Political parties, Giovanni Sartori reminds us, both “presuppose” and “produce,” reflect and affect. Two-party systems, for example, depend on and in turn nurture a moderate level of ideological difference. Extreme multipartyism thrives on ideological distance and entrrenches the polarization of opinion. Party and society act on each other.

Nowhere is the reciprocal relation between party and society more evident than in ethnic politics. Societies in which ethnic conflict is at moderate levels or in which ethnic divisions must compete for attention with other sources of tension produce party systems that sometimes foster and sometimes moderate ethnic conflict. This is the case in some countries of the West, where ethnic cleavages coexist with other historic sources of conflict. However, societies that are deeply riven along a preponderant ethnic cleavage—as in many Asian and African states—tend to throw up party systems that exacerbate ethnic conflict. By appealing to electorates in ethnic terms, by making ethnic demands on government, and by bolstering the influence of ethnically chauvinist elements within each group, parties that begin by merely mirroring ethnic divisions help to deepen and extend them. Hence the oft-heard remark in such states that the politicians have created ethnic conflict.

The main element that ethnic conflict introduces into party politics is the ethnically based party. An ethnically based party derives its support overwhelmingly from an identifiable ethnic group (or cluster of ethnic groups) and serves the interests of that group. In practice, a party will serve the interests of the group comprising its overwhelming support or quickly forfeit that support, so the test of an ethnic party is simply the

distribution of support. In some countries, ethnic parties emerged early, as the anti-colonial movement divided along ethnic lines long before independence—usually over the desirability, nature, or timing of independence. Such splits occurred in India, so far as Hindus and Muslims were concerned, as well as in Sri Lanka and Nigeria. In many other countries, the onset of elections at or after independence brought with it the formation of ethnically based parties. The creation of parallel, exclusive political organizations is the first propensity of a divided polity.

Of course, it is just a propensity and not an iron law. Furthermore, at the margins there are some ambiguities of classification. Formal requirements for party membership are a starting point. The Shiromani Akali Dal of the Indian Punjab is clearly a Sikh party, its membership open only to Sikhs, just as the United Malays National Organization is a Malay party, with similarly restricted membership. Before the January 1966 coup in Nigeria and the abolition of political parties that followed, the Northern People’s Congress was open only to people of Northern origin. Despite the difficulty of discerning who qualified as a “Northern,” that party, too, had an ethnically exclusive character. But membership clauses alone are not the test of an ethnic party, and neither are the original intentions of the party’s founders. The National Convention of Nigerian Citizens became an Ibo party, however much it aspired to retain pan-ethnic support. Even some limited heterogeneity of membership and support is not the measure. The Jan Sangh became a Hindu party even though it was not formally restricted to Hindus and even though it did, on the rarest occasions, allocate tickets to Sikh candidates in the Punjab. The Sri Lanka Freedom Party is a Sinhalese party even though it has gained some support from the Muslim minority. A small fraction of support from another ethnic group can provide at best a bit of leaven, insufficient to divert a party from the interests of the group that provides its overwhelming support. Party leadership will pursue such minority support only insofar as it is low cost and does not threaten the more valuable principal source of support. This is a major reason why it is so difficult for an ethnic party, once established, to become multiethnic.

To be an ethnic party, a party does not have to command an exclusive hold on the allegiance of group members. It is how the party’s support is distributed, and not how the ethnic group’s support is distributed, that is decisive. There are two major Sinhalese parties in Sri Lanka, not one, and several essentially Chinese parties in Malaysia. The leadership of the Akali Dal attempted to put forward the doctrine that a Sikh could not join another party, but many Sikhs and Hindus in the Punjab were members of the Congress Party. This division of Sikh support made the Punjab Congress a multiethnic party flanked by ethnic parties; it did not alter the character of the Akali Dal as a Sikh party. In Trinidad in the 1960s, it was said that Indian Muslims were less faithful to the Democratic Labor Party than were Indian Hindus. This did not prevent the DLP from being an Indian party any more than caste differences in party support in Sri Lanka or the Punjab prevented the SLFP from claiming plausibly to speak for the Sinhalese or the Akali Dal to speak for the Sikhs. Rough edges in a party’s support do not undermine its status as an ethnic party.

Yet, as these illustrations show, the shape of the party system is determined by the distribution of group support as well as by the distribution of party support. Whether ethnic parties emerge—and when—how many of them, their relative strength, and their interactions all have much to do with group division and cohesion. And the contours of the party system in an ethnically divided society have a profound effect on the ethnic outcomes of party politics.

THE RATIONALE OF ETHNIC PARTIES AND THE CONCEPT OF PARTY

Where ethnic loyalties are strong, parties tend to organize along ethnic lines for much the same reasons that other organizations, such as trade unions, social clubs, chambers of commerce, and neighborhood associations, tend to be ethnically exclusive. The features of an ethnically divided society conspire to impede the development of the full range of social relations among ethnic groups, and this affects its organizational structure in and out of politics. Occupational specialization, residential


leaders the promise of secure support. Politicians who can count have something they can count on.

To be sure, most political parties in most countries have a core of solid supporters, whose fathers and mothers were also supporters of the same party. In the United States, party allegiance has historically been transmitted from generation to generation for perhaps 70 to 80 percent of all voters. In recent years, this has declined to between 50 and 65 percent. Party identification is, furthermore, a powerful predictor of voting behavior. And, of course, ethnic affiliations are also associated with party preference and electoral choice in such countries as the United States, Canada, and Switzerland. Yet there is a difference between the ability of a broadly based party to count on the votes of a majority of a given ethnic group and the dependence of a party on the support of a single ethnic group to the exclusion of others.

In both cases, party allegiance may be largely ascriptive. In fact, ethnic affiliation may sometimes be a more reliable predictor of party support where parties are not ethnically based than where they are. As I have indicated, it is perfectly possible for a single ethnic group in a deeply divided society to split its support equally among two or more ethnically based parties. Merely knowing ethnic affiliation in such a setting gives no clue to party support. By the same token, it is possible for an ethnic group to give virtually its undivided support to a single nonethnic party operating in a society with a moderate level of ethnic conflict. So the difference between the two types of parties does not derive from the degree to which party allegiance is based on ethnicity.14


14. Again, it is necessary to emphasize that whether a party is ethnically based depends on the distribution of party support, not group support.
The difference lies, rather, in the relative independence of the two parties from group claims and demands. Ethnic demands are made through and often espoused by the broadly based party, but not automatically, not without consideration of competing demands, not without adjustment. That the broadly based party can remain broadly based in spite of this is typically evidence of a moderate level of ethnic conflict and the existence of nonethnic issues that also animate its supporters. The ethnic party, on the other hand, embraces ethnic demands as a matter of course, even when these have far-reaching consequences for other groups. An ethnic party is identified with the cause of the ethnic group it represents. Its raison d'être is to “unite the Sinhalese,” to “fight for the Malay race,” to “weld [the Yoruba] together,” to work for “the protection of Sikh rights,” or the like.15 No doubt, an ethnic party may need to moderate ethnic demands on occasion, in anticipation of the reaction of other groups outside the party or of practical difficulties in translating the demands into policy. But its overall mission is to foster the interests of the group it represents. There are no countervailing competitive incentives.

The very concept of party is challenged by a political party that is both assertive and exclusive. The prevailing concept of party emphasizes the conversion of segmental interests into public interests. On this basis, sharp distinctions are made between parties and pressure groups. The leaders of pressure groups, according to V. O. Key, “thrive by playing to group interest, by arousing anxieties and fears among their followers, by encouraging class and group cleavages. Political parties, on the other hand, must play down group interest by conciliating conflict, by compromising issues, by seeking formulas for the combination of many groups into a bloc strong enough to win... The pressure group,” Key concludes, “must appeal to the partial interest; the political party, to the common interest.”16 The main characteristic of the political party is its quality of mediating, of comprising a “combination of interests.”17 Key was writing about American political parties, which are broadly based. But cross-national conceptions of the political party make it equally difficult to fit the ethnic party within their bounds. As soon as these conceptions move beyond minimal definitions of the party as an

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17. Ibid., 216.
of stronger and stronger groups dedicated to the promotion of narrow group claims places greater strain on the social mechanisms for the settlement of group and class conflict."24 Ethnic parties make the mediation of group interests difficult, and this helps explain why ethnic party systems are so often conflict prone.

There is, however, another reason why ethnic party systems produce conflict, one we shall encounter repeatedly. Conventionally conceived, parties are a vehicle for choice by voters. This view of party tends to exclude the possibility that the support of any political party will be coterminous with the boundaries of any single social group, especially a group in which membership is determined by birth. Such a coincidence of party and group boundaries militates against the exercise of choice by voters. There is thus a certain fixity that sets in where parties are ethnically based that is conducive either to stalemate or to fears of permanent domination. The ascriptive predictability of party outcomes fosters conflict.

This predictability is not absolute. There are variations that derive from differences in how groups choose to spread their support. Some groups cohere around one party, others divide themselves between two, and still others fragment their support in several directions. Furthermore, the existence of ethnic parties does not rule out arrangements across ethnic and party lines: there are variations in the incidence of multiethnic parties and coalitions. Fixity there surely is, but there is also fluidity that affects the propensity of party systems to deepen divisions and their capacity to develop mechanisms of ethnic conciliation. Before we get to these variations in the interplay of party and ethnic conflict, it is necessary to canvass briefly the possible permutations.

