A Tale of Two Tigers

The Effective Constituency and Social Welfare Policy in Thailand and Mauritius

Comparative Politics Workshop, February 13th, 2009

JOEL SELWAY

University of Michigan

NOTE: SINCE THIS IS A DISSERTATION CHAPTER IT MAY SEEM TO HAVE AN ABRUPT START.

Do not distribute without author's permission. [1]

ABSTRACT

As Africa's leading Tiger Economy, the tiny country of Mauritius lying 600 miles off the coast of Madagascar has much to teach developing countries about human development. Since the 1970's, consecutive Mauritian governments have overseen the management of successful universal health and education systems, which in recent years have propelled the country into the elite group of "High Human Development" countries, as assessed by the United Nations Development Program. In contrast, a significant proportion of the population in Thailand (up until 1997) suffered from poor access to health and educations services. While not a basket case by any means, corruption and inefficiency characterized the distribution of social welfare resources in these two sectors. In a similar way that Thailand remained on the outskirts of 'Tiger' classification in terms of its economic growth, its performance in providing social opportunities to its citizens has like-wise fallen short. Two leading theoretical traditions fail to explain this discrepancy. First, Institutional Theory predicts that the provision of goods in these two countries should be similar. Both countries employ a multi-member-district (MMD), First-Past-the-Post (FPTP) electoral system, which existing theory posits to encourage a narrow distribution of resources. This is true in Thailand, but not Mauritius. Second, Sociological Theory predicts that the more ethnically diverse country (Mauritius) should do poorer at providing collective goods such as universal health and education. I resolve these theoretical inconsistencies under the lens of a *Socio-Institutional Theory* that offers different predictions for Institutional Theory in the context of different underlying social structure. I show that, given Mauritius' social structure, the MMD-FPTP electoral system actually encourages policies that benefit the nation broadly.

[1]Contact author at: Department of Political Science, University of Michigan, 5700 Haven Hall, 505 South State Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1045. E-mail: jselway@umich.edu.

Section 1: The Effective Constituency in Thailand and Mauritius

Introduction

This chapter explores the human development performance of two Tiger Economies: Mauritius and Thailand. In this and the next chapter, I employ an *embedded, multiple-case* research design whereby I analyze policy outcomes in the two countries across two different periods of time. In the current chapter, I examine Mauritius in the period 1976-2008 and Thailand in the period 1979-1997. During these periods, both countries had virtually identical electoral rules: First-Past-the-Post (FPTP) in multi-member districts (MMD). The two cases were carefully chosen to be *most similar* on the institutional variable while *most different* on the sociological variable: Mauritius is an ethnically diverse country while Thailand is fairly homogenous. This design allows me to directly investigate the main puzzle of this dissertation – do political institutions work identically in different social settings? In the subsequent chapter, I compare Thailand in the period 1997-2006 to a hypothetical Mauritius.[2] Being an embedded design, the subsequent chapter also compares each country at time *t + 1* to itself at time *t*, contained in this chapter. Thus, this design allows me to both analyze how an identical institutional change would affect policy incentives and political behavior differently in countries with different social structure.

This design is also fortunate in its ability to control for leading alternative explanations for why one country, Mauritius, was very successful in providing universal access to its citizens, while the other, Thailand, was less so. Both countries were at similar levels of economic development in the late 1970's, following a similar pattern of export-oriented growth to become leading Tiger Economies within their own geo-political regions (Africa and Southeast Asia respectively). Both countries were also at similar starting points in terms of the health and education sectors they 'inherited' from previous regimes. Over the next 30 years, both received similar attention from international bodies such as the World Health Organization (WHO). There are, naturally, some important differences, which I address in detail later on, but here briefly state that, in the aggregate, these differences tended to make Thailand more successful than it otherwise should have been in this first period.

The tiny country of Mauritius, which lies 500 miles off the coast of Madagascar in the middle of the Indian Ocean, has seen consecutive

---

[2] Mauritius has been contemplating electoral rule change for some years now. The most popular suggestion, a two-tier mixed FPTP and PR system, would result in a system very similar to Thailand's in the 1997-2006 period.

governments successfully manage the two largest and potentially unwieldy, most politically sensitive public sectors of health and education. This success propelled the country, in 2006, into the elite group of "High Human Development" countries, as assessed by the United Nations (UNDP 2006). In contrast, a significant proportion of the population in Thailand (up until 1997) suffered from comparatively poor access to health and educations services. While not a basket case by any means, corruption and inefficiency came to characterize the distribution of social welfare resources in these two sectors in Thailand. In a similar way that Thailand remained on the outskirts of 'Tiger' classification in terms of its economic growth, its performance in providing social opportunities to its citizens has like-wise fallen short. In this chapter, I show how the interaction of electoral rules, which were similar in both countries, with the structure of social cleavages, which differed sharply, led to different incentives for politicians to create broad, national constituencies, as opposed to narrow, geographic or ethnic ones. Thus, the Tale of Two Tigers is this: one tiger matched its stripes to the jungle fauna, while the other needed to change to spots.

Effective Constituency Breadth in Thailand

Thailand is the tiger that needed to change to spots. This it did with the introduction of the 1997 constitution, but prior to that, Thailand's mix of social structure and electoral system led to weak incentives for politicians to cater to broad, national constituencies. The institutional pressures for this phenomenon has been well documented by Hicken (CITE). I highlight, in this section, that this institutional effect depended on Thailand's social structure, in which ethnicity is unimportant and thus unable to connect politicians across numerous local districts as it does in Mauritius. The reason for ethnicity's insignificance is the high level of cross-cuttingness in Thailand among ethnic groups on a number of different dimensions, namely religion, class and geography. Indeed, each of the other three cleavages cross-cut each other: religion cross-cuts class and region, and class and region also cross-cuts to an extent.[3] Thus, the Thai social structure was unable to "overcome" the negative institutional incentives.

Ethnicity and Religion

---

[3] Selway (2007b) shows that if the group "Thais" are divided into sub-ethnic groups that Central Thais (or, more accurately, those that speak Central Thai in the home) have higher incomes than other Thai groups. Non-Thai groups have significantly lower incomes than Central Thais, but not much lower than Northeastern Thais (*khon Isan*). On average, then, Thais have a higher income than Non-Thai groups, but a large enough proportion of Thais fall into the lower class that this distinction is almost mute. Lastly, Muslims have a slightly lower income than Buddhists.

Thailand is usually regarded as ethnically homogenous. Apart from small Malay, Cambodian, Burmese, Vietnamese and Hill Tribe populations along the border, which collectively compose no more than 6% of the population, Thailand appears, for many intents and purposes, ethnically homogenous. The Chinese and Sino-Thais (Thai speakers of Chinese descent) make up 8% of the population, but are highly assimilated into Thai language and culture (Keyes 1997). There are regional linguistic groups that closely resemble ethnic groups, and perhaps have the potential for a future increase in salience, but this divide's salience has been mitigated by Thailand's strong nationalist movement over the past century. Renowned anthropologist Charles Keyes argues that they have all but become regional identities (*ibid* 1997). Nevertheless, it is important to note that Thai political entrepreneurs have attempted to resurrect this cleavage at times[4], and there is evidence of the growth in the regional nature of parties in Thailand over time prior to the 1997 constitution. One reason why it has

The religious divide in Thailand is also very homogenous with 95% of the country ascribing to Buddhism. Islam is the second largest religion, but while nearly all Malays identify with Islam there are also significant numbers of Thai Muslims, especially in the Southern region. Region reinforces religion, with the majority of Muslims living in the South. However, the cross-cutting of ethnicity and religion tends to mitigate any possible religious divide. The notable insurgency in the South of Thailand, which does have an ethno-religious component to it, is more a division between a small group of Malay Muslims and the State.

Socio-economic class and Geographic Concentration of Ethnic Groups

Thailand also has weak ethnic and religious components to wealth distribution, even if one views regional ethnic identities as fully developed ethnic groups. Indeed, class tends to cross-cut both religion and ethnicity, i.e. there are significant proportions of upper, middle and lower classes among all the main ethnic and religious groups. If ethno-regional groups were included, the Isaan of the Northeast would have a good claim as the poorest group, but because Thailand is still heavily rural, there are large proportions of all ethno-regional groups (*khon meuang* of the Northeast, the Central Thai, the Southern Thai) that remain poor, and the Malays are equally as poor in the aggregate (Selway 2007).

In short, ethnicity is simply not salient in Thailand. The recent problems in the South with Malay Islamic militants do not stem from inter-ethnic strife per se; violent acts have been almost entirely directed against the Central government rather than local Thai Buddhists. Ethnicity is thus not able to serve

[4] If I do not end up addressing the Southern identity of the Democrats, I will do so here along with a quote from Pasuk and Baker (and hopefully the Bangkok Post if I can find it) on Chavalit's attempt to make the New Aspiration Party the party of the Northeast.

as a unifying force for politicians elected in isolated districts as it does in Mauritius.[5]

Electoral Rules

Since Thailand and Mauritius share the same basic electoral rules, I will describe them here in general terms before discussing Thailand specifically. Both countries employ plurality systems rarely combined with multi-member districts. Plurality systems (and its broader variant majoritarianism[6]) are sometimes referred to as "winner-takes-all" systems, since whichever candidate has the most votes takes the seat. In Mauritius, all but one district has a magnitude of three, i.e. three legislators were elected in each district, whereas in Thailand this ranged more from one to three, but with a mode of three. Voters in both countries are able to cast as many votes as there are seats; they are not allowed to cast all three votes for the same candidate (plumpling), but can cast votes for candidates from different candidates (panachage).

The Effective Constituency

In the period 1979-1997, the Thai parliament (*saphaphuthaenratsadhorn*) was composed of 3-400 seats (the number gradually increased over time in sync with Thailand's population). Since the success of one candidate was entirely independent from (technically at least) his co-partisan, individual candidates had strong incentives to maximize their own number of votes. Parties could mitigate these "incentives to cultivate a personal vote" if they were strong independently of the electoral system (as is the case in the United Kingdom), but this was far from true in Thailand. A politician's effective constituency in Thailand, then, was essentially a sub-section of a single electoral district. This was the perfect environment for strong local patrons, characteristic in developing countries, who had no incentives to sustain strong parties, only to loot the state coffers for as much as they could while in office.[7] As some of these politicians began to invest in long-term political careers, forming parties became of increasing worth to them in order to capture cabinet seats, and the control of a ministry's purse

---

[5] Hicken also argues that other cross-district coordination dynamics not related to ethnicity were also weak during this time.

