Politics and democracy in microstates. A comparative analysis of the effects of size on contestation and inclusiveness
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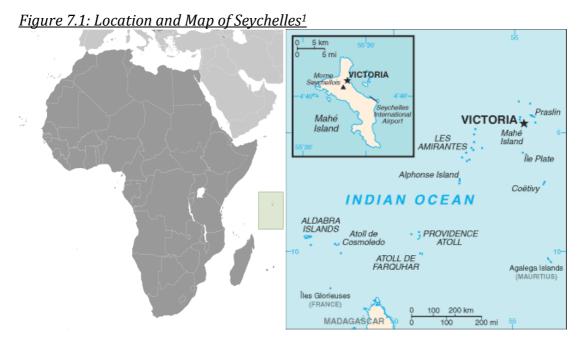**Title**: Politics and democracy in microstates : a comparative analysis of the effects of size on contestation and inclusiveness
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CHAPTER SEVEN

En Nouvo Sesel?

The Republic of Seychelles

Figure 7.1: Location and Map of Seychelles[1]

1. Introduction: Lingering Vestiges of Authoritarianism in a Tourist Paradise

The opening of Seychelles International Airport in March 1972 signaled a revolutionary change for the population of the tiny country. Whereas the archipelago of Seychelles was previously only accessible by boat, the construction of the airport initiated a rapidly growing influx of tourists, and in due course the country became known among wealthier European travelers as a tourist paradise. This did not change when, within one year after the attainment of independence in 1976, a coup d'état installed a socialist one-party regime on the islands. The tourism industry has turned Seychelles into one of the wealthiest countries of Africa, and more than seventy percent of the country's gross national income now derives from tourism (Campling and Rosalie 2006: 116).[2] Although the microstate is mostly categorized as part of the African continent, in terms of its culture and society it is an amalgam of multiple world regions and civilizations. This is most clearly visible in Seychelles' demographic structure,

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[1] Retrieved from the CIA World Factbook (CIA World Factbook 2011).
[2] In 2011 Seychelles has a GDP-per capita figure of US$ 24.700, which is the highest in Africa (CIA World Factbook 2011).

since the population consists of a diverse mix between European, African, Indian, Chinese, and Arab ethnic groups. Although Roman Catholicism is clearly the dominant religion, significant Protestant, Muslim, and Hindu communities exist in the microstate as well.[3]

In comparison to other African countries, the Republic of Seychelles is the smallest state according to both population and territorial size. The country consists of 115 islands that are scattered over a vast maritime territory in the Indian Ocean, located to the north of Madagascar and to the east of Somalia, Kenya, and Tanzania. Although about twelve islands are inhabited, more than ninety-eight percent of the approximately 90.000 Seychellois citizens live on the islands of Mahé (80.000), Praslin (6.500), and La Digue (2.000).[4] Seychelles has a landmass of only 451 square kilometers, but its exclusive economic zone (EEZ) is 1.336.559 square kilometers, which is more than twice the size of metropolitan France (CIA World Factbook 2011). Attaining independence from the United Kingdom in 1976, the microstate is one of the youngest independent states of Africa. Although it is mostly classified as part of this continent, historically and culturally Seychelles shares a lot of features with Caribbean island states, of which the population was also for the largest part brought to the islands as slaves from mainland Africa.

Whereas multiparty-democracy was officially reinstalled on the islands after the end of the Cold War, in Freedom House-rankings Seychelles continues to acquire 'partly free'-scores on both political rights and civil liberties (Freedom House 2012).[5] Although the archipelago is classified by Freedom House as an electoral democracy and therefore attains a more positive score than most African mainland states, in comparison to African island states like Cape Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Mauritius, Seychelles lags behind when it comes to

[3] According to the World Factbook, over 82 percent of the Seychellois population is Roman-Catholic, 7,5 percent is Protestant (mostly Anglican and Evangelical), 2.1 percent is Hindu, and 1.1 percent is Muslim (CIA World Factbook 2011). In addition to ethnic and religious pluralism, virtually the entire population of the country speaks the languages of Seychellois Creole (*Kreol*), English, and French.

[4] The islands of Seychelles are generally clustered into the Inner Islands Group (which consists of the granitic islands where most of the Seychellois population lives), and the Outer Islands Group (*Zil Elwannyen Sesel* in Creole), consisting of the coralline island groups of the Amirante Group, the Alphonse Group, the Aldabra Group, the Farquhar Group, and the Southern Coral Group. In addition to the inhabited islands, a number of Seychellois islands are either privately owned or only have private resorts that are primarily advertised as honeymoon destinations (Franda 1982: 2).