PARTIES: ETHNIC, MULTIETHNIC, NONETHNIC

Where party boundaries stop at group boundaries, it is appropriate to speak of ethnic parties, regardless of whether any group is represented by more than one party. Where party boundaries are more inclusive than group boundaries, more information is required before deciding whether parties are ethnic, multiethnic, or nonethnic.

Before dealing with nonethnic parties, it is necessary to explain what distinguishes ethnic from multiethnic parties. Surely, a party that brings together two or more groups under its organizational aegis is, by literal definition, multiethnic. But suppose, as in Mali in the 1960s, two main parties form, each of them supported by a different combination of ethnic groups gathered around an important core group.25 Or suppose, as in Upper Volta during the same period, the powerful Mossi, who comprise about 40 percent of the population, support a single political party, thereby inducing smaller ethnic groups to coalesce into two other parties.26 Internally, the Malian and the non-Mossi Voltaic parties were multiethnic, but externally—in relation to other parties—they reflected ethnic polarization. Here political context is more important than the literal meaning of words in determining the character of parties. If we ask whose party the Voltaic parties were, the answer is clear: one was the party of the Mossi, the others were the parties of the non-Mossi, and each party aimed to advance the interests of that group as against the interests of the other. For this reason, I would count the Malian and Voltaic parties as ethnically based, even though some comprised members of more than one ethnic group. For present purposes, a party is multiethnic only if it spans the major groups in conflict. If, for example, the Voltaic parties had Mossi as well as non-Mossi support, they would be multiethnic, even if all groups were not perfectly represented. What is required is that the parties not break clearly along the very ethnic cleavage that rends the society.27

This usage differs sharply from the rhetoric of parties themselves, which is often more aspirational and more literal. In Malaysia, for example, there have long been several parties catering to a predominantly Chinese and (to a lesser extent) Indian clientele. Periodically, these parties make heroic efforts to enlist Malays, usually run a few Malay candidates, and elect a few Malays to party office. They proudly call themselves multiethnic on account of these efforts. But the conception of a multiethnic party outlined here makes it clear that these are non-Malay or, to smooth off the rough edges, essentially Chinese parties. And this is a subjective criterion, but it is less difficult to operationalize in deeply divided societies than might be imagined. Moreover, it is not very much more subjective than deciding where ethnic boundaries themselves lie.


26. No doubt, this is a subjective criterion, but it is less difficult to operationalize in deeply divided societies than might be imagined. Moreover, it is not very much more subjective than deciding where ethnic boundaries themselves lie.
a good example of how wrong one would be to call such parties multiethnic by virtue of their ability to include Chinese and Indians when differences between those two groups are negligible compared to the political differences between Chinese and Indians, on one side, and Malays on the other.

The distinction between nonethnic and multiethnic parties is also difficult to draw. It depends on whether group members participate in the party on a group basis, whether, in other words, the party comprises a coalition of ethnic groups. A clear example of a multiethnic party is the Parti Démocratique de Côte d’Ivoire around the time of independence. The PDCI was built heavily on local ethnic associations and organized around ethnically based party units. Leaders who were propelled upward considered themselves “ambassadors of the ethnic groups to which they owed their selection.” A proposed reorganization of party units along nonethic lines had to be abandoned because of resistance from local party leaders, who understood that this would alter the very basis of party allegiance.

If the PDCI was a clear case of a multiethnic party, it is more difficult to categorize other parties as multiethnic or nonethnic. If avowed intention is the test, many parties ostensibly aim to turn politics in a nonethnic direction, organizing political conflict around what are thought to be the “real issues” of ideology, development, or economic interest. Few succeed. The criterion, therefore, must be more complex than one that rests on manifest intent. As the PDCI suggests, party organization affords a clue to the multiethnic character of a party. Where parties are not organized explicitly around ethnically based branches or sections, then the nature of the issues dividing parties, the ethnic demarcation of factions within the party, or the movement of ethnic blocs in and out of the party often testifies to the nature of a party as an internal coalition of ethnic groups. In Senegal, the Lebou and the Fulani, among other groups, acted as “autonomous blocs,” moving in and out of the ruling party as it suited their interests.

In Zambia, when the United National Independence Party held primary elections in 1967, Bendha and Tonga delegates joined hands to defeat candidates of the Lozi and Nyanja groups. After the primary conference, the two ethnically based factions formed separate committees to work for their interests within the party. Clearly, UNIP was a fragile coalition of ethnic groups.

Multiethnic parties like PDCI and UNIP seem to move toward the single-party format, outlawing or pressuring opposition parties out of business. I shall return to this tendency later. For the moment, it suffices to note that the intolerance of competition renders the multiethnic span of such parties suspect as coerced or somehow contrary to “natural” political forces in an environment of ethnic conflict, since it prevents the realignment of ethnic groups and parties. In severely divided societies, multiethnic parties are strongly susceptible to centrifugal stresses.

Parties organized nonethically are rare or nonexistent in such societies. They may, however, be found in countries where divisions do not run deep or where ethnic groups are so dispersed that it hardly makes sense to organize along ethnic lines for national-level politics. The Congress Party of India and its successor parties are fundamentally nonethnic at the national level. The same, however, cannot be said of the Congress Party in all the Indian states. In Kerala, the four major ethnic castes and religious and caste groups have tended to divide along party lines, with Congress often deriving its support from Nairs and Christians. In Bombay, at the height of a Maharashtrian ethnic movement (the Shiv Sena), the Congress Party was largely confined to the support of immigrant ethnic groups.

India is not alone in this respect. The ethnic basis of support of nonethnic parties is often apparent at the local level. As Congress was the party of non-Maharashtrians in Bombay, Nkrumah’s Convention People’s Party was the party of Southern, non-Ashanti immigrants in Kumasi. Much the same was true of Indonesian parties during the period of free elections in the 1950s. The Nationalists and the Communists.

32. It should be clear that the term nonethnic parties is used here purely as shorthand for a residual category of parties arranged along a Left-Right, traditional-modern, urban-rural, aristocrat-commoner, secular-religious, or, for that matter, any other axis except ethnic differences.
both major parties nationwide, obtained in 1955 four times as many votes in Javanese areas as in Minangkabau areas.36 In particular localities, ethnic distinctions among parties were even more intense, as R. William Liddle has skilfully shown. To take one of many examples, Lower Simalungun in East Sumatra, the Protestant party was the exclusive preserve of the North Tapanuli Batak, Masjumi (a Muslim party) was identified solely with the South Tapanuli Batak, and the Nationalists and Communists were confined to Javanese support.37 Yet the Ghanian CPP and the Indonesian parties could accurately be described as nonethnic at the national level. Ethnic issues were not the driving force of party politics, but what was true nationally was not necessarily true locally.

THE VARIETY OF PARTY SYSTEMS

Parties, then, can be ethnic, multiethnic, or nonethnic. Party systems, however, may combine various types of parties.

The first possibility is a party system in which all parties are ethnically based. Zanzibar until 1964, the Sudan, Sri Lanka, Chad, Benin, Kenya, Nigeria, and Congo (Brazzaville) at various times, and Guyana and Trinidad since about 1960 are all countries that have had party systems based clearly on ethnic parties. Other countries have had variations on this theme: two parties representing two clusters of ethnic groups in Sierra Leone in the 1960s (the Mende pattern) and splits in Kenya and Mauritius between a party representing one or two powerful ethnic groups and a party representing a combination of smaller groups (the Upper Volta pattern).

Moving to the opposite extreme, a wholly nonethnic party system is possible but unusual. Perhaps the outstanding case of a nonethnic party system in an ethnically divided society is the two-party system in the Philippines during the period before martial law was imposed in 1972. Built on pyramids of competing factions extending down to the local level, the Philippine system was inhospitable to the monopolization of any ethnic clientele by either party. There were, to be sure, marked propensities toward ethnic voting (on a candidate basis), and the shifting of ethnic loyalties from one party to another, but these were ephemeral and were determined by the ethnic identity of major national candidates in any election.38 At any given moment, the support of one or another ethnic group may have been concentrated in one party or another, but the parties simply did not divide along ethnic group lines.

Why Filipino parties developed nonethically remains difficult to say. Filipino parties were not, after all, unique in their clienteleistic organization.39 Perhaps the relative mildness of ethnic conflict in the Philippines is part of the answer, but even the Muslim groups, whose conflicts with the Christians were anything but mild, were tied into the nonethnic parties. Another possible explanation is the dispersion of groups, which is generally a disincentive to ethnic organization at the national level, but this alone is not always enough. In Zaire, where ethnic groups are at least equally numerous and dispersed, parties quickly began to form along ethnic lines.40 What is clear is that the Philippine system of nonethically based parties is well-nigh unique in ethnically divided societies in the developing world. Where parties divide exclusively along Left-Right lines or along nonideological lines determined by patronage patterns, that is an excellent indication that ethnic divisions are not salient.