[6] Plurality is a less strict version of majoritarianism, only requiring the winner to have the most votes, rather than a simple majority, or 50% + 1.

[7] Arguably, patron-client relations in Thailand prevented the establishment of strong parties. Hicken (2002) writes how the weak incentive to capture the premiership in Thailand led to a lack of cross-district coordination. Ockey (1994) and others have well documented how Thai MPs formed parties with the goal of capturing a cabinet seat simply to control the resources of that ministry to the benefit of their constituency

strings. However, these coalitions changed from election to election and even regional, or sub-regional constituencies failed to develop.

Most districts in Thailand are ethnically and religiously identical. Thai Buddhists constitute the majority of the population, with some Chinese and/or Sino Thai that, as mentioned above, are highly assimilated into Thai culture including Thai Buddhism. A few districts near the borders of Burma and Cambodia may have larger percentages of minority ethnic groups, but compared to the 350+/- seats available. The South of Thailand is different in this regard. With a high population of Muslims and a concentration of Malays in the most nether provinces, there is potential for some interesting dynamics. However, it is not just the high proportion of Malays/Muslims, but the economic power and social prestige of these groups that allows representatives from these groups to capture seats.

There is no good data available on the ethnic compositions of actual electoral districts, but rough assessments are useful. Assuming most of these districts were three-seat, a minority group would have to constitute roughly 1/3 of the population to stand a chance of winning a seat. According to the 2000 Census, provinces with minority populations that large only number 7 (or less than 10% of all provinces). An additional five provinces have minority percentages in the mid 20s and an extra seven (19 in total) have minority percentages over 10%. Of course, actual distribution within electoral districts may mean that groups with as little as 10% in the overall province may constitute 1/3 of a given electoral district.

For example, in the Northeast, Si Sa Ket is 26.2% Surin is 47.2% and Buri Ram is 27.6% Khmer. Between 9-10 MPs were elected in these provinces, meaning 3 districts electing 3 members or 2 electing 3 and 2 electing 2. It is conceivable, then that if the Khmer were concentrated in one of these districts they might capture a seat, even all three (or both). However, the Khmer tend to be economically marginalized and even in the South, mobilization on ethnic terms has not taken place. The same is true for the Hill Tribes, which constitute, at its highest, 63% in Mae Hong Son province. The Hill Tribes are even less likely to contend for political power than the Khmer, however, not only due to their low economic status, but also due to their diversity, Hill Tribe being simply a collective categorization of numerous Hill-dwelling tribes. There is perhaps the potential for this in the future, but generally the electoral saliency of ethnicity and religion has been non-existent.

In the South, however, it is not uncommon for Thai Muslims in the Southern region and even Malay Muslims in the three Southern-most provinces (Yala, Narathiwat, and Pattani) to capture a seat. Again, it should be emphasized that electoral competition still tends not to be between religious or ethnic groups; 18-28% of these provinces are Thai Buddhists with 1.5-4% Thai Muslims and Thais often win a seat. Moreover, the three Southern-most provinces only contribute about 2% of total seats in the House hardly making an impact on

policymaking. The South's strong regional image likely is responsible for religion never becoming politically charged in Thailand. Indeed, the Democrat party has been instrumental in playing the regional card and making the South its base of support.

In general, then, nearly all Thais go to the polls with no strong ethnic or religious political pressures or incentives. While some parties and political entrepreneurs have tried to make region more salient, this has only taken off in the South. However, when Southern Thais go to the polls they are still choosing among ethnic Thais from the South. Thus, the Democrat Party's ties to the South are not based on any kind of inter-regional conflict, and the Democrat Party's desire to win seats all over the country (especially in Bangkok) has stopped it from ever declaring at the national level that they are the party of the South.

With this lack of ethnic or religious conflict in the past, and indeed a general trend of assimilation into the Thai culture by immigrants, politics in this period was confined solely to the local level. Influential public officials, wealthy businessmen, chiefs and even godfathers (jao por) battled it out at the local level. The successful candidates had to have a combination of largesse in both a financial and social sense. This largesse was often won or increased by connecting oneself to larger political networks – provincial governors, extremely wealthy businessmen. As these networks increased, the faction might become large enough to challenge for a cabinet seat. Factions joining factions would then aim for the more financially lucrative portfolios, with the Interior Ministry being the most sought-after. The next step up was to be the largest party in parliament and possess ultimate control of the purse strings as Prime Minister.

These political networks and factions were constantly changing as shrewd Thai politicians constantly re-evaluated their opportunities with rival factions and parties. Parties rose and fell in power as they shrunk or grew in size. MPs would frequently defect to new parties. Parties would be dissolved as a new combination of factions would challenge for a cabinet seats, seats, or the Prime Ministership. Party formation, then, was very bottom-up in the sense that there were no national-level social groups manipulating party labels or organizations. Accordingly, Thai parties were notoriously void of ideology.

Class was the only other national-level cleavage of salience in Thailand at the start of this period, but conservative forces in Thailand had completely eliminated the Left by the early 1980s. Indeed, if it were not for this extreme reaction to the open politics of the 1970s, a traditional Left-Right class continuum may have emerged in Thailand. Thus, class could have been a strong source of cross-district coordination. Sadly, natural limitations prevent an experiment of this nature! We will see, however, in the next chapter, that with the new constitution in 1997, class did become a strong source of cross-district coordination.

At the factional level and sometimes at the party level (in the case of the South), region did become a source of cross-district coordination. More than

being a case of regional identity, however, were the kinship and business ties that had spread across a certain geographical space. Outside of the South, the Chart Thai party tended to be composed of MPs from the Central region; the New Aspiration Party tended to be composed of MPs from the Northeast. However, there was many MPs from other regions (especially Bangkok) within these parties. New Aspiration contained plenty of MPs from the Central region. The Democrats, likewise, had MPs from all regions. It cannot be said, then, that Thai parties were based on regional identity.

At the local level, competition was fierce amongst local notables. Vote buying was rampant and violence was all too common (Anderson YEAR). With three seats (on average) in a district up for grabs, candidates campaigned on their personal merits. There was no party allegiance, and local notables from different parties sometimes campaigned unofficially on the same slate. Of course, Thai voters could vote for candidates from three different parties if they so chose. Indeed, voters had no incentive to cast three votes for the same party. Hicken (YEAR) even shows that voters had more incentive to split their vote due to the gains to be had from vote buying (i.e. consistently voting for the same party would make an individual ineligible for payments from another party). Among candidates, it was every man (or women in some cases) for himself. There was no incentive to help another candidate running under the same label. Perhaps one might argue that by supporting another candidate from the same party one could provide greater certainty of capturing a cabinet seat for his faction/party. However, such coordination could be done post-election because party lines and even factional allegiances were so fluid.

Effective Constituency Breadth in Mauritius

I start with a description of the 'jungle fauna', or social structure, of Mauritius. Mauritius is a deeply complex society, with numerous possible dimensions of identity (ethnicity, religion, class and caste), and varying degrees of geographic spacing for each potential group. As discussed in Chapter 1, I focus on the latent social structure, the set of all possible identity groupings, of each society rather than the politicized structure, or the salient groupings that emerge in response to the electoral rules.[8]

Ethnicity and Religion

There are four major ethnic[9] groups in Mauritius: the Indo-Mauritians, who constitute 69% of the population; the Creoles (27%); the Chinese (3%) and

---

[8] Chandra (2008) refers to this dichotomy in relation to the cleavage of ethnicity as ethnic structure (latent structure) and ethnic practice (politicized structure).

[9] In Chapter 1, I explicitly define ethnicity as separate from religion.

the Franco-Mauritians (1%). The major religious groups are Hindus (52%), Muslims (16%), Christians (~30%), Buddhists (1-3%) and Sikhs (<1%).[10] The Indo-Mauritian ethnic group consumes the first two religious categories and Sikhs in their entirety. There are some Indo-Christians, mostly of the Indian provincial-group Tamil. Franco-Mauritians and Creoles make up the vast majority of Christians (mostly Catholic). Eriksen (1997) also writes that 80% of the Chinese converted to Christianity, but other sources (CITE HERE) put the number of Buddhists as high as 2.5%. Mauritius thus has a medium-low level of ethno-religious cross-cuttingness. It is low due to the tiny proportion of Indians that are Christian and the few individuals any of the other ethnic groups that are Hindu or Muslim. However, it is not extremely low since the Indo-Mauritians are divided between Hinduism and Islam, whereas Christianity is shared by the Creoles and Franco-Mauritians.

Socio-Economic Class

In addition to religion reinforcing ethnicity, there is a fairly strong ethnic dimension to socio-economic class. The Franco-Mauritians sit clearly atop the pecking order. Originally owners of the lucrative sugar plantations which dot the island, these descendents of French settlers took advantage of the economic boom, diversifying their holdings into finance and export holding companies. The Chinese are the second wealthiest ethnic group in Mauritius. Similar to Chinese diasporas in other parts of the world, this group dominated the internal trade in Mauritius in the colonial era. Much like the Franco-Mauritians, the Chinese' original wealth meant that they were poised to take advantage of the country's export-oriented growth strategy. The Indo-Mauritians are generally perceived to be the next best off in financial terms. Indeed, many individuals from this group have substantial holdings. Their cultural emphasis on education has also led ensuing younger generations to benefit from tertiary education and enter professions such as law and medicine. Many Muslims, like the Chinese, were also heavily involved in trade during the colonial era. The Creoles are, without a doubt, perceived to be the poorest ethnic group in Mauritius. Their social exclusion was brought to the public's attention in 1993 following Catholic priest Father Roger Cerveaux's coining of the term *malaise créole* in his address at the annual celebration of the abolition of slavery.[11] However, there are significant parts of the Indo-Mauritian community, especially those that still work as laborers on the sugar plantations that have equal claim to impoverishment. Mauritius thus has a moderately low level of ethno-income cross-cuttingness.