[5] In the last ten years, Seychelles has consistently acquired a score of 3 (on a 7-point scale with 7 being 'least free') for both political rights and civil liberties (Freedom House 2012). Freedom House is the only aggregate index of democracy in which Seychelles is included.

democratic development.[6] According to Freedom House reports, the governing party of Seychelles continues to maintain an all-powerful position in Seychellois politics and society, with the opposition party and other political and societal institutions playing a subordinate role (Freedom House 2012). This assessment is broadly confirmed by the scarce academic literature on Seychellois politics, in which especially the fusion of the microstate's government and its ruling party is repeatedly cited as a major obstacle to further democratization (Hatchard 1993; Ellis 1996; Scarr 2000; Van Nieuwkerk and Bell 2007; Baker 2008; Yoon 2011).

In the current chapter, the influence of size on politics and democracy in the Republic of Seychelles is analyzed and evaluated. The findings of the chapter are for the main part based on field research that was conducted in the archipelago in February and March 2011, during which thirteen semi-structured interviews were held with Seychellois government ministers, members of parliament, party leaders, journalists, academics, legal officials, and the ombudsman.[7] The chapter commences with an overview of the political history of Seychelles, and a synopsis of the country's pathway to democratization and the re-establishment of multiparty-democracy in 1993. After this, one section is devoted to explaining democracy in contemporary Seychelles by pointing to a number of potential contributing factors, which is followed by a paragraph in which the political structure of the country is outlined. Subsequently, in four sections the influence of size on politics and democracy in Seychelles is examined along the lines of Dahl's dimensions of contestation and inclusiveness. In sequence, attention is paid to the role of cleavages and political parties, the balance of power between institutions, the effects of closeness and direct contact, and the characteristics of political participation and elections. The chapter ends with a summary and discussion of the findings.

2. Political History and Democratization of Seychelles

The islands of Seychelles geologically form part of the Mascarene plateau that originated when the Indian plate broke away from Madagascar approximately ninety million years ago. The Seychelles islands thus actually constitute a continental fragment or 'micro-continent' on their own, and due to their isolated

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[6] In fact, among the five small African island states only Comoros has a less democratic Freedom-House score than Seychelles.

[7] A complete list of the people I interviewed can be found in the Appendix. Throughout the chapter I occasionally use interview quotes to underline or illustrate my findings and the analytical narrative. Due to the strong interpersonal relations and the smallness of the Seychellois society, I have decided not to disclose the names and professions of the persons to whom the specific interview excerpts belong.

location a completely unique flora and fauna has developed on the islands of the archipelago (Franda 1982: 2). Although Arab and Indian merchants and navigators were aware of their existence, the islands of Seychelles were never colonized or even settled until 1770 (Scarr 2000: 5-7). After several Portuguese and British discoverers and navigators had already visited Seychelles in the 16th and 17th centuries, the French navigator Lazare Picault was the first to extensively explore the archipelago and map its main islands between 1742 and 1744.[8] The exploration of Seychelles was organized by the French Governor of the nearby island of Île de France (contemporary Mauritius), which together with Île de Bourbon (contemporary La Réunion) had been occupied by France in 1715 (Franda 1982: 9). In 1754 the archipelago was given the name of *Séchelles*, in honor of the contemporary French minister of finance, Viscount Jean Moreau de Séchelles.[9]

On 12 August 1770, fifteen French colonists, seven slaves, five Indians, and one black woman established a small settlement on the island of Ste. Anne, and thereby finally ended the uninhabited status of the islands (Franda 1982: 5-6; Scarr 2000: 5-7). After the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789, these settlers decided to establish their own Colonial Assembly, write their own constitution, and run the colony themselves. As a consequence Seychelles acquired *de facto* independence, and many of the policies of post-revolutionary France (such as the abolition of slavery) were not recognized on the islands (Scarr 2000: 14-16). In 1794 Chevalier Jean-Baptiste Quéau de Quinssy took over power in the colony, and through skillful diplomacy was able to preserve the autonomy of the islands (Franda 1982: 11-12). During the Napoleonic wars Seychelles hosted a group of French privateers,[10] but the British discovered this and forced De Quinssy to surrender. Since the British themselves however deemed occupation of the archipelago a waste of resources, the Seychellois colonists managed to retain their autonomy by remaining officially neutral, while supplying both French and British ships that passed by with goods (Scarr 2000: 19-20). Not only was this a successful strategy in diplomatic terms, but it also resulted in a period of increased economic activity and prosperity on the islands.

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[8] On his voyage to India, Vasco da Gama sighted the Seychelles islands in 1502. In 1608, the English East India Company-vessel *Ascension* got lost in a storm and reportedly anchored on a paradisiacal island with "land turtles of such bigness which men would think incredible". In the rest of the 17th century, the Seychelles islands were primarily used as a hiding place for pirates from different origins.

[9] The spelling was changed to *Seychelles* in 1814, after the British had gained control of the colony.

[10] A privateer was a private person or ship that had a government license to attack and capture enemy ships.