For similar reasons, party systems involving a combination of ethnic and nonethnic parties (or multiethnic and nonethnic parties) are unlikely in Asia and Africa. Such a system presupposes the prevalence of more than one issue dimension. This is characteristic of ethnically divided societies in Western Europe, where parties simultaneously reflect a Left-Right and a clerical-secular dimension as well as an ethnic one.41 Religion, class, and language are all strong predictors of party preference in Switzerland.42 In Belgium, religious and class issues, each well-repre


42. Kerr, Switzerland, 7-20.
presented in the party system, for a long time impeded the growth of strong, ethnically based parties. When these did emerge, they had to compete for support with the older Catholic, Liberal, and Socialist parties, which in varying degrees spanned ethnic groups. This mixed party system reflects the existence of strong cross-cutting cleavages arising out of long-standing historical conflicts not strongly reflected in the party systems of developing countries. Consequently, when ethnic parties arise in deeply divided societies in Asia and Africa, they tend to displace rather than coexist with nonethnic parties. Party positioning in such countries quickly becomes unidimensional—along an ethnic axis. I shall say more about this when I consider the fate of Left parties in ethnically divided societies.

If nonethnic parties do not fare well under such conditions, the same is not necessarily true of multiethnic parties or coalitions of ethnic parties. These are not ipso facto precluded by the pervasiveness of ethnic issues, and they may form for a variety of electoral or governmental reasons.

Systems involving multiethnic parties are generally of two types. The multiethnic party either competes with ethnic parties on one or more flanks, as in the case of the Congress Party in the Punjab, mentioned earlier, or else the multiethnic party moves to a single-party position, as the PDCI and a number of other multiethnic parties in Africa have. The difference is important, since it involves something central to party politics: the existence or absence of competition.

Coalitions of ethnic parties differ from multiethnic parties in several respects. The multiethnic party is, at least in principle, permanent; the coalition, though it may become permanent, embodies no such necessary assumption. Organizational, the two also differ. At some level, even if only at the top, the multiethnic party must integrate its ethnic wings. The coalition of ethnic parties need not do so, and indeed the parties may meet only within the framework of government. Electorally, ethnic parties in coalition may or may not contest the same seats, depending in large measure on whether the parties have reached their agreement before or after the election. Multiethnic parties, however, put forward one candidate per single-member constituency or one list in multimember

constituencies. As these differences suggest, the process of bargaining and conciliation must be more elaborate and regularized in a multiethnic party than in a coalition where the partners remain organizationally separate. This is also likely to be true because the existence of the multiethnic party reflects some commitment to ethnic accommodation, even though the commitment may be only imperfectly shared among the ethnic participants or among leaders and followers. No such commitment can necessarily be inferred from the existence of a multiethnic coalition. The motivation for its formation may run the gamut from the desire to reduce ethnic conflict to the necessity of joining together simply to form a government.

The burden of what I have been saying so far is that parties and party systems can make a difference in ethnic politics. This position may seem a bit odd in a period that has witnessed the decline of political parties in Asia and Africa, first because the state bureaucracies afforded greater opportunity for advancement and influence than party organizations and then because so many parties were destroyed by the rise of authoritarian personalities or by military coups, or both. Free elections are now a rarity in the developing world. But none of this proves that party is unimportant, either in the states that still enjoy party politics or in those that do not. In the latter, as I shall show in Chapter 12, the growth of ethnic parties has had a profound impact on the incidence of military coups. And, of course, the alleged inability to handle ethnic problems through the existing party system was a reason frequently invoked by civilian authoritarian rulers who smashed the party system. In short, where party politics has declined, ethnic party systems have been a major reason for that decline.

More than this, party systems are not merely established or destroyed. They can be reestablished, and military regimes occasionally move or are pushed in this direction. Uppermost in the minds of some military leaders as they contemplate restoration of civilian rule are concerns about whether the parties that emerge will be ethnically based.


44. Only a small minority of African states held as much as one free election after independence. John Carwright, “Party Competition in a Developing Nation: The Basis of Support for an Opposition in Sierra Leone” (unpublished paper presented at the 1971 annual meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association), p. 1. The Asian record—despite major exceptions—is not very much better.

this is no fanciful concern is shown clearly by the military turnover to civilians in Ghana in 1969. This was quickly followed by the establishment of a party system largely along ethnic lines, partly because of alignments and rivalries that grew up during military rule. Party systems are a key policy problem of severely divided societies.

If party systems do matter, then it is time to show what difference they make by examining the four most common party systems, those composed of: (1) ethnic parties, (2) ethnic parties and coalitions of ethnic parties, (3) ethnic parties and multiethnic parties, and (4) multiethnic single parties. Ethnic party systems will be dealt with in this and the next chapter. The three remaining systems, which all involve party contact or organization across ethnic lines, form the subject of the two following chapters. For each system, I intend to depict, through the use of case illustrations, the evolution of the party system, its main characteristics and consequences for ethnic conflict, and the sources and directions of change in such systems. Although these four systems have different properties, they are by no means unrelated: one of them can evolve from another. In particular, ethnic party systems often give way to one of the other three party arrangements. Ethnic parties and ethnic party systems are thus the building blocks of party politics in ethnically divided societies.

**THE GROWTH OF ETHNIC PARTY SYSTEMS**

The tendency to organize parties along ethnic lines is very strong in most deeply divided societies, particularly those in which a few major ethnic groups meet at the national level of politics. It is a tendency that is cumulative: once one party organizes along ethnic lines, others are inclined to follow suit. The strength of the tendency is illustrated by its ability to overcome the preferences of political leaders in two important respects.

First, ethnic party systems can and do emerge contrary to the convictions of the principal party leaders. Party leaders may genuinely believe that ethnic divisions are not very important, that they only obscure the issues that ought to concern (and unify) a nationalist party. A wholly ethnic party system may come into being despite such ideological convictions.

Second, party leaders oriented toward the electoral process typically have a strong preference for strategies calculated to produce electoral victory. (Revolutionary parties are another matter.) To be sure, they may need to make compromises with their own beliefs or the beliefs of key supporters along the way. These compromises may require them to espouse positions that impair their chances of attaining the majority they seek. By the same token, party leaders may have to settle for mere legislative representation, though they desire outright victory. Especially in multiparty systems, they may realize that the best they can hope for at the polls is a marginal improvement on their minority position. For such parties, “victory” is determined by their share of votes or seats relative to earlier elections and relative to parties specifically competing for the same clientele, rather than relative to a majority or plurality. But none of these qualifications impeaches the general validity of vote maximizing as an electoral strategy.

How, then, to account for the party leader who intentionally pursues a course foreseeably leading to a permanent minority position for his party? Rational models of electoral politics make no provision for such a strategy in an electorally oriented party. Yet that is the situation of the politician who organizes a party around the ethnic sentiment of a demographic minority, especially the politician who leaves a majority party to do so. Many organizers of parties that turn out to have a limited ethnic base believe, with undue optimism, that they are creating a party that will span ethnic divisions. But unrealistic optimism alone cannot explain the conduct of those politicians who choose to break up a broader party for narrower ethnic horizons. Ethnic politics is filled with decisions of this kind.

To some considerable extent, such decisions reflect irresistible voter pressures. “An elderly Ashanti man in Swedru was . . . emphatic” in explaining why he rejected the party led by the Ewe, K. A. Gbedemah, in the 1969 Ghana election: “‘Have you ever heard of an Ewe chief ruling over Ashanti? No, Busia is our man.’” 48 (Busia came from a group related to the Ashanti.) This bit of reasoning, parsimoniously linking 46. In the United States, for example, it has been shown that the extremes views of party activists relative to voters have sometimes jeopardized a party’s electoral chances. Cases in point include the Democrats’ nomination of George McGovern in 1972 and the Republicans’ nomination of Barry Goldwater in 1964. David D. McCleary, “Asymmetry in the Party System,” *American Political Science Review* 65 (Sept. 1971): 716-30.
for those who remain in the party may be left in a minority position with the electorate. Again, it is necessary to account for such decisions.

Many parties in Asia and Africa developed in the terminal period of colonial rule, shortly before ethnic issues became paramount, and many therefore began with at least some multietnic support. As the claims of two ethnic groups begin to appear incompatible, both groups represented in unequal numbers within the party, a kind of lesser-evil or “caricaturing” logic may emerge. Party leaders would undoubtedly prefer to keep the strong, multietnic party intact, but they may sense that it is increasingly risky to attempt to retain the support of both groups. Feasing that if they try to retain the support of both, they will probably lose out to new parties catering solely to ethnic interests, party leaders take action to avoid being left with nothing. Faced with such a choice, those with the ability to retain the support of the larger ethnic group within the party will be willing to forgo the support of the smaller group within the party, even at the risk of being consigned to only minority ethnic support in the country as a whole. Leaders of the smaller group in the party may likewise be willing to forgo the augmented strength their association with larger groups in the party gives them, when they contemplate that the alternative is the possible loss of all support. As centrifugation is manifested in party organization, then, it rests on assessments of relative risk, specifically on anticipation of the likelihood that, unless action is taken, new, ethnically based political competitors will enter the market. Thus it happens that a party leader, fearing the potential loss of all support, may actually choose to preside over a party representing only a minority ethnic group. This is still electoral logic.