---

[10] Exact numbers are uncertain since the last census that recorded ethnicity or religion was YEAR?????

[11] Miles, William F. S. 1999. The Creole Malaise in Mauritius. *African Affairs* 98: 211-228.

Geographic Dispersion

There is a fairly strong correlation between ethnicity and location of residence, both in terms of urbanicity and specific regions of the country. The Hindus are heavily concentrated in rural parts of the country, whereas the Creoles, Muslims and Chinese live almost exclusively in urban areas. While the Franco-Mauritians do not tend to be identified in urban-rural terms, they are heavily associated with the lush Plaines-Wilhem region in the Southeast of the Island. Creoles generally live in the Port-Louis megalopolis that extends from Port-Louis in the Center-East to Vacoas in the heart of the island. The Chinese are concentrated in one area of Port-Louis and the Muslims ????????????????? Thus, Mauritius has a moderately-low level of ethno-geographic cross-cuttingness.

Electoral Rules

Mauritius has an almost identical electoral system to pre-1997 Thailand. The island is divided into 20 three-member constituencies on the mainland plus 1 two-member constituency on the island of Rodrigues. Up to an additional eight legislators are elected in a unique *Best-Loser System (BLS)*, originally created to ensure ethnic equality in the legislature. As I show later on in this chapter, the BLS has become largely symbolic, never featuring into the strategies of political parties, and never determining the winner of any election.

The Effective Constituency

There are several possible constituencies to which a politician in Mauritius could see himself accountable to and, thus, cater to. I argue that, unlike Thailand, the strongest incentives for Mauritian politicians are *not* to cater to the electoral district. **Indeed, I argue that the FPTP system in Mauritius provides strongest incentives for politicians to cater to a *national* constituency.** The logic behind this is two-fold. First, in contrast to Thailand, ethnicity matters in Mauritius. Because ethnic identity is reinforced by religion and socio-economic class, ethnic differences are much more salient. Shared ethnic identity provides incentives for politicians elected in separate electoral districts to join together with co-ethnics from other districts. In other words, ethnic identity encourages cross-district coordination, a process that was absent in pre-1997 Thailand. Thus, cross-district partnerships in Mauritius are much stronger than the incidental, temporary parties in Thailand. Not surprisingly, there is an ethnic element to political parties in Mauritius.

Ethnic salience and the formation of ethnic parties is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for the formation of national constituencies in Mauritius.

Incentives for cross-district coordination do not necessarily result in national constituencies, just constituencies of some broader nature; in the case of Mauritius, ethnic ones. How have incentives for the broadest type of constituencies emerged in Mauritius? More particularly, why has a single Hindu party not formed and consistently won a majority? The answer to this question has to do with the geographic concentration of ethnic groups and, more specifically, the manner in which district boundaries are drawn around ethnic groups. Despite there being some ethno-geographic patterns in Mauritius, it is moderate enough to allow the creation of multi-ethnic constituencies where the ability of a candidate to form a majority depends on the votes of other ethnic groups. This explains why Hindus have not been able to create a single party capable of consistently forming the government. At the very least, such a party would have to rely on at least one other ethnic group.

But why not buy off a single group – say the Chinese – rather than cater to the whole nation? It might be cheaper to narrowly target goods to this community, say with a Chinese cultural center, or including Mandarin in the education system. This is not possible, however, given the way the boundaries are drawn, which is greatly restricted by the level of ethno-geographic cross-cuttingness, make this impossible. There is great variability in each district and any number of combinations of ethnic groups could conceivably win a seat. In short, candidates are reliant on the votes of more than one ethnic group to win seats. Thus, interestingly, parties in Mauritius, though they tend to be associated with certain ethnic groups, field candidates of multiple ethnicities. Ostensibly Hindu parties field Creole candidates, and vice-versa.

Regardless of the geographic concentration of ethnic groups, boundaries could be gerrymandered to the benefit of certain groups, and Mauritius has not been free of this. However, the multi-ethnic nature of parties and alliances in Mauritius have made this hard to do in practice. The saliency of ethnicity seems to make this a not uncommon occurrence, but these tendencies are kept in check by the prevailing socio-institutional incentives.

This reliance on other ethnic groups operates at the national level as well as at the constituency level. Even if individual candidates at the district level were able to successfully buy off members of other ethnic groups within their district, at the national level, it is still extremely difficult for the Hindus to constitute 51% of the legislature. The malapportionment of district boundaries in favor of non-Hindu groups means that in order to form a government, a Hindu party would still have to recruit the support of legislators of different ethnicity. There is thus a third layer to the multi-ethnicity of the party system in Mauritius: multi-party coalitions are necessary.

How about district magnitude in Mauritius – does that make a difference as to the formation of national constituencies – or would single-member districts suffice to produce the multi-ethnic phenomena we observe? I argue that, whereas increasing district magnitude would lead to poorer politician

coordination in countries with social structures like Thailand, in Mauritius, it further increases incentives for politicians to work together. Specifically, with three seats up for grabs in each district, groups may withhold their vote unless one of the seats is given to a candidate of their ethnicity, even if they do not represent 1/3 of the constituency, population-wise. In single-member districts (SMD's), ethnic parties may still agree to field a non-co-ethnic candidate in a district where their group is the majority, for example. However, the MMD's make this more likely in Mauritius by biasing the ethnic composition against the largest group (Hindus) who must then rely on the support of other ethnic groups.

In sum, given the same set of electoral rules as Thailand, a very different set of constituency-forming incentives emerged in Mauritius. At both the district level and national level, majoritarian forces encourage Mauritian society to come together and forge a "common denominator" from its numerous, disparate social groups.[12] This combination of social structural and institutional incentives is widely recognized in Mauritius; attempts by politicians of one ethnic group to cater to those of other groups is often referred to as *Scientific Communalism,* recognizing the strategic response of politicians to the socio-institutional environment[13].   For majoritarianism to lead to an effectively national constituency, two conditions must be met. First, ethnicity must be sufficiently salient, which I gauge by ethno-religious and ethno-income cross-cuttingness. Second, boundaries must be drawn around ethnic groups in such a way as to make candidates rely on the votes of other ethnic groups to win seats, and any potential ethnic party to rely on an alliance with other parties to form a government. This boundary-drawing exercise is facilitated by at least a moderate level of ethno-geographic cross-cuttingness. While it is not impossible at low levels of EGC, it is definitely logistically harder.

Since the literature on Mauritian politics is scarce, in the remainder of this section, I present a detailed description, based on original primary research (newspaper archives and personal interviews), of political constituencies in Mauritius. This description by itself, however, is insufficient evidence to support all of the mechanisms outlined in the theory above. Specifically, I describe the ethnic composition of electoral districts in Mauritius, the multi-ethnic nature of Mauritian political parties, and the alliances and outcomes of all elections since 1976.

Multi-ethnic Parties and the Ethnic Composition of Electoral Districts

---

[12] "Common denominator" is the title of the definitive anthropological study of social structure in Mauritius by Eriksen.

[13] Chandra (YEAR) refers to this as ethnic head-counting.

According to Dubey (1997), Hindus constituted the majority community in just ten of the twenty constituencies on the Mainland at the time of the first post-Independence elections.[14] This boundary design was a purposeful part of the electoral system left by the British to counter the "Hindu Peril"[15] and the fear that independence would mark "the end of western civilization and Christian tolerance in Mauritius."[16] Single-member districts had resulted in some cross-ethnic voting in pre-independence elections. However, Hindus still won a disproportionate share of seats during this period, and the British were reluctant to make this a permanent feature of the fledgling nation.[17] Figure 1 shows the approximate proportion of Hindus vs. non-Hindus around the time of independence (1968).

---

[14] For the purposes of this discussion, I exclude the ethnic composition of the island of Rodrigues. Even the island is almost entirely Creole, the inhabitants consider themselves as distinct from Creoles on the Mainland and thus the constituency did not feature into the strategic decisions of the major political parties.

[15] This was a campaign slogan of charismatic Creole leader Gaetan Duval in the lead up to the pre-independence elections. Ajay Dubey. 1997. *Government and Politics in Mauritius* Delhi: Kalinga Publications, p.65.

[16] *Le Cerneen,* 12 April 1953. Quoted in *Government and Politics in Mauritius* by Ajay Dubey. 1997. Delhi: Kalinga Publications, p.57.

