. Anecdotal evidence abounds of individual voters being offered direct inducements: envelopes full of cash, or rice, sarongs, prayer outfits or similar materials, by candidate's so-called 'success teams' (*tim sukses*). There is some polling evidence to suggest that a large proportion of voters (as high as 30%) are offered inducements in this way and that a sufficient

⁶⁵ See van Klinken G. & E. Aspinall. 2010. "Building relations: corruption, competition and cooperation in the construction industry." In *The State and Illegality in Indonesia*, edited by E. Aspinall & G. van Klinken, 139-64. Leiden: KITLV Press.

proportion of them report being swayed by such offers to provide a margin of victory in many legislative and executive races. But more important than the direct distribution of funds or goods to individual voters is their distribution to local political brokers: religious leaders, leaders of mass organisations, village heads, influential local businesspeople or political operators, whose actions and opinions can sway the votes of their own followers or constituents. Such people populate the 'success teams' that individual candidates create in order to campaign for office; in turn, members of success teams try to develop networks that penetrate and infuse whatever local social and political networks happen to be most influential locally, with the connections typically greased by money. Thus in some elections, for example, neighbouring villages will vote *en bloc* for different candidates, reflecting how the village heads have been won over by the gifts or promises from the *tim sukses* of different candidates.⁶⁶ At the same time, especially after the Constitutional Court decision that created an open party list system, there has been considerable (anecdotal) evidence of manipulation of the process of vote tabulation and allocation of seats. Many candidates apparently find it more cost effective to intervene at this stage rather than trying to distribute cash or goods to a large number of voters. Much of the manipulation is directed at bumping up the individual votes of candidates, typically with the result that they displace competitors from the same party.

There does seem to be a connection between the degree of patronage and the degree of party fragmentation, especially at the local level. Places with weakly institutionalised and highly splintered party systems tend to be more ethnically plural than the major population centres of Java and Sumatra, but they also tend to be places where a host of local affiliations and networks (for example those based on clan or home village) are very influential politically, and they tend to be dominated by a variety of local political bosses – similar to the 'big men' of the Pacific. The smaller parties (that is those which fail to fulfil the parliamentary threshold at the national level) are so influential and well-represented at this level often because these local political bosses, whenever they lose out in internal battles within the major parties, simply look around for smaller parties whose nominations they can purchase, or whose local organisational shells they have the resources and networks to dominate. As a result, there is a great deal of fluidity in political alignments, and party hopping by local grandees.

At the grass roots level, vote-buying is not only prevalent in both Indonesia and Melanesia. It also tends to assume similar forms. Candidates regularly visit key

⁶⁶ See Clark S. & B. Palmer. 2008. "Dubious Democracy: Aceh's Post-Conflict Elections and their Implications." Indonesian Social Development Paper No. 11. Jakarta: The World Bank, p. 39.

villages late on the night before the election to dispense money, a practice much maligned by less well-endowed losing candidates. Whereas in Solomon Islands, this practice is known as the 'devil's night', reflecting the strong Christian traditions, in Indonesia the expression used is 'dawn attack' (*serangan fajar*). Seeking to command the vote of kinsfolk or villagers by payments to the clan or village head is also common to both Indonesia and the Pacific Islands.

Conclusion

The political history, geographical setting and strength of the state radically distinguish Indonesia from the Melanesian countries, and even more so, from the far flung micro-states of Polynesia and Micronesia. The absence of robust political parties in most of the Pacific is linked to size, history and context. Extraordinary diversity is often thought responsible, at least in Melanesia, but as we have seen this too can be said of Indonesia. Conversely, the more homogeneous Polynesian and Micronesian polities in the eastern and northern Pacific showed no greater proclivity towards party organisation. It is not diversity or homogeneity that has underpinned Pacific party systems, where these emerged, but something mid-way in between, as we saw in the case of bi-communal contests in Fiji and New Caledonia. PR electoral systems with large districts, and reasonably high thresholds, encouraged political parties in Indonesia, and in the larger constituencies in the Pacific French territories (such as on New Caledonia's *Grande Terre* and in the Tahiti-Moorea constituency in French Polynesia). Single member districts and small multi-member districts were not the only drivers of a more personalized political style in the ex-British and ex-American colonies, but they did little to encourage the emergence of political parties. The absence of anything resembling the left-right cleavages, that proved so central in shaping the party spectrum in Europe, North America and Australia, further encouraged the weak institutionalisation of political parties.