These assessments of risk may or may not be accurate. No doubt they are typically intemmingled with other disintegrative forces: uneasy personal relations within the party between leaders from different ethnic groups, mixed feelings about ethnic outcomes in party policymaking, feedback from ethnic supporters along the lines of the Ashanti man in Swedru, and cold calculation about prospects for improving one’s political position by moving at least temporarily into an ethnically exclusivist position. Whether the assessment of risk is accurate, the seriousness of the feared consequences, should they occur, cannot be denied. That is why action of this kind is typically taken in an anticipatory way, before

49. Kapwepe left UNIP to form his own Bemba party in 1971. Lim Chong Eu left the Alliance Party and formed his own essentially Chinese party in 1962. Odinga resigned from the Kenya African National Union and formed a Luo party in 1966. Burnham split with the People’s Progressive Party and formed a Creole party in 1953, as we shall see in more detail below. Stevens abandoned the SLPP to form a Northern party in 1962.

50. This possibility occurs, needless to say, because the larger group in the party may be the smaller group in the country, and vice versa. For the sake of simplicity, I speak of only two groups—larger and smaller—but there may, of course, be more.
the polarization of sentiment is complete. Consequently, the formation of ethnic parties generally does not await the development of a substantive ethnic issue that might split a multiethnic party apart. Such a break comes over intraparty affairs, usually leadership relations. For this reason, the break often appears to result solely from the politicians’ own narrow ambitions.

These pressures help explain why the emergence of ethnic parties seems to defy the personal preference of politicians for multiethnic organization as well as their preference for strategies that maximize the chance of electoral victory. This is not, of course, an ineluctable process. There are points of decision along the way. A party leader may feel personally so secure in his support among his ethnic group that he is willing to chance keeping the multiethnic party intact even in the face of ethnic pressure. Alternatively, a party leader may seek the support of leaders of the smaller group within the party to scale down its ethnic claims so as to make it clear that the larger group within the party is preeminent. In Malaysia, Tengku Abdul Rahman followed both of these courses to preserve his Alliance Party from succumbing to centrifugal forces. He took sides, and he also sought a demonstrably unequal relationship among groups within the Alliance. Even so, strong competitor ethnic parties emerged to challenge his. A much more frequent response, however, is to end party competition and move to the single-party format before complete centrifugation takes hold. This was Kenneth Kaunda’s response in Zambia. Assuming, however, that parties are free to organize and elections are freely conducted on a party basis, parties in a deeply divided society will tend to follow the lines of the major ethnic cleavages.

I intend to say more about the logic of ethnic party systems as we proceed. Now, however, it is best to turn to some concrete examples of this process. The examples are the party systems that developed in Guyana and Trinidad in the 1950s and ’60s. These are archetypical cases of ethnic party systems, especially useful because they represent well-documented examples of what happened in many other ex-colonies. To illustrate the evolution of ethnic party systems, the Nigerian, the Mauritian, the Congolese, or any of a dozen other cases would have done just as well, and I shall refer to a number of these in the course of the discussion. The data for Guyana and Trinidad, however, happen to show with special clarity the process by which parties crystallized along ethnic lines despite leadership intentions; the patterns of electoral behavior that underlay the party realignment; and the specific properties and effects of an ethnic party system on ethnic politics. Consequently, these two small Caribbean countries, laboratories of ethnic politics, are worthy of sustained attention.

**GUYANA AND TRINIDAD: NATIONALIST BEGINNINGS, ETHNIC ENDINGS**

Long-standing differences between Creoles and East Indians thwarted attempts to organize parties across ethnic lines in Guyana and Trinidad. Eventually, two major parties developed in each country. Through a process of ethnic alignment and realignment, each party came to represent one or the other major ethnic group. This was not the preferred outcome of any major political leader, and it was contrary to the Marxist ideology of Cheddi Jagan in Guyana and the strongly nationalist aspirations of Eric Williams in Trinidad. It happened in spite of their intentions. Moreover, the growth of an ethnic party system put the leaders of


52. Creoles refers here to those portions of the Guyanese and Trinidadian populations that had some ancestral contact with Africa. The reason for this term is twofold: to use one word that would include both brown and black Guyanese and Trinidadian (these color groups having a history of some separateness) and that would span differences between Guyana and Trinidad (Guyanese parlance referring to “Africans,” “Trinidadian in the past to “Negroes”). East Indians, or simply Indians, refers to the descendants of laborers imported into India. Americans, by contrast, refers to indigenous American Indians. The term Trinidad here is used to include Trinidad and Tobago, both islands politically unified, but I do not focus on Tobago politics. Guyana, of course, refers, for the colonial period, to British Guiana.
the parties representing minority ethnic party groups in the position of pursuing a party-building strategy that guaranteed their parties' electoral defeat. Nevertheless, the structure of the situation was such that this was the course they felt constrained to pursue.

In the post-World War II period, Guyana and Trinidad were colonies with weak party systems. Such parties as there were tended to be electoral alliances that dissolved after the balloting. Independent candidates were numerous. In the 1956 elections in Trinidad, there were eight parties and 127 candidates, including thirty-eight independents, contesting twenty-four seats. In Guyana, in 1953, there were five parties and 130 candidates, seventy-nine of whom were independents, for twenty-four seats. These elections marked the end of the old order. There were clearly opportunities for new party structures. With independence on the agenda, these opportunities were taken.

In Guyana, Cheddi Jagan, an East Indian, had formed the People's Progressive Party in 1950. The Jagans (Cheddi and Janet) had surrounded themselves with a number of left-wing intellectuals, both Creole and Indian, including the Creole barrister L. F. S. Burnham. The PPP had campaigned on a reformist platform, demanding social welfare programs, tax reform, and attention to the interests of labor. In the 1953 elections, the PPP won eighteen out of twenty-four seats. Marxist in leadership, it had what the main opposition party did not: working-class identification, strong organization, and a clear nationalist program.

The same was true of Eric Williams and the People's National Movement in Trinidad. Formed in 1956, the PNM publicized itself as an instrument of socioeconomic and political reform. It was most emphatic about substituting for the old political "individualism" a strong party able to effect the changes it envisioned. In the 1956 elections, the PNM won thirteen out of twenty-four seats in the legislature.

**Trinidad: Merger and Split**

The opposition in both colonies was galvanized into action by the maiden elections of the PPP and the PNM. In Trinidad, there were substantial opportunities for alternative parties, for the PNM legislative majority had been won on a base of only 38.7 percent of the total vote. The multitude of parties and candidates had fragmented the remainder.

The opposition remedy was clear—consolidation—and so was its direction. The PNM had gained most of its support from Creole voters in and around urban areas. The strongest centers of opposition were in the predominantly East Indian sugar belt and in the rural, mostly Creole Eastern districts, where the PNM had won less than half the vote. An alliance of rural Creoles and Indians was unquestionably the way to build a strong alternative to the PNM.

The occasion for consolidation was the formation of pan-West Indian parties to prepare for politics in the ill-fated West Indian Federation. In 1957, the People's Democratic Party, led by an Indian notable, merged with two other opposition parties into a new Democratic Labor Party. An amalgam of Indian politicians reacting to Williams' ability to mobilize the Creole vote and of old-style Creole conservatives from the days of pre-party politics, the DLP's sole basis for unity was the potential antagonism of many rural voters to the PNM's apparent urban bias.

The merger produced handsome returns. The DLP won the 1958 elections for the Federation Parliament, six seats to the PNM's four. Each party received half the total popular vote, but the DLP won the South, with its large Indian vote, and the East. Three of the four PNM seats were located in or around the capital, Port-of-Spain. In the county council elections of the following year, the DLP repeated its performance, capturing thirty-five of the seventy-two seats, one more than the PNM, and securing a majority or plurality in every Southern or Eastern county council except one.

To all appearances, a strong rural-urban, two-party system had emerged in Trinidad. The appearances, however, were illusory. While the DLP was winning at the polls, it was failing apart internally. The party had been more dependent on Indian than Creole votes to begin with, and in the 1958 election had mobilized Indian support on a bloc basis. At least two-thirds of the DLP's votes had come from East Indians. This put the Indian leaders of the party in a dilemma. Creole votes were the marginal increment necessary for victory, but they were a clear-cut minority in the party's overall support. To hold the votes of its Creole supporters, the party would have to concede leadership positions to members of the Creole faction, and such positions were in fact demanded. To have accorded such recognition to the Creole elements in the DLP might have jeopardized the party's standing with East Indians,

53. Williams and the PNM had joined with Norman Manley and his Jamaican People's National Party to form the Federal Labor Party. Manley's opponent, Sir Alexander Bustamante, and his Jamaican Labor Party then created the Democratic Labor Party of the West Indies. Bustamante's party was heavily rural, and it quite naturally turned to the rural Trinidad opposition for support. This was the catalyst for the Trinidadian opposition parties to unite. See Kusman, "The Origins and Development of Political Parties," 418–25.

whose support had been attracted by contrasting the DLP with the Creole-dominated PNM. The Indian leaders were unwilling to risk this, and so the mariage de convenance dissolved at the height of its electoral success.

The dissolution of the multiethnic party was in the interest of neither component and desired by neither. The results of the split were disastrous for the DLP. The party never again achieved the strength it had in 1958–59. The strong party system inaugurated by the PNM had convinced most voters that their loyalties had to rest with one or the other of the two major parties. When the DLP became an Indian party, rural Creole voters were denied any alternative to the PNM. The former DLP Creole politicians were consigned to obscurity, and the ethnic party system was solidified.