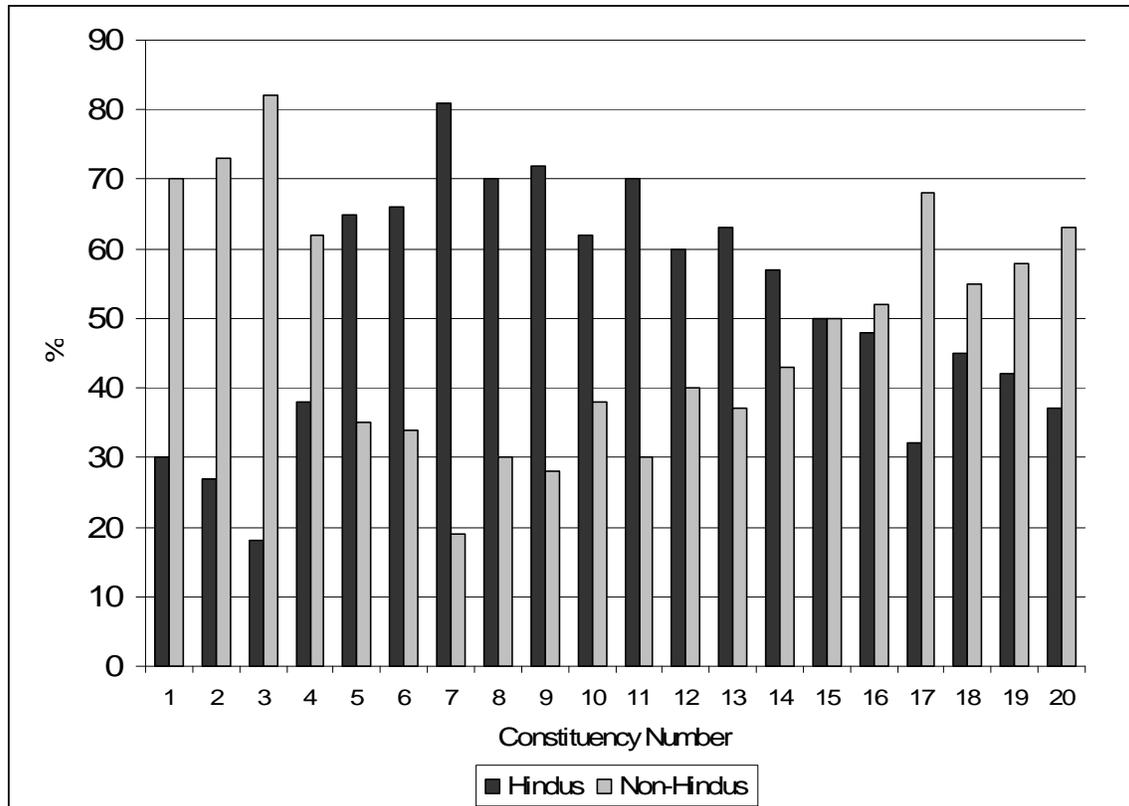[17] PUT EXACT ETHNIC FIGURES FROM THE 1959 AND 1963 ELECTIONS HERE

Figure 1. Percentage of Hindus and Non-Hindus in Mauritius' twenty constituencies.
Source: Author's own amendment (based on YEAR census data) of Ajay Dubey (1997)

What this distribution of ethnic groups meant was that, even if a single, unified Hindu party did emerge, it would have to enter into a coalition with another ethnic party.[18] The Hindu community itself was split as to how to do this exactly.[19] As the prospect of Independence became an increasing reality, politics became simultaneously increasingly communalized. The party of the Creoles, *Parti Mauricien*, accused the Hindus of being "invaders and barbarians to be beaten back", engaged in violent protests and even "undressed [Indian] women wearing *sari*" (Dubey 1997, p.60). In response, the All Mauritius Hindu Congress (AMHC) was formed, demanding 52% of jobs be reserved for Hindus and advocating Hindu political supremacy (CITE). The leaders of the AMC were

---

[18] Another factor that increased uncertainty in electoral outcome was the large proportion of the voting population made up of youths, around 50% in the early 1970's (Dubey, 105).

[19] Sutton (2007) argues that political rivalry for the leadership of the Hindu community generated communalized political propaganda. This interpretation of history, however, ignores the reasons for the rivalry within the Hindu community, which surrounded the future control of power of the Hindu community. It also ignores the communal propaganda of Creole leaders, especially Duval. See Sutton, Deborah. 2007. The Political Consecration of Community in Mauritius, 1948-68, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 35, no. 2 (June): 239 – 262.

dissatisfied with the passivity of Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, the leader of the MLP. Discord, however, was not restricted to the Hindus and Creoles; in April 1965, Hindu youths looted Chinese shops in retaliation for Chinese support of the PM. A month later, riots between Hindus and Creoles broke out in the Trois Boutiques region forcing the British to send in troops to quell the violence.

These increasing communal tensions hung over the independence negotiations and led to the drawing of boundaries to prevent outright Hindu dominance. The PM immediately saw its chance to create cross-ethnic partnerships. As an ethnic party it could command no more than 30% of the population's vote. Thus, in a bizarre turnabout, the former advocate of "Black Power", Gaëtan Duval, Creole leader of the PM coined a new slogan: *Hindu mon frere* (Hindu, my brother). His mission was to convince "any Indian group or individual for association or collaboration" (Dubey 1997, 65). Moreover, he threatened to punish anybody in the party promoting communalism.[20] Though there had been some cross-ethnic voting in previous elections, and an earlier carnation of the MLP had been fairly multi-ethnic, Duval was perhaps the first (out of sheer necessity) to understand the socio-institutional potential of the new electoral system. As leader of the PM, he added *Social-Démocrate* to the end of the party's name, and made the wiping out of inequality central to its party manifesto. Part of that manifesto stated: "We want things to happen in such a way that racial discrimination, religious divisions, classes, favouritism and nepotism become only nightmares of the past" (Mannick, n.23, p.133). In response, the MLP, in association with a smaller Hindu party (the Independence Forward Bloc [IFB]) convinced the major Muslim party (*Comité d'Action Muselman*, CAM) to enter into an alliance.[21] The MLP had originally modeled itself on the British Labour party, but had increasingly been dominated by a Hindu leadership and associated with that group.[22] Neither party, however, could be described as truly national at this point. The MLP-led coalition won 54% of the vote compared to PMSD's 43%, but only by co-opting a small proportion of the Muslim community.

Further evidence of the ethnic particularism still ingrained in the parties is seen in the policies adopted by MLP-IFB-CAM alliance after is won the 1967 elections.[23] The MLP introduced tax concessions for Hindu small sugar planters

---

[20] *Le Mauricien,* 6th December 1965. Quoted in Dubey (1997)

[21] A majority of Muslims still sided with the PM in these elections, which the MLP-IFB-CAM alliance won.

[22] In fact, it was founded by a Creole leader, Dr. Maurice Curé (Dubey 1997, p.52)

[23] As is common in new nations, the alliance invited PMSD to join it in government, creating a grand coalition. However, "both designed policies to benefit their respective constituencies" (Dubey, p.98).

from the Hindu community[24], and provided facilities for cultivate potatoes, tomatoes and onions. The government sponsored a cooperative movement for small planters to provide preferential finance and better prices for sugar cane. CAM supporters (mostly in trade and commerce) were awarded 'developmental certificates', which provided tax holidays, export tax exemption and subsidized electricity and water. The government also implemented policies that harmed the Franco-Mauritian sugar barons and their Creole managerial staff by imposing heavy taxes to finance economic development (Dubey, p. 99).

Then a new party burst onto the scene of Mauritian politics: the *Mouvement Militant Mauricien* (MMM). Led by Paul Bérenger, a Franco-Mauritian, and two Hindus D. Virahsawmy and Joneed Jeerooburkhan, the MMM carved out a truly national constituency aiming to "wipe out twenty years of communalism and rebuild Mauritian unity through a socialist programme".[25] It put together a team of representatives that was truly multi-ethnic. In its first test—a by-election in 1970—MMM demonstrated the success of its new constituency. Running Virahsawmy as candidate, the nascent party dealt a crushing blow to the MLP in its rural stronghold winning 72% of the vote.

Many historians and political observers, rightly point out that the choice to run Virahsawmy, and not Bérenger, demonstrate that MMM played the communalist game from the start (e.g. Dubey 1997). And over time, its "militant" agenda quickly faded. What the MMM leaders understood, however, was that ethnicity was a central element of Mauritian society. No class-based ideology alone could eradicate communal feelings. But MMM was clearly multi-ethnic. Both the candidates it fielded and the voter support it won was painted with *every color of the rainbow*.[26] A fact that supports this nationalist label I apply to the MMM is the degree of cross-ethnic voting that took place in the first general election the party competed in, and every election since for that matter. Creoles voted for Hindus, and vice-versa; Chinese for Muslims, and Franco-Mauritians for Creoles. As mentioned above, cross-ethnic voting had occurred in pre-independence elections, but not to this degree. The MMM and its appeal to a national constituency that encompassed every community was a new phenomenon in Mauritius, a phenomenon brought about by the interplay of Mauritian social structure and the new electoral rules.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

---

[24] Ram Seegobin and Lindsay Collen. 1977. "Mauritius class forces and political power". *Review of African Political Economy,* 8: 115.

[25] Dubey (1997, p.101)

[26] Mauritians call themselves the *Rainbow Nation.*

Over time, all political parties became adept at the science of communal politics under the new electoral rules. Maintaining detailed lists of community sizes in each constituency, solid patterns of the "correct" ethnic distribution of candidates emerged. Table 1 gives a detailed breakdown of ethnicity in each electoral district and the ethnicity of candidates from the two main parties or alliances that competed in the eight elections since 1976. Where the two parties fielded a different ethnic composition of candidates, two patterns appear in each cell, in which case the first pattern corresponds to the governing party's candidate list. We can see that, over time, the difference in ethnic patterns diminishes between the two main contenders, as evidenced by variation in only one district in the two most recent elections (#19 in 2000 & #20 in 2005). Notice how the ethnic patterns correspond strongly to the ethnic makeup of the district. Thus, in districts ##5-10 & #11, the Hindu rural heartland, both parties field three Hindu candidates, almost without exception in all eight elections. In district #3, where Muslims constitute __% of the population, both parties field three Muslim candidates. In district #2, both parties make a token gesture to the Chinese community, the only area it is concentrated enough to affect voting, consistently fielding one Chinese candidate in every election. The urban districts seem the hardest for parties to settle on a fixed pattern, especially districts #19 & #20. Parties fielded a different pattern in these two districts every election.

In many of these districts, we can determine quite easily whether cross-ethnic voting is occurring. In constituency #2, Muslims are clearly voting for the Chinese candidate, even though they could elect three Muslims since they compose a majority of the population. Hindus do the same for the Creole candidate in constituency #12. Again, they constitute the majority, but because Creoles compose 1/3 of the population, parties have settled on giving them some representation. Remember the reasoning behind why they do this: no ethnic community can rule by itself, not even the Hindus, so they have to placate groups that constitute around 1/3 of the population any given district, even those where another community has a clear majority.

In eight of the twenty districts (40%), however, no community has a clear majority and must rely on other ethnic groups in order to ensure victory. Since it is a plurality system, technically, the largest group, regardless of its size, could win all three seats. However, there is then a huge incentive for the other communities to work together, field a multi-ethnic slate and win all three seats a the exclusion of the majority community. Party leaders seek to reduce this uncertainty by fielding the right combination of ethnic groups to ensure victory. All parties seem to have settled on a consensus of what the right combination is in each district. The little variation that does occur depends on the particular party alliances that form prior to each election.