The relative newness of the Pacific Island states, most de-colonised only in the 1970s and 1980s, plausibly played some role in shaping party systems, or their absence, and if so one might expect parties to emerge with time. Indonesia achieved independence in 1945, and under Sukarno and then Suharto built a relatively strong state able to achieve high growth-rates based on oil revenues and, later, manufacturing industry. It went through a messy, and in part violent, process of democratisation in the late 1990s and early 2000s, but in some respects it retains a relatively coherent and effective state, despite the considerable decentralisation of governmental authority that occurred in the early 2000s. The Pacific nations obtained independence in a very different global and historical context, one with greater political protections for the outward

edifice of the nation-state, but also powerful politically corrosive domestic forces stemming from interventions by foreign extractive industries for which the weak Melanesian states were no match. Predictions of the imminent emergence of political parties in the Pacific region, a familiar chorus amongst scholars examining early elections after independence, eventually proved badly wrong. Indeed, in PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu party systems have considerably weakened since independence.

Indonesia not only had longer to develop its political order, but also acquired a relatively strong state able both to shape the party system, and to whittle away some undesired parts of it. None of the Pacific Island states witnessed anything resembling the pattern of deliberate moulding of the party system to eliminate smaller parties and ethno-regional influences that we have seen in Indonesia since the period of democratic reform. PNG experimented with ambitious party-strengthening laws in 2001-03, but these served mainly to strengthen the government of Sir Michael Somare, not political parties in general, and key provisions were anyway rejected in mid-2010 by the Supreme Court as unconstitutional. Fiji's 1970s efforts to establish a dominant Malaysian-style Alliance Party, with backing amongst ethnic Fijian, Indian and General voters, and a late 1990s coalition based on inter-ethnic compromise, both ended in coups. Efforts at still more ambitious constitutional engineering in the late 1990s also had adverse results, and yielded outcomes quite contrary to what their architects had intended.

Several factors have helped to provide a degree of stability both to the Indonesian polity as a whole, and to the party system in particular. After a period of debilitating conflict and economic crisis in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the country has stabilised once more as an emerging middle income economy with a fairly well developed set of national institutions and a widely shared sense of national identity and purpose (even if there remains contention on a number of issues, such as the part to be played, ultimately, by Islam in defining the national identity and institutions). Indonesia's political engineers, early in the democratic transition, designed a set of rules for party registration that prevented the emergence of regional parties and the fragmentation of the party system along ethno-regional lines. This rule reinforces socio-political factors pushing in the same direction (for example, in comparison to some other large multi-ethnic democracies like India, Indonesia has a single indigenous national language, Bahasa Indonesia, which is spoken by over 90% of the population, providing a cohesive ingredient via the nationwide influence of the national media and popular culture). Relatively stable socio-religious cleavages between nominal, traditionalist and modernist Muslims have not been highly conflictual over

almost half a century, and provide an axis around which the party system is differentiated. The development of a robust national economy and media landscape have also contributed to a growing professionalisation of party politics and political campaigning more generally, with growing influence by polling organisations, political consultants, advertisement and charismatic political leaders.⁶⁷ Indonesia's party system may not be highly institutionalised and is characterised by considerable electoral volatility but at the national level it is not highly fragmented, personalised or unstable.

Yet our analysis also shows that there are some similarities between party systems in Indonesia and Melanesia, especially when we shift our focus from the national level to the local level in Indonesia. Once we start analysing Indonesian politics in the provinces and, especially, the districts, then we are dealing with political units that resemble the Pacific Island nation-states in their size, population, and demographic composition. Once we leave the relatively industrialised and urbanised regions of Java, Sumatra and a few other islands, we find many much poorer rural societies with cultural and political features reminiscent of some aspects of Pacific societies, even if their local political systems are overlaid by and integrated into the wider systems of the Indonesian nation-state. Little wonder then, that away from the core areas of the Muslim Malay-Javanese heartland, out in peripheral islands and less densely populated regions, especially in eastern Indonesia, we see many patterns of party political behaviour that bear more than passing resemblance to political styles in Melanesia and other parts of the Pacific. 'Big man' politics, the prevalence of money politics and vote buying, highly fragmented party systems at the local level: these are all features of local politics in Indonesia that have long been familiar to scholars of Melanesian politics.

⁶⁷ As described in Aspinall, E. 2005. "Elections and the Normalization of Politics in Indonesia." *South East Asia Research* 13 (2): 117-56, p. 121; Ufen, A. 2008. "From Aliran to Dealignment: Political Parties in Post-Suharto Indonesia.;" Mietzner, M. 2009. "Political Opinion Polling in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia. Catalyst or Obstacle to Democratic Consolidation?" *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 165 (1) 95-126.

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