As the DLP became a minority party, it was confined strictly by the number of Indian voters—about a third of the electorate. Its losses were the PNM’s gains. Whereas in the 1958 federal elections the two parties had divided the vote evenly, in 1961 the PNM secured 57 percent; the DLP, 42 percent. In 1958, the DLP had won six of the ten federal seats; in 1961, it won only ten of the thirty seats in the Trinidad House of Representatives. By 1961, the Eastern constituencies that had formerly been carried by non-Indian DLP leaders went to the PNM, where they remained from then on. The 1961 results were essentially repeated in 1966, with the PNM winning twenty-four of the thirty-six seats in an expanded House and the DLP taking the rest. Party alignments were ascriptive, and election results were predictable. In 1970, the DLP made yet another attempt to link up with Creole politicians, this time led by defectors from the PNM. This encounter many of the same problems as the DLP merger of 1957, and by the time of the 1971 election the alliance had dissolved in distrust.55

The 1971 election was boycotted by the DLP, for the party would again have been confined to the Indian strongholds. The PNM won all thirty-six seats with less than half the electorate voting. So secure was the PNM majority—and hence Creole power—that, in the years after 1966, intra-Creole divisions began to emerge with much greater force than at any time in the preceding decades. Trinidad experienced back-power disturbances in 1970 that would have been unthinkable while the outcome of the Creole-Indian party rivalry remained uncertain.

New parties came and went, but in the 1976 election the PNM again took two-thirds of the seats with a majority of the vote, while a successor party to the DLP captured the East Indian constituencies with 27 percent of the vote. In 1981, an alliance of the Indian party with some left-wing Creoles proved counterproductive; the party won fewer seats than it had five years earlier. A split in the ranks of the PNM produced a new Creole party, which gained no seats. For all the flux in party labels and alliances, the shape of party politics remained the same: Creole majority, Indian minority.

**Guyana: Split and Merger**

In Guyana, as in Trinidad, there was an opening for an opposition. The PPP had won its two-thirds legislative majority in 1953 with only 51 percent of the vote, and the opposing elements were badly divided. As in Trinidad, externally generated incentives crystallized the opposition. The occasion was different: the suspension of the colonial constitution. And the opposing party was not formed from without, but from within.

Following the 1953 election, the PPP formed a government. Nonetheless, pursuing a strategy Jagan later characterized as “all struggle and no unity,” the PPP government also considered itself the “opposition.” This dialectical strategy was designed to protest the limited powers under which the PPP held office and to oppose the “real” government, namely, British colonial officials. In the course of this opposition, the PPP managed to convince the British of its general good faith, its desire to disrupt the economy by threats of confiscation, its ideological extremism, and its commitment to undemocratic methods.

The British, in response, suspended the constitution and replaced the Jagan regime with an appointed legislature and cabinet. A “period of marking time in the advance to self-government” was declared, and the British made clear their desire for moderate forces to emerge.57 During this interregnum, a Burnham faction of the PPP appeared.

As early as 1950, Burnham’s ambitions had surfaced inside the PPP, when the party’s founders yielded to his demand to become its first party chairman—an appointment made to solidify Creole support behind the PPP.58 Thereafter, Burnham became an intraparty critic of the Jagan.

Rivalries within the PPP leadership were not ethnically based, but the

need for a prominent Creole in the forefront of the party's leadership testified to the character of the ethnic environment in which the PPF was operating. In fact, party officers, the general council, and party candidates were all carefully balanced between Creoles and Indians. The British provided the occasion and the inducement for a split, but other forces might have sufficed on a later occasion. In Guyana, a two-headed party stood a good chance of becoming two parties.

Both factions retained their interethnic character at the top. Burnham initially also resisted the temptation to merge with the United Democratic Party, a conservative, urban, Creole party. But despite the adherence of the Indian politician who had led the PPP sugar union, Burnham had no organization in the countryside; and that not only meant no Indian support, but not full rural Creole support either. When the electoral process was restored in 1957, the Jagannites took nine of the fourteen seats, the Burnhamites only three seats in the heavily Creole capital, Georgetown. The remaining two seats were divided between the UDP and another minor party.

This election was a way station on the path to complete ethnic realignment. Indian support was heavily with Jagan, but Creole support was divided. There were incentives to realignment, and it occurred.

In 1956, three of the most prominent members of the left wing of the PPP leadership abandoned the party because of disillusionment brought on by Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin in February 1956 and the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian revolt later that year. The three had been opponents of Burnham before the PPP split, but they all happened to be Creoles. Their resignations left the PPP without a Creole leader of stature.

As the Jagan faction was losing its Creole component, the Burnham faction was solidifying its own Creole foundation and losing its Indian component. Shortly after the 1957 election, the Burnhamites became the People's National Congress and a Creole ethnic party. One of its prominent Indian supporters was expelled in 1958, and another died. One of the ex-Marxist defectors from the PPP joined the PNC, where he became an outspoken black nationalist. Finally, the PNC absorbed the UDP and inherited its Creole clientele. With Indian support so solidly with Jagan, it made no sense to continue to leave Creole support divided. Like the Trinidadian DLP, but by an inverted process of fission and then fusion, the PNC had become a minority party. Split and merger were the concrete expressions of ethnic forces in politics.

The electoral results of this process were similar. In Guyana, as in Trinidad, close correspondence between ethnic composition and the respective parties' share of the vote was evident. In Guyana, however, East Indians were about half the population (though only a plurality of voters), and this was sufficient initially to put their party in power. In the 1961 election, the PPP received 43 percent of the vote, the PNC obtained 41 percent, and a third party, the United Force, which represented a number of minorities, drew 16 percent.60 The PPP won twenty seats; the PNC, eleven; and the UF, four. By 1964, the Colonial Office had revised the electoral system to provide for proportional representation. Electors voted for party lists rather than for individual candidates. Notwithstanding this change, voting patterns were not very different (for reasons to be discussed in Chapter 15). The PPP list received 46 percent of the vote—an increase probably accounted for by its failure to run candidates in all constituencies in 1961. The PNC again was left with 41 percent, and the UF was reduced to 12 percent.61 While the PPP had the largest number of votes, it was short of a majority. Burnham became premier in a PNC-UF coalition government.

The 1961 and 1964 elections were accurate reflections of the parties' support. The constancy of the figures, adjusted for the PPP's nonparticipation in some constituencies in 1961, indicates the extent to which the

60. The United Force appealed to several small and generally privileged minorities: whites, Chinese, and Portuguese. The UF also did very well among Amerindians, who comprised nearly 5 percent of the Guyanese population. (Such a group does not exist in Trinidad.) Survey data gathered by me in 1965 indicate that those of mixed origin—which means, effectively, Afro-Europeans or "mulattoes" (12 percent in Guyana, 16 percent in Trinidad)—divided their vote evenly between the PNC and the UF in the 1964 election, whereas in Trinidad they voted overwhelmingly for the PNM. The existence of the UF, in short, appears to have been attributable to a postparti of minorities. Perhaps the critical mass of support for the UF was provided by the Amerindians, for only they were sufficiently concentrated (in the interior) to elect candidates under the single-member constituency system that prevailed in the 1961 election. The absence of an Amerindian group in Trinidad probably helps explain the absence of a comparable third party there. The 16 percent of the vote won by the UF was, in addition, inflated by the fact that the PPP did not run candidates in some strongly Creole constituencies in 1961. In those constituencies, some normally PPP voters probably did not vote, but many who did no doubt voted for the UF rather than for the PNC.

61. I shall explain the reasons for the adoption of proportional representation and analyze its impact in Guyana in more detail below. Despite the conventional view that PR should enhance the position of third parties, the UF share of the vote declined in 1964, largely because those PPP voters who had voted for the UF in preference to the PNC in 1961 could vote for a PPP slate in 1964. See note 60, above.

parties were drawing on clienteles that were stable because they were ethnically determined.

In subsequent elections, the PNC share of votes and seats increased, permitting it to govern alone. But these elections were conducted in a dubious manner, and the results were unreliable. As in Trinidad, interest in the electoral process declined as ethnic and party outcomes became utterly foreseeable.

THE ETHNIC PARTY DYNAMIC

Once ethnic politics begins in earnest, each party, recognizing that it cannot count on defections from members of the other ethnic group, has the incentive to solidify the support of its own group. As Burnham's experience shows, there is no point in holding back from consolidating the party on an ethnic basis; Burnham's delay in this cost him votes and seats in 1957. Even parties that are initially organized on a multiethnic basis, as the DLP was, are vulnerable to ethnic splits when confronted with a strong, ethnically based opponent like the PNM. (The DLP leaders may have been maladroit in permitting their multiethnic party to break apart so easily, but even if the East Indian leaders had not acted as they did, Creole support might later have eroded under the strong magnetic pull of the PNM.)

What Guyana and Trinidad illustrate, therefore, is a dynamic process of ethnic realignment: once past a certain threshold, the realignment proceeds on its own momentum, whatever the real wishes of party leaders.

As I have suggested, leadership decisions in the course of party realignment trend to be made on an anticipatory basis, before substantive ethnic issues emerge to divide the whole country. This, I shall point out later, is quite different from the nature of pivotal events that produce a proliferation of parties serving a single ethnic group. Splits that break up multiethnic parties are designed precisely to avert the growth of ethnic parties competing for the same clientele. Pivotal events in the Guyanese and Trinidadian sequences of party mergers and splits were confined to party leadership disputes and did not involve policy positions. Since party leaders of any consequence have followings that are ethnically differentiated, a leader's decision to leave one party for another—particularly if the latter is clearly identified with that leader's own ethnic group—results in shifts of ethnic followings. The cumulative effect of such shifts is to provide voters with a set of cues about the ethnic identity of the parties based on their leadership composition.