Party Alliances

The MMM, under the leadership of Bérenger, toned down its Marxist ideology tremendously prior to the 1976 elections and sought to broaden its appeal further.[27] Advocating a racial redistribution of wealth and the democratization of education, the MMM accused the MLP of accentuating ethnic divisions. In response, the MLP, still allied with CAM, began to make efforts to broaden its constituency. Ramgoolam, the current MLP Prime Minister, promised free secondary education if he was re-elected, for the first time matching his policies to the party's multi-ethnic slate of candidates.

The result was an extremely close race. The MMM won a slight majority of the popular vote, 39%, compared to MLP-CAM's 38%. PMSD, suffered from an in creasingly pro-Creole agenda. The PMSD leader, Duval, campaigned on a wage increase and cost of living allowance for workers in the Export Processing Zone. He attempted to excite his constituency with the prospect of Creole power, pointing to the divisions within the Hindu community. Not only did the PMSD suffer from this narrow agenda, but the reality was that a huge portion of its Creole base had gone over to the MMM, seeing its broader agenda as more likely to win power. MMM's 39% translated into 30 seats, just a whisker short of a majority, compared to the MLP-CAM's 25 seats. The PMSD, which won 16.5% of votes, took its seven votes over to the MLP-CAM alliance, and MMM was denied power.

The MLP had narrowly retained power, but only with the support of the humbled Creole PMSD.[28] This harsh lesson encouraged Ramgoolam to broaden the party's appeal, or risk an MMM defeat in the next elections. It had secured only a tiny proportion of the Creole vote, and despite an initial promise from Duval's for a MLP-PMSD in the next elections, Ramgoolam understood that his party needed to create a broader appeal independently.

Despite its failure to capture the government, MMM supporters were fired up for the next elections, and the party began to seek for ways to carve away further at the constituencies of both the MLP and the PMSD. The MMM had already secured 2/3 of the 18-21 year old Hindu community (Mannick, p.150), mostly because it was MMM efforts that resulted in the extension of the franchise to this demographic in YEAR (CITE). In addition, a majority of former IFB supporters (Hindus), 75% of Tamils, and the majority of Muslims (Mannick, p.150) went over to MMM. The MMM's newspaper, *Le Militant* reported:

---

[27] Following the MMM-led strikes of 1971, the government declared a state of emergency, banned the MMM's newspaper, *Le Militant*, suspended trade unions, and put limits on political party activity. Bérenger gradually realized that the party's appeal was too narrow, and that he needed the support of the bourgeoisie. In disgust, Veerahsawmy's more militant branch broke away and formed the *Movement Militant Mauricien Social Progressite (*MMMSP*).

[28] The PMSD leader, Gaëtan Duval, failed to retain his parliamentary seat.

"It is a victory for the unity of Mauritius against communalism. The MMM's victory is proof of the support it has received from a cross-section of the Mauritian people."[29]

Following the 1976 elections, the MLP's leadership was increasingly divided over how to handle the next elections, which would be take place in 1982. On one hand, Ramgoolam appointed the Oxford-educated, James Burty David, a Creole as President of the Labour Party (Mannick, p.157), but on the other hand, he was still at the behest of the "old guard", who were being seen as increasingly corrupt. In 1978, the young Harish Boodhoo and his group, the *Contestaires,* openly challenged Ramgoolam by refusing to vote for three posts in the foreign service. The next year, Ramgoolam expelled them from the party, calling them the "Grave Diggers of Hindu unity" (*fossoyeurs de l'unité Hindoue)* (Dubey, 126). Boodhoo formed his own party, the *Party Socialist Mauricien* (PSM) who the shrewd Bérenger, committed to "a grand fraternity"[30], entered into an alliance with for the 1982 elections.

The MMM-PSM alliance won the 1982 elections hands down. With 63% of the popular vote, they nevertheless made a clean sweep of all sixty seats. The MLP only managed 25% of the vote, while the sorry PMSD had dropped to 8%. The MMM's broad, national agenda had at last triumphed. As Dubey writes:

"Ethnic, caste, religious and linguistic loyalties, so important in the previous elections, seemed to have become defunct now in political life."[31]

The alliance, however, upset sections of MMM. Hindu MP's led by Aneeroodh Jugnauth, who was installed as Prime Minister, felt betrayed by Bérenger offering cabinet posts to MLP Labour defectors, accused by their own as being "extreme rightists". Within just 9 months of MMM's resounding victory, Bérenger took twelve of the seventeen ministers into the opposition. New elections were called and Jugnauth founded his own party: the Mauritian Socialist Movement (MSM). Boodhoo dissolved PSM and joined MSM, seeing it as the future of Hindu power. MSM was joined by the MLP and PMSD as they scraped together a 3.7% vote margin over the MMM, who ran alone. MMM scored a massive 47% of the vote, but received only 22 seats. This grand coalition of Hindu parties, dubbed the

---

[29] Quoted in Mannick, p.151

[30] Dubey, 145.

[31] p.135

Alliance, with the support of PMSD[32], benefited from slim majorities in the key ethnically mixed constituencies.

Ethnicity in the Cabinet

Despite this apparent grand alliance of Hindu parties, which was repeated in the 1987 elections, the candidates fielded were decidedly multi-ethnic, and the coalition depended on votes from non-Hindus in the key mixed constituencies. More importantly, these candidatures were not empty ethnic overtures. Six of the nineteen cabinet seats (32%) went to non-Hindu members of the Alliance, and although 68% seems to over-represent the Hindu community who compose 52% of the population, Hindus regularly get over 60% of cabinet seats regardless of the coalition. Table 3 shows the ethnic composition of cabinets since 1976. The lowest percentage of cabinet seats held by Hindus was in 1982; at 55.56%, this was still 3.5% more than the community's share of the overall population. Moreover, although Hindus tend to get less seats whenever MMM is in power, the MMM/MSM alliance in 1991 still assigned 64% of seats to Hindu MP's.

Year	1976	1982	1983	1987	1991	1995	2000	2005
Government Coalition	**PTr/CAM, PMSD**	**MMM/ PSM**	**MSM/ MLP, PMSD**	**MSM/ MLP, PMSD**	**MMM/ MSM**	**MLP/ MMM**	**MMM/ MSM**	**MLP/ PMSD**
Opposition	**MMM**	**MLP, PMSD**	**MMM**	**MMM**	**MLP, PMSD**	**MSM, PMSD**	**MLP, PMSD**	**MMM/ MSM**
Total Hindu	14	10	13	13	16	13		16
Creole	4	3	4	4	4	4	*data*	3
Franco-Mauritian	1	1	1	1	2	1	*not*	0
Muslim	0	4	1	0	2	4	*yet*	2
Chinese	1	0	0	0	1	1	*gathered*	1
Total	**20**	**18**	**19**	**18**	**25**	**23**		**22**
% Hindu	*70.00%*	*55.56%*	*68.42%*	*72.22%*	*64.00%*	*56.52%*		*72.73%*

Table 3. The Ethnic Composition of Mauritian Cabinets (1976-2005)

Peeling Back the Layers of National Constituencies in Mauritius

Table 3 also shows that various types of pre-electoral alliances have formed in Mauritius. From the 'All-Hindu' alliances (MSM & MLP) of 1983 & 1987 to the 'Alliance of Arch Enemies' (MMM & MLP) in 1995, anything goes. In

---

[32] PMSD ran as a separate party, but did not run in the same districts as MSM/MLP. Both encouraged their followers to vote for the other.

the most recent elections, the MLP allied with the much shrunken PMSD and, for the first time, managed to beat out the seemingly indomitable 'Alliance of Militants' (MMM & MSM). It seems, for the most part, that despite the multi-ethnic nature of parties (in terms of candidates and voter support), a second level of inter-ethnic cooperation is required in Mauritius, that of the multi-ethnic alliance. The four main parties are still associated with certain ethnic communities in the minds of at least a significant part of the electorate. Specifically, the MLP and MSM are seen as Hindu parties, the PMSD as a Creole party, and the MMM as the party of minorities. A prominent leader of the MSM explained it as follows. In order to win an election in Mauritius, parties must follow conform to certain rules:

1. **Espouse a broad, national ideology**
   e.g. MLP's 2000 campaign slogan was "Let us Move Together for a Better Country."
2. **Field a slate of multi-ethnic candidates**
   These must conform to the ethnic composition of each district, as well as consider certain national social structure features, such as the geographic concentration of Chinese and geographic dispersion of Muslims.
3. **Enter a multi-ethnic alliance**
   The "best" alliance is MMM/MSM[33]

The last of these seems to be a common, but not necessary rule, since an MLP-MSM alliance won two elections in 1983 and 1987. Moreover, the "best" alliance was defeated in 2005 showing the ever-changing political situation in Mauritius. For example, a new development in the 2005 elections is the support of the MLP/PMSD alliance by the Muslim community, evidencing the increasingly broad appeal of the MLP.[34] A rough estimate is that by 2000, the MLP were attracting 1/3 of the Muslim vote (up to 1995, 80% had voted with MMM), while in 2005 they managed to attract 1/2 of the Muslim vote.[35]
      To the above list, I add the following:

4. **Form a multi-ethnic cabinet**
   Hindus must be favored in the distribution of seats
5. **The Prime Minister must be Hindu**
   This requirement may be thawing as the MMM/MSM alliance split their

---

[33] I am sure there was no bias in this politicians assessment, being of the MSM party.

[34] Personal interview with MLP leader, DATE HERE.

[35] Personal interview with MSM leader, DATE HERE.

term in 2000-2005 between Jugnauth (Hindu) and Bérenger (Franco-Mauritian).
6. **Form credible, broad-based policies.**
    This is especially critical whenever the distribution of resources is at stake as in the case of the health and education sectors.