There is, of course, a close interplay between leadership decisions and voter decisions. Voters choose among the parties provided by the leaders; they also choose on the basis of how other voters appear to be voting. Leaders provide party choices in accordance with their sense of how voters are voting, as well as in response to the party-organizing actions of other leaders. In Guyana and Trinidad, both sets of decisions pushed, spiral-fashion, toward an ethnic party system, which is why the term dynamic is appropriate. So far, though, our attention has been riveted largely at the leadership level. It is instructive to look a bit more closely at the voter level. Four underlying electoral phenomena are worth special scrutiny: (1) ethnic voting; (2) the sanctions applied to deviant voters; (3) increasingly high voter turnouts as the ethnic party system crystallizes, leading to a crucial, polarizing election, followed by declines in turnouts; and (4) the relationship between high voter participation rates and ethnic tension.

Ethnic Voting

A growing polarization of voting patterns is implicit in the rough overall correspondence of party support with ethnic demography. Surveys of voting intentions and voting behavior in Guyana and Trinidad in the critical years of the 1960s all reveal extraordinarily high rates of ethnic voting.

Here it is necessary to explain what ethnic voting means. The term has two possible meanings. Members of an ethnic group may vote heavily for one party over another. Alternatively, members of a given group may vote for candidates belonging to the same ethnic group, irrespective of party affiliation. Where parties are not organized along ethnic lines, ethnic voting takes either or both of these forms. In the Philippines, for example, voters customarily crossed party lines to support candidates of their own ethnic origin.

The organization of parties along ethnic lines changes this. No longer is it advantageous to cross party lines to vote for a candidate of the same


64. Ando, "A Study of Voting Patterns in the Philippine Presidential and Senatorial Elections." For a case where voters were subjected to conflicting pulls, between voting for the party that tended to represent their caste interest and voting for an independent candidate of their caste origin, see F. G. Bailey, Politics and Social Change in Orissa in 1959 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1963), 44. This is a sure sign that parties are not clearly demarcated along ethnic (here caste) lines.
it has no malevolent intentions that they need fear; and, finally, the aim of keeping alive the multiethnic aspirations of the party against the day when its ethnic base may actually be broadened. In Guyana and Trinidad, minority representatives in each party served all of these purposes.66 The prevalence of the practice elsewhere suggests that similar purposes also exist elsewhere.

Where parties are ethnically based but minority candidates are given party tickets, ethnic voting occurs even if, as commonly happens, a Creole voter votes for an East Indian candidate of a Creole party, or vice versa. Ethnically aware voters have understood that presenting a multiethnic slate is an exigency of political life, even for an ethnic party, and have accordingly voted for the ethnic party rather than for or against the ethnic identity of the individual candidates. When voters elect minority members of their ethnic party, it is wrong to regard this as nonethnic voting.67 Quite the contrary: it is party and not candidate ethnic identification that counts. No doubt an occasional voter will cross party lines to vote for a member of his ethnic group running on the ticket of the party identified with the opposing ethnic group. But a crossover of this type, away from one's own ethnic party just to support a candidate of one's own group, is a rare case: that is why safe seats provided to minority candidates are in fact safe.

If ethnic voting is defined solely in party terms, the evidence from Guyana and Trinidad is compelling. A survey of Guyanese voting intentions in 1961 found 87 percent of East Indian villagers aligned with the PPP and 81 percent of African villagers aligned with the PNC.68 Since this sample included nonvoters, who were probably least strongly committed to the ethnic parties, these figures probably underestimate the incidence of ethnic voting. More to the point are the data on ethnic crossover intentions: only 2 percent of the East Indians and only 6 percent of the Africans indicated an intention to vote for the PNC and the PPP, respectively.

65. There are many examples of reserved places of this kind, especially places reserved for indigenous parties representing immigrant groups. Chinese parties in Malaysia do this routinely. In Mauritius, the Labor Party, predominantly Hindu, recurrently chose Creoles to be party leader. Adele Smith Simmons, "Politics in Mauritius Since 1944: A Study of Decolonization in a Plural Society" (Ph.D. diss., Oxford Univ., 1969), 354–355, 375.

66. In Guyana, the electoral system was changed for the 1964 election to proportional representation, with the whole country one constituency and each party putting up a single list of candidates. Candidates were declared elected in order of their priority on the list, the cutoff depending on the proportion of votes received by each party. Guyanese parties took care to place members of the ethnic group with which they were identified high on the list, so as to insure the election of such candidates. This is the functional equivalent of the safe seat.

67. In Guyana and Trinidad, for example, Creole MPs representing East Indian parties acted as spokesmen for the rights of Indians—a role they would obviously assume without being accorded favoritism toward their own ethnic group.

68. Cheddi Jagan was the most obvious case of a leader with international pretensions, but he was not the only one. For example, the effectiveness of multiethnic composition in compelling impressions of ethnically circumscribed support, see Report of a Commission of Inquiry into Disturbances in British Guiana in February 1962 (Color. No. 354, London: H.M.S.O., 1962), 17: "...it seems to us that whatever racial differences existed were brought about by political propaganda. These differences do not go very deep and it is to be remarked that there are two African Ministers in Dr. Jagan's Cabinet. The counsel of the PPP at the inquiry was an African barrister and some of Dr. Jagan's strongest opposition in the proceedings before us came from East Indians."

69. The term minority representatives, used in this context, denotes minority in the party, not in the society (e.g., East Indian in a Creole party, and vice versa).


tively. My own data on those actually voting in the 1964 Guyanese election, drawn the following year from an urban and rural sample \( n = 186 \), also show a very low crossover rate. Not a single Creole reporter having voted for the PPP. The few non-PNC votes cast by Creole respondents went to the small third party (the UF). Of those Indians who said they did not vote for the PPP, almost none voted PNC; the overwhelming majority of avowed Indian crossover votes went to the conservative UF—which suggests that these Indian voters refrained from supporting the PPP out of fear of Jagan’s Marxism. Thus, even where support for ethnic parties is not unanimous, noneconomic voters are still not likely to vote for the party of the opposite ethnic group.

In any case, my Guyanese data point to high rates of ethnic voting: 96 percent for Africans and 77 percent for East Indians. The latter figure, however, is likely to be understated because of fear of disclosing support for the Indian party, which was in opposition. In Trinidad, the same disparity is my data \( n = 158 \), with 94 percent of black respondents indicating support for the PNM in the 1961 election and only 78 percent of East Indians professing support for the DLP. The same explanation is, I believe, responsible for the low Indian figure.\(^2^2\) Another voting study of the same election turned up ethnic voting rates of 92 percent for black respondents and 96 percent for Indian respondents.\(^2^3\) That study, however, utilized interviewers of the same ethnic background as the respondents, just as it might be dangerous to admit voting for the DLP to a non-Indian stranger, so it might be equally dangerous to admit not voting for the DLP to a Trinidadian Indian interviewer, who might report the deviation. The 96 percent figure may therefore be a shade too high.

Whatever the exact figure, it is clear that overwhelming numbers of Guyanese and Trinidadians—surely more than 90 percent—voted ethnically in the 1960s. What set this in motion, above all, was the initial identification of one of the major parties—in both cases, the largest party—with a single ethnic group. Since the Trinidad PNM never gained large-scale Indian support, it was early identified as a Creole party. Following Burnham’s resignation, the Guyana PPP likewise came to be seen as an East Indian party. Each such identification triggered a reaction in members of the other group. When, for example, the East Indian slogan

\( \text{apan jaht} \) (Hindi for “vote for your own”) became known among Guyanese Creoles, it became a perversely rallying cry for Creole voting solidarity—a felt necessity in the face of the larger Indian population. “The Indians,” said a PNC leader, “will support the PPP. If the PPP is to be beaten the bulk of African people will have to vote as a bloc together with minorities and dissident Indians.”\(^2^4\) Indian ethnic voting in Guyana made it easy to organize Creole ethnic voting, and vice versa for Trinidad.

The incentives toward reactive ethnic voting are strong. When voters of one group choose, in effect, not to choose but to give their vote predictably on an ethnic basis to an ethnically defined party, they put voters of the other group who choose among parties at a collective disadvantage. All else being equal, such voters will seek to reduce their disadvantage by concentrating their votes in a comparable ethnic party. In such a situation, ethnic votes tend to drive out noneconomic votes.

The data on ethnic voting in Guyana and Trinidad are consistent with other kinds of data on party support where parties appeal along ethnic lines. In countries such as Ghana and Congo (Brazzaville), placing the ethnic map over the electoral map reveals clear patterns of party support.\(^2^5\)

Ghana held a national election between the overthrow of Nkrumah in 1966 and the overthrow of Busia in 1972. In that election, conducted in 1969, parties came to be identified with ethnic groups—the Progress Party with the Brong, Asante, Akim, and other Akan-speakers; the National Alliance of Liberals, with the Ewe and Krobo.\(^2^6\) The allegiance of Northerners was split between the two parties. The PP obtained 85 percent of the popular vote in the Akum heartland; much of the NAL vote there was accounted for by the presence of Ewe or Northerners resident in Akan areas. The NAL, for its part, received overwhelming majorities in Ewe areas.\(^2^7\)

The Congo Republic was polarized even more completely in the

\( ^{2^2} \) In neither Guyana nor Trinidad was there any statistically significant correlation between noneconomic voting and the education, age, occupation, or residence of respondents.