Voter Party Affiliation and Incentives to Cultivate a Personal Vote

I have referred numerous times to the cross-ethnic voting that has occurred in every election since independence. Table 1 also revealed the general tendency for most Mauritian voters to tow the party line in terms of voting for all three candidates the party of alliance fields in that particular constituency. Exceptions to this rule occur regularly, i.e. a constituency will vote for two from one party and one for another. This is not always due to ethnic voting. Indeed, as pointed out in the Thailand discussion above, the electoral rules provide incentives for the cultivation of a personal vote. A Mauritian politician[36] explained it as follows, using an example of electoral district X, in which there are 43,000 voters. The party vote is the most substantial part of a politician's vote, providing 14,000 to the MSM/MMM candidate and 15,000 to the MLP candidate. This is conditional on the party meeting the six components listed above. However, candidates also have personal credit, stemming from service to the constituency, local or national notoriety, personality, track record and even, heaven forbid, extra-legal methods, such as vote-buying.[37] In district X, the MMM/MSM candidate receives another 4000 from personal votes, while the MLP candidate only receives 1000 (the average number of personal votes in a constituency this size). In this way, the MMM/MSM candidate gets elected along with two other MLP candidates. In addition, there is a small proportion of any constituency who vote ethnically regardless, which, depending on the constituency may help or hinder the MMM/MSM candidate. In short, we can say that the majority of Mauritians vote based on party lines, some based on personal lines, and even fewer on ethnic lines. This seems to accord with the patterns we see in Table 1.

---

[36] Personal interview with MSM party leader, DATE HERE.

[37] My informant did not mention this one to me, but as I show below there is wide acknowledgement of this.

Serve the people better

— I defected because I find in this party, funds, cars, houses, servants and other facilities to help me serve the people better!

Cartoon 1. Party switching in Mauritius

No cause to resign

Nonsense, you don't have to resign just because you don't like our policy! We don't like it either!

Cartoon 2. Party policy in Mauritius

Interestingly, however, the Mauritius party system shares many similarities with the Thai party system, but for different reasons. First, party loyalty is low. "There is really no loyalty to parties here, either by voters or politicians except for some of the smaller parties who can't form a government anyway. Voters see the politicians forming alliances and then abandoning them so they usually just vote for change," says political analyst Raj Mathur of the University of Mauritius.[38] Party switching by politicians is a common occurrence in Mauritius, though not as rampant as in Thailand. Moreover, switching only occurs between the four main parties, which have endured for the past three decades. Small parties spring up, but are never successful in winning seats, nor instrumental in alliances. The reason for this is that party leadership is more stable in Mauritius and parties are more programmatic. Cartoon 2 illustrates the degree Mauritian parties are beholden to broad, national types of policies, even if the party leaders themselves do not necessarily like them.

---

[38] Quoted in McCullum, Hugh. 2000. South Africa Research and Documentation Center (SARDC). "Changing Parties and Governments a Mauritian Habit" *Elections 2000, Mauritius*. At < http://www.sardc.net/sd/ elections2000/mauritius/mau_habit.html>

Conclusion

The effective breadth of constituencies in Thailand and Mauritius are wildly different. In Thailand, politicians cater to subsections of single electoral districts with very little interest in the success of co-partisans or the party in general to the extent that candidates from different parties have been known to campaign together. Parties are un-programmatic in nature, weak and short-lived. In contrast, politicians in Mauritius have incentives to cater to the nation more broadly. Although personal credit is still important, politicians from the same party work together to win the district's votes. Politicians promote the party label, and benefit directly from it as the majority of voters support the entire slate of candidates from their party of choice. And despite the low party loyalty by voters, and to an extent by politicians, parties are much stronger in Mauritius than in Thailand. Parties, their labels and leaders have all endured for over thirty years, which reduces the incentive to switch parties.

To repeat, given the same set of electoral rules as Thailand, a very different set of constituency-forming incentives emerged in Mauritius. At both the district level and national level, majoritarian forces encourage Mauritian politicians to forge national constituencies from a hodgepodge of social groups. For majoritarianism to lead to an effectively national constituency, two conditions must be met. First, ethnicity must be sufficiently salient, which I gauge by ethno-religious and ethno-income cross-cuttingness. Second, boundaries must be drawn around ethnic groups in such a way as to make candidates rely on the votes of other ethnic groups to win seats, and any potential ethnic party to rely on an alliance with other parties to form a government. This boundary-drawing exercise is facilitated by at least a moderate level of ethno-geographic cross-cuttingness.

	Thailand	Mauritius
Ethno-religious cross-cuttingness	High	Low
Ethno-geographic cross-cuttingness	High	Moderate
Ethno-income cross-cuttingness	High	Moderate/Low

Table 4. Comparing Social Structure in Thailand and Mauritius

Section 2: The Provision of Health and Education Resources to Constituencies in Thailand and Mauritius

Introduction

The effective breadth of constituencies impacted the breadth of resource distribution in Thailand and Mauritius. Narrow constituencies in Thailand led to narrow targeting of health and education funds to sub-sections of individual electoral districts. In comparison to the Mauritius, the Thai health and education systems were inefficient, pork-ridden and prone to corruption on a grand scale. The broad, national constituencies in Mauritius, in contrast, resulted in universally free systems, maximizing access to these social opportunities. Although the Mauritius system was not free of inefficiencies, pork, or corruption, compared to Thailand, these problems were minimal. I now turn to a detailed description of the politics of health and education policy.

A Standard for Evaluation

To evaluate the breadth of health and education policy, I first establish a standard for evaluation. The discussion begins with an assessment of the degree of access to these systems. I examine equality of access ethnically, geographically and socio-economically. The standard is complete equality of per capita benefits among all these groups of people, with exceptions made only for cost-of-living adjustments. Access consists of several elements: insurance, distribution of healthcare facilities and personnel, and out-of-pocket (private) expenses. Moreover, the quality of care should be similar. In the health sector, qualifications of medical personnel, standards of drugs and medicines, and access to necessary medical equipment should be similar. In the education sector, I analyze the quality of teachers, textbooks, and other facilities.

Next, I study the efficiency of resource allocation. In the health sector, the decades-long doctor shortage problem should improve, with an increase in the number of doctors and other medical personnel and an effective policy for a long-term solution in place. More money should be allocated to preventative care, health promotion, and actual treatment of diseases. Spending on infrastructure should take up an appropriate percentage of the budget in both health and education. Specific to education, there should be an appropriate balance between infrastructure, teaching materials (such as books and stationary) and salaries. Teacher training and continual improvement should also not be

neglected. Finally, in both sectors, corruption should occur less, and be tackled more effectively when it does occur, thus maximizing public funds.

The Provision of Health and Education in Thailand, 1979-1997

****NOTE: I HAVE YET TO WRITE UP THE EDUCATION PARTS OF THIS THAILAND SECTION****

I begin my account in 1979, when elected politicians came on to the policy scene for the first time in Thailand, (bar a couple of spurts in the early 1970's).[39] Although many scholars view this period as semi-democratic, political parties had full control over the social welfare ministries, including the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH). Each ministry was overseen by an individual political party or faction, and an informal rule developed making it strictly *faux pas* to interfere with the affairs of a coalition partner's ministry, even for the Prime Minister.[40] Such ministerial independence was crucial in enabling politicians to maximize pork. This pork took several forms, from the favoring of projects in the constituencies of one's party/faction or allies to outright corruption. Cox and McCubbins (2001) refer to the former of these forms of particularism as *fiscal pork*. Fiscal pork can further take two forms. First, specific projects, such as hospitals, health clinics, or medical schools, can be targeted to geographic districts. Alternatively, politicians can break up broad, national policies into morsels. For example, a policy of free medications could be broken up into contracts for the actual drugs, packaging, distribution, etc.

Politicians in charge of the MoPH became extremely adept at fiscal pork, breaking up the budget into increasingly smaller projects that could be targeted at the local constituencies of politicians. Construction building composed the core of Thai particularism, fulfilling three of of Franzese's (2002) four "ables": target*able*, manipul*able*, palp*able* and attribut*able*. First, hospitals were highly targetable. Not only could politicians target their provinces with the grandiose provincial hospitals that were popping up in the 1980's, but with the small hospital program, they could now target specific districts, which could be used

---

[39] The Prime Minister up until 1989, it should be noted, was not elected, and, moreover, was head of the Thai armed forces. Nevertheless, several scholars have described the necessity of the Prime Minister to build support in the legislature. Indeed, the first Prime Minister met a swift dismissal after aggravating the main political parties with dissatisfactory ministerial appointments. The second Prime Minister, General Prem Tinsulanondha, was supremely skilled at coalition building in the fractured legislature, which was especially necessary for him to retain his position, since one or another faction of the army was constantly trying to displace him.

[40] Hicken (2004), Pasuk and Baker (2002), and others have described the bargain concerning ministerial allocation Prem made with political parties. Prem and his technocrats maintained control over the line ministries (Finance, Defence) leaving the sectoral ministries (Education, Health, Interior, etc.) for the elected politicians with very little interference.

to shore up support in a candidate's weak areas. At an even more local level (*tambon*), politicians created health centers (*satarni anamai*) – small, local establishments often staffed only by health volunteers and/or nurses (Choekwiwatn 2002). Health centers and district hospitals increased politicians' ability to target the health ministry's budget, even though they were highly under-utilized (Krongkaew 1982). Construction contracts were also highly manipulable, allowing politicians to award contracts to political allies (*hua khanaen,* local chiefs or men of influence). And while the projects might take years to complete (low palpability), they were highly attributable to candidates.

Table 1 shows the rapid increase in the number of beds throughout this period. Notably, the number of beds in rural hospitals more than doubled. The first half of the period (1979-1989) still sees a bias toward Bangkok, which is explainable by the Prime-ministership, Finance Ministry and Budget Bureau still being occupied by the Bangkok-biased military. However, in the second half of the period, after which the PM was fully elected, this imbalance is adjusted for.