\( ^{2^4} \) Quoted in Despres, Cultural Pluralism and Nationalist Politics in the British Guiana, 261.

\( ^{2^5} \) There is support for this even in Western countries, where religious and linguistic cleavages explain more about voting patterns than does class. Arend Liphart, “Religious vs. Linguistic vs. Class Voting: The ‘Crucial Experiment’ of Comparing Belgium, Canada, South Africa, and Switzerland,” American Political Science Review 73 (June 1979): 442–38.

\( ^{2^6} \) For evidence, see Austin and Luckham, eds., Politicians and Soldiers in Ghana, 226, 228, 255, 283, 385.

1950s. By 1959, each of the two major ethnic parties obtained well over 90 percent of the vote in most of the area inhabited by members of its ethnic group and more than 99 percent in its large core area.78

Similarly, Paul R. Brass has shown that correlations between party voting and the ethnic composition of constituencies in the Indian Punjab have been extremely high. In the Punjab, it will be recalled, the Akali Dal has been identified as a party of the Sikhs, while the Jan Sangh was regarded as a Hindu party. For 1969, there was a correlation of 0.73 between Akali Dal votes and the percentage of the constituency that is composed of Sikhs; there was also a $-0.76$ correlation between Akali Dal votes and the Hindu percentage of the constituency. In the same election, needless to say, Jan Sangh votes were highly correlated with the Hindu proportions of a constituency (0.71) and just about as negatively correlated with the Sikh proportions ($-0.68$).79 These unusually strong correlations existed despite the fact that no group in the Punjab voted solidly for any single party: Congress, for example, drew votes from Sikhs and Hindus.

It is not necessary to belabor the point that ethnic parties depend on ethnic voting. Guyana and Trinidad are not at all atypical in this respect.

Sanctions for Deviants

Once it begins, ethnic voting for ethnically defined parties tends to push toward unanimity. As I have said before, a group may divide its support among two or more ethnic parties or between an ethnic party and a multiethnic party, as in the Punjab. What group members will not do, however, is countenance voting for the party of the opposing ethnic group. As one of Brass’ respondents commented, “No sensible Hindu will vote for an Akali . . .”80 This is not merely because of the incentives mentioned earlier, to solidify support in the face of tendencies toward ethnic voting by members of the opposing ethnic group, but also because sanctions tend to be applied to deviants. An assumption begins to grow that each group has its own party and that loyal group members will line up behind it. In Guyana and Trinidad, each group supported only one party, and it came to be seen as only natural that a group member would cleave to his group’s party. “The PPP fights for the Indians,” said one of my respondents tersely. “He [Jagan] is Indian, and I am Indian,” answered another who was asked to explain his vote. Or simply: “I am a black man.” In the colorful expression of an Indian canefield worker who supported the DLP, “That’s we own party.”

A result of such conceptions is that deviation is not tolerated. In Guyana, East Indians who opposed the PPP were ostracized or beaten.81 Indeed, as the close identification of party with ethnic group grows, group members on both sides of the ethnic boundary firmly expect widespread ethnic voting. A letter to the editor of the Trinidad Guardian, written shortly after the 1958 federal elections and signed “Lame Victim,” illustrates the point. The letter was written by an Indian businessman who had supported an unsuccessful PNM candidate and had been beaten by several (presumably Creole) PNM supporters, notwithstanding his profuse professions of PNM sympathy:

It was stated openly and vehemently that no Indians voted PNM and if one said he did, they usually said: “You lie; you only saying so now because PNM in power.”

Indians who said they voted PNM were often abused, maligned, and discredited.

I like the policy and principles of PNM. But unfortunately many of its adherents fail to practice it. In trying to explain this to people I come in contact with I am accused of being anti-DLP or anti-Indian, and for that I am not only abused, but my trade has fallen off badly. To boot I am denied entrance to our village theatre.

Here is the big joke, Mr. Editor: I am afraid to be seen in San Fernando [a Creole-majority town] at night for fear of being assaulted, and being called anti-PNM, and in my own district I am being despised for being anti-DLP.82

Deviance thus becomes unprofitable, and—so strong are the expectations of ethnic voting—the deviance can even go unrecognized. Again, Guyana and Trinidad are not unique. In the 1969 Ghanaian election, Akans who were affiliated with the NAL soon found themselves stamped


82. Trinidad Guardian (Port-of-Spain), Apr. 3, 1958. For the story of a candidate who tried unsuccessfully to keep ethnicity out of his campaign, see Arthur Niehoff and Juanna Niehoff, East Indians in the West Indies (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Public Museum Publications in Anthropology, 1960), 68.
as "Ewe sympathizers." Richard L. Sklar sums up a number of violent incidents in Nigeria, where ethnic parties grew up in every region, with the remark that "the supporters of a communal membership party are apt to view opposition to that party by a member of the community with moral indignation and to punish it as antisocial conduct."

The Election as Census

A member of a Commonwealth team sent to observe the 1964 Guyanese election described it as a "racial census," in which a person's vote was "predetermined by the demands of [his] security" in an "atmosphere charged with fear." What makes this description apt is not ethnic voting alone, but also exceptionally high rates of voter turnout. With the crystallization of the ethnic party system in Guyana and Trinidad, the electoral contest became more intense. At the same time, ethnic voting made it easier for ethnic parties to mobilize the vote. Identifying the voters of each party is a simple matter when ethnic and party identifications are synonymous. As Table 4 shows, in the post-war period both Guyana and Trinidad had steady rising rates of voter participation. (The temporary exception of Guyana in 1957 is undoubtedly explained by the suspension of the constitution from 1953 to 1957.) Voting rates reached a peak in 1964 in Guyana and 1961 in Trinidad. As participation began to approach 100 percent, these elections assumed more and more the quality of a census. The Guyanese election of 1964, which took place in a context of acute conflict and closely balanced party support, brought out nearly all the registered voters.

In both cases, the high point of voter participation produced an unusually large turnout by world standards for free elections, which these were. Exact figures for subsequent elections in Guyana are unreliable, but it is clear that voter participation declined after 1964, as it did in Trinidad after 1961.

The reason for the peak and decline is not hard to discern. The 1961

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Guyana</th>
<th>Trinidad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>70.0*</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>74.8</td>
<td>1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>55.8</td>
<td>1956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>89.4</td>
<td>1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>96.9</td>
<td>1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>1981</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Official reports.
*Approximate.
*Participation figures for Guyana after 1964 are unreliable.
The exceedingly low figure in the 1971 Trinidad election resulted from an opposition boycott of the election.

and 1964 Guyanese elections and the 1961 Trinidadian election were crucial tests of the political power of the respective ethnic groups. They occurred after parties had been reordered along clear ethnic lines and the number of ethnic contestants reduced essentially to two. Since voting was known to be largely ascriptive, each party's electoral performance could be expected to be repeated in subsequent elections. Consequently, once party strength was tested and confirmed in a polarising election, participation rates declined. Guyana went through such an election

87. This is true in Guyana as well as Trinidad, even though there was a third party in Guyana (the United Force) that had an ethically differentiated base of support. See note
60, above. The UF's support was best reflected in the 1964 election: 12 percent of the total vote, hardly enough to detract from the overriding Creole-East Indian division. Moreover, the UF was clearly aligned with the PNC. This is because its electoral base shared certain ethnic points of contact with the PNC (particularly the "mixed" population) and because the conservative supporters of the UF saw themselves as being far closer to Burnham's views than to Jagan's avowed Marxism. The UF-PNC alliance was manifested not merely in the two-party coalition formed after the 1964 election. It also took the form of street demonstrations begun as early as 1962 to bring the Jagan government down, as well as serious but unsuccessful negotiations to merge the two parties in 1960 (before the formation of the UF was officially announced). For all these reasons, the existence of the UF as a third party does not detract from the essentially bifurcated character of the struggle in Guyana in the 1960s.
twice because the voting system changed to proportional representation for the 1964 election; although the 1964 results closely paralleled the 1961 results, no one was sure in advance that this would occur.) A kind of census had indeed been conducted.

Voter turnout statistics are thus clearly related to the emergence of the ethnic party system. They vary with its stage of development, peaking at the time when it is most important that all ethnic-group members be counted.

The distinctive character of the electoral process where parties are ethnically based is underscored by contrasting peaks and declines in voter turnout in such a system with the same phenomena in a system without ethnically based parties.88 The differences that emerge from such a comparison are striking and fundamental.