Region/Year	1979	1981	1983	1985	1987	1989	1991	1993	1995	1997	%Δ
Bangkok	14,585	17,661	18,486	19,376	24,376	20,337	21,704	24,351	25,236	27,327	**87%**
Central	17,481	20,246	21,954	22,018	24,628	24,156	25,519	27,658	34,248	37,386	**114%**
North	9,917	12,503	12,751	12,650	14,252	15,520	16,181	17,502	20,943	25,874	**161%**
South	8,515	8,521	10,258	10,334	11,153	11,394	11,888	12,936	14,449	16,016	**88%**
Northeast	10,776	13,437	14,989	15,294	15,887	16,575	18,560	18,719	23,541	25,802	**139%**
Total	61,274	72,368	78,438	80,438	87,554	87,982	93,852	101,166	118,417	132,405	**116%**

Table 1. Number of Beds by Region, 1979-1997
Source: Health in Thailand 1995-6

Tables 2 and 3 show that the nature of health-facilities construction in Thailand took a heavy local orientation in the form of small-bed hospitals and health centers. Almost 1,000 10-bed hospitals were built in this era, the 1987 figure almost triple the 1979. Likewise, the number of 30-bed hospitals almost doubled. The rate of hospital-building, in sum, over this short 8-year period was phenomenal. However, savvy Thai politicians did not stop at 10-bed hospitals in their quest for more targeted distribution of health resources. Table 3 shows that the number of health centers increased heavily over this period, especially outside the Central region. Numbers of health centers in the North, South and Northeast all virtually doubled. While I am sure the building of small hospitals can be justified by appeals to politicians' unquestionable concern with equity, it is no coincidence that such a phenomenon could have been easily predicted based on institutional theories. Mongkol na Songkhla, the permanent secretary for health in 2001, stated frankly: "Buildings were built unnecessarily in hospitals in almost every province. This is because the expansion of hospitals was based on the desire of members of parliament and ministers, and not public

demand."[41] To get an idea of the oversupply of hospitals, one estimate put the excess number of beds in Bangkok at over 8,000. Indeed, Dr. Boon Vanasin suggested that the 8,000 surplus was enough for the next ten years. [42]

Size of Public Hospital/Year	1979	1981	1983	1985	1987	1989	1991	1993	1995	1996	1997
10-bed	211	215	263	325	376	377	375	344	317	368	219
30-bed	72	83	97	109	131	131	140	224	260	302	335
60-bed	8	15	28	40	43	46	51	65	87	97	103
90-bed				6	7	7	10	12	17	21	37
120-bed								5	7	7	9
Total	291	313	388	480	557	561	576	650	688	795	703

Table 2. Number of Hospitals in Thailand by size, 1979-1987
Source: Thailand Health Profile 2003-4

Region/Year	1979	1987	1996	1997
Central	1,219	1,635	2377	2471
North	914	1,616	1965	2151
South	688	1,252	1400	1488
Northeast	1,277	2,489	3100	3367
Total	4,088	6,992	8842	9477

Table 3. Number of Health Centers by Region, 1979-1987
Source: Health in Thailand 1995-6

Thai politicians in the pre-1997 era were so adept at particularism that they even managed to morselize the "Free Medical Services for the Poor" (FMSP) program. The reason politicians shied away from broad, redistributive programs in the first place was that it is hard for them to take the credit (low attributability). However, the FMSP program had been initiated in the 1970's and its implementation was highly anticipated. Thus, when the program was launched in March 1980, it took just a month to exhaust the funds, with the rapid distribution of seven million free medical cards.[43] And it was this method of distribution – tangible, physical health cards – that allowed elected politicians to claim credit for this wildly popular program. While politicians were not officially responsible for distributing the cards, members of their political clientele were. Local project officials, usually chiefs and *kamnans*, were responsible for screening and distribution, but had a tendency to "issue the cards

---

[41] The Nation. 2nd May, 2001.
[42] The Nation. 17th July, 2001.
[43] Bangkok Post. 27th and 29th April, 1981.

to their "well-to-do" relatives and friends."[44] Via these political networks, based heavily on vertical lines of patronage, Thai MPs were able to take credit for the program.

Indeed, few genuinely poor had taken advantage of the free services by 1984, while thousands of "not-so-poor" had gotten their hands on the health cards. The director general of the Local Administration Department was often forced to order local provincial authorities to withdraw cards from such families.[45] Several evaluations estimated that up to 45% of card holders exceeded the means test limits, while up to 72% of the poor did not acquire the cards (Suksawat 1989; Tumkosit 1996).

Expensive medical equipment also became a political tool, which similar to construction, was highly targetable, manipulable and attributable. It also had the added incentive of being palpable, since the goods could be delivered immediately, whereas construction took a few years to complete. For example, Bangkok ranked third in the world for the number of computerized temographic (CT) scanners per million after Japan (29.2) and US (14.7), with 10 scanners per million. A 1995 study revealed that Thailand had 3.5 computerized scanners per million population, compared to 2.3 in the UK - the birthplace of this technology. In Bangkok alone there are 15.7 scanners for every million people. [46] Figure 3.1 shows the tremendous growth in the purchase of CT scanners and mammography machines in this period. From just 15 in 1988, the number of CT scanners grew to 260 just ten years later. Mammography machines also increased from just 3 in 1988 to 97 in 1998. Such extravagant purchasing was made possible by a health budget that not only doubled in size (in terms of % of the national budget), but also by a doubling of the investment portion of the health budget.

---

[44] Bangkok Post, 17th September, 1984. See Arghiros (2001) and Nelson (1998) for detailed accounts describing how chiefs and kamnans constitute MP's political clientele.
[45] Bangkok Post. 27th February, 1982. See also Supachutikul (1996).
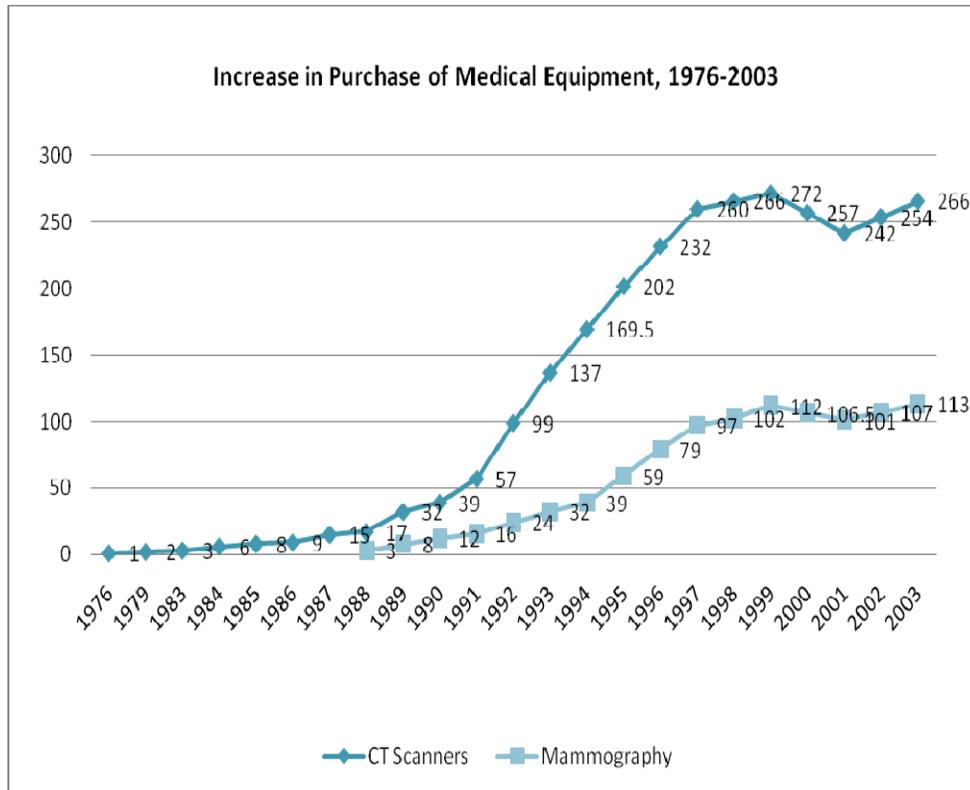[46] The Nation. 17th August, 1997.

Figure 1. Increase in Purchase of Medical Equipment, 1976-2003
Source: Jindawatthana (2002-3)

Corruption

Another form of particularism came in a less savory, outright illegal fashion. In Thailand all departments and ministries within Thailand have a reputation for their lucrativeness in terms of corruption (Bowornwathana 2001). In the top tier, or A-grade departments, falls the Food and Drug Administration (FDA)—part of the MoPH, which is responsible for licensing drugs and various medical equipment. One official referred to the FDA and the Communicable Diseases Control Department (CDC), which has an annual budget of well over one billion baht as "attractive places for those looking for personal gains"[47]. The ousted head of the FDA who made this statement claimed that the then Minister of Public Health (Boonphan Kaewattana, 1992) had requested financial support from him.

It is thus no surprise that the most infamous corruption case in the MoPH involved the FDA. In 1998, then Minister of Public Health, Rakkiat Sukthana, ordered nearly all state-run hospitals in the upper Northeast to buy overpriced medical supplies (up to 30 times their value), even though community hospitals were overflowing with reserves. Some hospitals were forced to stock up on overpriced drugs enough for use for as long as 19 years, even though many of

---

[47] Bangkok Post. 12th September 1993. "Nation's brain drain is not a healthy issue."

them would expire in three years (NCCC 1998). Corruption took many other forms in Thailand during this period. From the construction of a 200-million-baht hospital building for which 360 million baht was paid, to the impractical purchase of 348 Volvo vans for use as ambulances by remote community hospitals. Very few corruption cases were actually discovered in this period, however, let alone followed up on, and of the few that make it to the investigation stage even fewer are successful in prosecuting top officials.[48] As such, the 1998 Medical Supplies scandal involving Minister Rakkiat was unprecedented; no other corruption case has been this successful (or unsuccessful depending on where you stand!).

How lucrative was the MoPH?

	1987	1990	1993	1996	1997
Security	23.7	20.8	20.4	17.6	17
Education	18.1	17.9	19.6	20.4	22.4
Health	4.4	5.4	6.5	7.6	7.8

Table 4 Budget Proportions by Allocation Type, 1987-1997
Source: Bureau of the Budget

In 1988, the position of Prime Minister ceased to be appointed, and with Prem gone, the informal pork-policy compromise disappeared. Elected prime ministers now had control over the Ministry of Finance and the Budget Bureau. As such, pork demands could be targeted with much greater ease and accuracy than before to the constituencies of the governing coalition. Those ministries that provided the most lucrative opportunities for pork were awarded with larger budgets accordingly. Table 4 shows how Defense's share dropped by almost 3% of the National Budget following Prem's absence. Indeed, defense's share continued to drop throughout the 1990's while the budgets of the sectoral ministries, such as Education and Health, increased. Within a decade, defense commanded just 17% of the national budget, having commanded proportions in the low-mid 20's since at least the 1960's. The Health Ministry, specifically, saw an increase of 1% of the budget almost immediately – its highest ever proportion to that point. By the end of this period, Health's share of the budget had increased to almost 8% mainly because politicians found it easier to manipulate pork and engage in corruption.[49]

	Salaries	Operating	Investment
1979	38.1	39.3	22.6

---

[48] Personal interviews with MoPH officials found that corruption was rampant in this period, generally recognized, mostly accepted, but rarely probed or publicized except when disputes arose between internal factions of the ministry.

[49] Based on anonymous interview with MoPH officials.

1980	41.9	36.6	21.5
1981	46.2	32.7	21.1
1982	42.2	35.6	22.1
1983	44.8	36.5	18.7
1984	45	38	17
1985	45.3	38.3	16.3
1986	49	37.8	13.3
1987	52.6	36.1	11.3
1988	52.2	36.2	11.7
1989	50.6	35.3	14.2
1990	47.9	0.4	18.2
1991	47	32.5	20.5
1992	43.2	34.4	22.4
1993	44.2	33.2	23.6
1994	40.1	32.4	27.5
1995	37.1	31.5	31.4
1996	37.4	29.3	33.5
1997	33.5	27.8	38.7

Table 5. MOPH Budget, by allocation category
Source: Thailand Health Profile, 2003-4

The "porkiness" of the Public Health budget can further be seen in the percentages devoted to salaries, operating costs, and investment (e.g. construction). Table 5 shows how the investment portion of the MOPH budget increased from 11.3% in 1987 to 38.7% by 1997 – the highest proportion of the budget *ever* dedicated to investment.[50] The effects of this extortionate investment can be seen in the increase in the number of beds (Table 1) and health centers (Table 3). A total of 2485 were built in the ten-year period ending in 1997, a little less than in the previous period. However, the number of beds added in this period is almost double the number of beds added in the previous period!

Health Outcomes

The 1993 WHO Health Services Report verified the meager advances made in over a decade of elected politicians' influence on health policy. Thailand's outlay on health care delivery in 1982 was 3.56 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). By 1992 it had risen to 6.38 per cent, and was projected to reach 8.10 per cent of GDP by the year 2000. Compared to its neighbors, Thailand was spending an extortionate amount. In 1993, proportion of GDP spent on health in Indonesia and the Philippines was 2 per cent, in Malaysia it was 3 per cent and Sri Lanka outlaid 3.7 per cent. Likewise, per capita expenditures in 1993 were US$73 per person in Thailand compared to $12 in

---

[50] Note that the cost of supplies is included under the "Operating" category, so the "Investment" column quite accurately reflects the amount spent on construction.

Indonesia, $14 in the Philippines, $18 in Sri Lanka and $67 in Malaysia. Despite the higher health spending, the "return" on the "investment" was lower than that of neighboring countries. Thai infant mortality stood at 38 per 1000 live-births, while the rates in Sri Lanka were 18 and Malaysia 15. Thais also had a shorter life span, an estimated 68 years, compared to 70.5 for Malaysians and 71.3 years for Sri Lankans.

This report is usefully compared to comments by the WHO chief in 1984 lauding Thailand's health projects and heralding the country for being on the verge of *Health For All by 2000*. Indeed, in that same year another WHO official said that Thailand had the best primary health care program of all WHO aid recipients—so much so, that Thailand was the only country that was permitted to make its own decisions on what to do with WHO funding and was granted $12million in WHO commitments over the succeeding six years.[51]

The main reason for Thailand's deteriorating health outcomes in this period, I argue, was the influence of elected politicians on the distribution of health resources. Specifically, the combination of narrow constituencies in a highly cross-cutting society meant that the locally-based patron-client relations characterized political competition in Thailand. The advent of full democracy saw the MoPH budget increase at the expense of the Defense Ministry, but the budget was not efficiently managed. Rather substantial growth in particularism, and corruption also escalated as ministers of individual portfolios strengthened their power.[52]

In 1997, the Financial Crisis and ensuing social and political unrest led to a new constitution, hailed as one of the best and most democratic in the world. The Constitution provided a new set of electoral incentives for Thai politicians; incentives that we will see had a significant effect on health policy.

The Provision of Health and Education in Mauritius, 1976-2008

"Even when an economy is poor, major health improvements can be achieved through using the available resources in socially productive ways"

Amartya Sen

Access to Health and Education

The above quote is nowhere better demonstrated than in Mauritius. With a GDP per capita of $3875 in 1968, Mauritius inherited a low-middle income economy from the British. This wealth was concentrated in the hands of the Franco-Mauritian sugar barons. Access to the health and education sectors

---

[51] Bangkok Post. 1984. July 9th and November 2nd.

[52] So that this account does not appear entirely negative, elected MPs can claim credit for bestowing Thailand with a huge improvement in proximity to health facilities.

reflected this inequality. In 1953, a report to advise the government to set up a Health Insurance Scheme by the Mauritius Legislative Council found that "almost all doctors live either in Port Louis or in Upper or Lower Plaines Wilhems," the Franco-Mauritian heartland. In terms of government service, there was a Medical Department set up by the British, but its functions were limited. Most of the population was privy to a "lamentable condition" of healthcare.[53] By Independence, conditions had improved only minimally as the economy oscillated in the 1960's. Chandrakanta (2000) writes that the system inherited from the colonial period was of poor quality.[54]

DESCRIBE EDUCATION SYSTEM INHERITED FROM BRITAIN HERE.

After the 1967 elections, the MLP gradually increased expenditure on social welfare. It was in response to the national program of the MMM, however, that the MLP allocated the, then, huge sum of Rs 368 million to education, health and other social expenditures (EHSE). But this would be "rather a small finance" compared to the major shift that would occur in the 1980's. In preparation to face the strengthened MMM in 1982, the MLP-led government increased EHSE spending to Rs 182 million. This sum almost doubled by 1985. A decade later, EHSE spending had reached Rs 1.27 billion, and by 1999 it was Rs 2.1 billion. Table 4 shows the total increases education and health spending in both real terms and as a percentage of GDP and central government budget. We can see that . . . . WILL COMPLETE AFTER ENTER DATA FROM TABLES.

TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

On the eve of the 1976 elections, the MLP promised that, if elected, it would extend free education to the secondary level. It also committed to extend the paltry, though free, health services provided by the British.[55] A primary health care (PHC) policy was initiated in 1978, and services began to be delivered on a regional basis with the set up of Community Health Centers (CHC's) and Area Health Center's (AHC's). The CHC's and AHC's helped to combat the unequal distribution of health infrastructure. The Ministry of Health and Quality of Life (MHQL) also built a hospital in each region. In addition, doctors and other health personnel began to be more evenly spread across the island. Rural Hindu areas could now access the same services as the Port Louis

---

[53] Dr. A Rankine, Director Medical and Health Department. 1944. *Report on Health Conditions in Mauritius.*

[54] Chandrakanta, Kaleeka. 2000. *Social Change in Mauritius: Fields of Family, Education & Health.*

[55] Khedoo, Stéphanie. 1998. *Comparative Analysis between the Public and Private Health Services in Mauritius.*

megalopolis, which benefited Franco-Mauritians and Creoles. Table 5 shows the distribution of infrastructure and personnel in Mauritius from 1976-2007. We can see that . . . . WILL COMPLETE AFTER ENTER DATA FROM TABLES.

TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

DESCRIBE ACCESS IN EDUCATION IN MORE DETAIL HERE. REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION. ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION.

Efficiency of health & education spending

Unlike Thailand, this commitment to infrastructure spending was not built on particularistic demands, but based on an efficient, economically-sensible plan by the health ministry. Other services were likewise coordinated. Specialist wings were attached to given hospitals in order to prevent the unnecessary doubling-up of equipment and personnel. Patients were referred to these units only after seeing a doctor from their local hospital first. Likewise, CT scanners and other specialist technology, as well as blood testing facilities were shared among the regions.
SUMMARIZE EFFICIENCY OF EDUCATION SPENDING HERE.
Looking at the proportion of the Health budget spent on capital, comparable to the Investment portion of the Thai health budget, we can see that despite also having to build its health infrastructure from scratch, a much lower proportion of the Mauritian health budget was dedicated to new buildings. Table 6 . . . WILL COMPLETE AFTER ENTER DATA FROM TABLES.

TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE

In terms of efficient spending of the budget, we do not see the wasteful purchase of expensive medical equipment aimed at harvesting votes from one's local district. Neither do we see a lack of coordination in the purchase of drugs and routine medical supplies.[56]
Health promotion and preventative services. DESCRIBE HERE.
DISCUSS EFFICIENCY OF EDUCATION SPENDING IN MORE DETAIL HERE.

Corruption

---

[56] Drug purchasing was one of the weak areas of the Mauritius health system, however. Only ten companies were officially allowed to import drugs, and prices tended to be high. There were also issues with under-stocking and out-dated drugs in some dispensaries. CITE NEWSPAPER ARTICLES HERE.

Mauritius was not corruption-free in either the health or education sectors. Compared to Thailand, however, the problems were miniscule . . . WILL DESCRIBE CORRUPTION HERE. DISCUSS THE MEDICAL MAFIA.
DESCRIBE CORRUPTION IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR HERE.

Health and Education Outcomes

In 2006, Mauritius was one of a handful of middle-income countries, and the only African country, to be ranked along with the developed countries in the category of high human development.
PRESENT OUTCOMES IN MORE DETAIL AND COMPARE UNDP DATA TO THAILAND.

Conclusion