It has long been observed that upsurges in voter turnout in the United States produce a strong increase in the vote for one of the major parties but little change in the vote for the other.89 This is because sharp increases in turnout are the result of unusual interest in particular issues or the unusual attractiveness of particular candidates. These events and personalities of the moment bring people to the polls who often do not vote. The issues and candidates that have the power to bring such voters to the polls are not neutral in their effects on the parties. The Depression produced a large turnout in 1932 that aided the Democrats; the Eisenhower candidacy in 1952 brought out masses of voters specifically to vote for the party on whose ticket he ran. "The circumstances which create a high-stimulus election," in other words, "may be expected to create simultaneously a strong differential in the attractiveness of the vote alternatives perceived by the electorate." Thus concludes Angus Campbell, the very conditions that increase turnout also "swing the partisan division of the vote toward the party which happens to be advantaged by the circumstances of the moment."89 This is why surges in voter turnout benefit one party more than the other.

Declines in voter participation following such surges in the United States also affect one party more than the other. Marginal voters, whose interest in voting in the preceding election was stimulated by the existence of important issues or attractive candidates, tend not to vote once those ephemeral circumstances have passed. Likewise, voters who switched parties to vote for the party "advantaged by the circumstances of the moment" tend to move back to their former position. Consequently, in the United States, a sharp decline in turnout generally also results in a decline in the share of the vote taken by the party that had benefited disproportionately from the previous surge in turnout.

The contrast with the surge and decline in Guyana and Trinidad could not be clearer. The surge in both of these countries benefited the party with the demographic majority, but only because one ethnic group happened to be larger than the other. The surge was not associated with any transfer of votes from one party to another, either by newly participant marginal voters or by regular voters. In contrast to the situation in the United States, both major parties increased their votes markedly. The surge was associated with strong propensities toward ethnic voting, and rates of participation were very high among members of both of the main ethnic groups. In Guyana (1964), 96 percent of my black respondents and 89 percent of my East Indian respondents voted. In Trinidad (1961), 81 percent of my black respondents and 82 percent of my Indian respondents voted. (These figures are somewhat lower than official voting figures, based on voters as a percentage of those registered, because my samples included respondents who were not registered to vote.)

In the United States, in short, surges go up because people go to the polls to register a choice, often a different one from the one they would ordinarily make. In Guyana and Trinidad, on the other hand, turnouts went up because people went to the polls to register their affiliation with the same party they would ordinarily be affiliated with, given the ethnic basis of party politics. High turnouts were not associated with changes in party preference.

The same is true of subsequent declines. Here we are confined to the Trinidad data. From these it is clear that the decline of 22.6 percent in voter participation from 1961 to 1966 did not benefit one party significantly more than the other. The parties split the seats in exactly the same proportions—two to one—in both elections. Both parties lost votes. To be sure, the PNM's share of the vote declined by only 3 percent, whereas the DLP's declined by 7 percent; but this was probably only a function of the differential distribution of third-party and independent candidates.

in the 1966 election.\textsuperscript{91} Whereas declines in voter participation in American elections change the result, declines following a polarizing ethnic party election are unlikely to change anything. They occur, in fact, because results are so foreseeable that the same results can and will be replicated in any given constituency with a lower turnout. In the one case, changes in voter participation are closely related to changes in voter choice; in the other, choice is preempted by birth.

\textbf{Voter Participation and Ethnic Tension}

Not only were voter participation levels high in Guyana and Trinidad, but apprehensions about the outcome made these elections tense and sometimes violent occasions. The 1961–64 period was a time of unparalleled violence in Guyana. In Trinidad, Creole uncertainties were greatest in 1956, when the PNM entered its first election. As indicated earlier, the parties that preceded the PNM had all been weakly organized, but one of them, the People’s Democratic Party, was clearly an East Indian Party. Some PNM leaders feared that the Creole vote would be so badly split in 1956 that the PDP might win.\textsuperscript{93} The campaign was interspersed with acts of violence and threats to the safety of leading politicians. In the event, the PNM drew enough Creole support to form a government. Then, in 1961, it was time for Indian apprehensions. Outnumbered, the DLP leadership stirred Indian feelings to the brink of violence,\textsuperscript{92} in part, no doubt, to maximize the East Indian turnout. By 1966, past the critical test, calm had returned to the electoral process.

There is no guarantee, of course, that ethnic demography will produce closely balanced contests that can only be resolved by a crucial, polarizing election. In Benin (then Dahomey), there were three main groups and three corresponding parties contending for power in the 1960s. Various coalitions of two against one were formed, all of them unstable. But the three contenders were never really reduced to two, and so permanent exclusion was never a foreordained result of the electoral process. Togo did have two main ethnic clusters, but the more numerous Southerners, led by the Ewe, early gained ascendancy, capturing nearly two-thirds of the vote in the 1958 election.\textsuperscript{94} Both of these countries had ethnic party systems, with the accompanying instability, but they did not have the kind of balanced bipolar ethnic division that lent itself to a tense and crucial electoral test. Benin lacked the bipolarity, and Togo lacked the balanced strengths.

Yet the polarizing election occurs often enough so that a number of such elections can be identified rather easily: Sierra Leone (1967), Nigeria (1964), Congo (Brazzaville) (1959), and Zanzibar (1961). The first three of these elections split the country along North-South lines, between two closely balanced parties. Each of them resulted, sooner or later, in a military coup. I shall therefore discuss them when I deal with military politics and ethnic conflict. For the moment, it is sufficient to point out that the development of this kind of bipolar ethnic party system was typically accompanied by violence and very high voter turnout, as ethnic followings were mobilized for the crucial electoral count. In Nigeria, the Southern party boycotted the 1964 election to protest questionable electoral practices; but even in 1959, when polarization was incomplete and tension was lower, the turnout was 80 percent nationwide and was over 89 percent in the North, which feared Southern hegemony.\textsuperscript{95} In the Congolese election of 1959, voter participation in many areas exceeded 90 percent. The overall rate was 79.2 percent.\textsuperscript{96} In Zanzibar, party and ethnic lines were not perfectly matched, but they were close enough so that each party had a commonly accepted ethnic identification. By the 1961 election, 96.2 percent of the electorate voted; and violent disturbances followed.\textsuperscript{97}

A central feature of the polarizing election—and to a lesser extent of all elections where parties are ethnically aligned—is the devotion of party efforts to mobilizing known supporters to turn out for the vote. Of course, all electoral parties concern themselves with voter turnout, but there are differences. Here “known supporters” are known by their ethnicity. Since that is their distinguishing feature, they are most readily mobilized by appeals to ethnic interests, threats, and hatreds. The

\textsuperscript{92} Sklar, \textit{Nigerian Political Parties}, 37–38.
\textsuperscript{93} Wagret, \textit{Histoire et sociologie politiques de la République du Congo (Brazzaville)}, 93, 192.
greater the collective danger, the greater the likelihood that politically apathetic group members will go to the polls.

Attention to turnout can be single-minded. Elsewhere, nonethnic parties divide their electoral energies between two tasks: mobilizing known supporters and appealing for uncommitted votes. These two are not necessarily the same thing. In fact, there is often a tradeoff between whipping up party loyalists to get them to the polls and soliciting the support of those whose loyalty is uncertain. Pandering exclusively to the concerns and prejudices of loyal supporters may well drive away uncommitted or potential crossover voters; sweet reasonableness and moderation may be required to convert the uncommitted to the party cause.

All this is different in an ethnic party system. In such a system, mobilizing known supporters and appealing to marginal voters are effectively the same thing, for there are virtually no uncommitted votes to be had on the other side of the ethnic boundary. What is uncertain is not how a voter will vote if he votes—a Creole will vote for the Creole party, an Ibo for the Ibo party, and so on. In such a party system, all that is uncertain is whether a potential voter will vote. Accordingly, turnout becomes all-important, and there is no electoral reason to be moderate about ethnic appeals.

As the mobilization of all group members to vote imparts a census-like quality to the electoral count, so the ethnic appeals that push voting rates up also raise the pitch of ethnic conflict and increase the danger of violence. No doubt politicians will later find that it is easier to kindle a fire than to quench one, but in the census-type election ignition takes untrammelled priority. Hence, apn jah is the order of the day—or, in the more direct Creole lyric of a Trinidad calypso: "We don't want no coolie [East Indian] premier. We don't want no roti government."*8

98. Coolie, originally a Tamil word, was the early pejorative term for the East Indians who came to work the sugar estates as indentured laborers. Roti, which means bread in several Asian languages, refers in Trinidad to a widely sold snack food, stuffed with curried potatoes. Its Indian origins make it a convenient vehicle for a disparaging quip at the expense of the DLP.

The realignment process we have just observed for Guyana and Trinidad is reminiscent of two hypotheses advanced by Sartori.1 The first states that the appearance of one or two mass parties undermines party atomization in the rest of the party system. To compete with the mass party, other organizations need to merge into more solid parties. The second hypothesis, framed with Europe in mind, states that when a religious party becomes a mass party with an outspokenly pro-clerical orientation, this sets in motion a chain reaction in party formation. Parties form to take sides on the secular-religious dimension. The chain reaction, Sartori asserts, is likely to have a centrifugal impact.

There are echoes of these hypotheses, suitably modified for ethnicity rather than religion, in Guyana and Trinidad. Certainly, the consolidation process was quite visible, and it occurred hand in hand with the formation of parties that lined up along ethnic boundaries as soon as the ethnic character of one of the parties was established. The appearance of the first mass parties quickly undermined the position of the former personalistic parties and locally influential independents, forcing them to join together. In this respect, their reaction was no different from the behavior of other organizations in adversary relationships. These typically imitate each other's structural innovations, the better to engage in struggle.2