In 1811 Seychelles finally came under control of the United Kingdom, and after a major political struggle slavery was abolished in 1835.[11] Seychelles was united under colonial rule with the island of Mauritius, where the central administration of the colony was based, but the British largely allowed the white settlers (the so-called *Grand Blancs*) to preserve their French heritage and traditions. Although the colonial authorities were British and reported to London and Mauritius, the islands were largely ruled according to French customs and traditions, and (creolized) French remained the colony's common language (Scarr 2000: 54-55).[12] After decades of pressure and pleas, Seychelles finally was separated from Mauritius to become a Crown Colony on its own in 1903 (Franda 1982: 14; Van Nieuwkerk and Bell 2007: 142). Like the French, the British saw the islands as a useful place to exile political prisoners, and over the years such prisoners arrived from British colonies around the world. In addition to the *Grand Blancs* and the former slaves that had been imported from East-Africa, the British also imported indentured laborers from India, China, the Arabian Peninsula, and other British colonies to Seychelles, as a consequence of which in light of their size, the islands acquired their remarkably heterogeneous population (Franda 1982: 18-19).

After the end of the First World War, which not only had dramatic economic consequences for Seychelles but also led to the outbreak of diseases and rising crime levels, the *Grand Blancs* established the Planters' Association, which vied for greater representation of the plantocracy in governmental affairs (Scarr 2000: 113). In similar fashion, plantation workers in 1937 founded the League for the Advancement of Colored People, which primarily emphasized the need for minimum wages and better working conditions (Scarr 2000: 122-123). The first competitive elections in Seychelles were organized in 1948, when four of the twelve members of the legislative council could be elected by an electorate that was limited by property and literacy conditions (Franda 1982: 14; Campling et al. 2011: 14).[13] Since these restrictions implied that only the plantocracy could vote, the Seychelles Taxpayers' and Producers' Association (STPA), which had been established by *Grand Blancs* in 1939, easily won all four seats.

Despite restrictions on the franchise, in 1963 two political parties emerged in Seychelles. On the one hand, the socialist Seychelles People's United Party (SPUP) was established by France-Albert René, and this party vied for

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[11] British control over the islands was formalized during the Treaty of Paris in 1814.

[12] In an attempt to appease the settlers, the British appointed Quéau de Quinssy (now De Quincy) as *juge de paix*, which he remained until his death in 1827.

[13] Due to these restrictions, only five to ten percent of the Seychellois citizens could vote in these elections.

complete independence from the United Kingdom and international alignment with the Soviet block (Van Nieuwkerk and Bell 2007: 142).[14] Its counterpart, the Seychelles Democratic Party (SDP) was founded by James Mancham, represented the business-oriented Seychellois middle-class, and desired closer political integration with the United Kingdom (Scarr 2000: 171-173; Campling et al. 2011: 14-15). Despite their differences, both parties called for the introduction of a Westminster political system and universal suffrage, which were finally realized in 1967. Elections that same year were won by the SDP, which together with an allied independent MP managed to secure a majority of five out of eight parliamentary seats (Franda 1982: 14; Campling et al. 2011: 15-16). In subsequent elections in 1970 and 1974 the SDP and Mancham managed to stay in power by marginal majorities, and the ideological divide between this party and René's SPUP rapidly became more profound.[15]

Since not only the public opinion of the Seychellois population, but also the attitude of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the British government became increasingly anti-imperialistic and pro-independence, Mancham realized that he would have to change his position on this issue in order to remain in power (Scarr 2000: 184-188). During the Constitutional Convention in London in 1975, the British (Labour-) government insisted on the formation of a coalition government between SDP and SPUP as a precondition for independence of Seychelles. After such a government was formed, and Mancham became President and René Prime Minister, Seychelles became an independent republic on 29 June 1976.[16] Although rumors of a potential *coup d'état* by the SPUP circulated and also reached Mancham, the President did not appear to take these very seriously (Scarr 2000: 193).

Within one year after independence, on 4 June 1977, Prime Minister René seized power in a bloodless coup while Mancham was on an overseas trip (Hatchard 1993: 601; Ellis 1996: 167). Aided by Tanzania, Libya, and other Soviet-aligned African states, René embarked on a socialist political program,

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[14] The SPUP was to some extent related to and aided by contemporary African liberation movements and socialist regimes, and was itself categorized as a liberation movement by the Organization for African Unity (OAU) in 1973. In addition, at least in the 1960s and 1970s René was supported by the French socialists and the British Labour Party, which both supported his anti-colonialist ideals (Campling et al. 2011: 14-15).

[15] The Mancham-governments successfully established a tourism industry in Seychelles, as a consequence of which the country rapidly became more prosperous. The SPUP however believed that foreign capitalists gained too much influence in the country's economy, and that the revenues from tourism were not equally distributed among the population (Campling et al. 2011: 18).

[16] Under the new constitution, Seychelles acquired a republican political system which included elements of both British and French political traditions.

suspended the constitution, and established a one-party state (Baker 2008: 297). With regard to international politics, Mancham's staunchly pro-Western position was substituted with a policy that aimed at closer cooperation with the African socialist states and the Soviet Union. Due to its strategic location in one of the main areas of Cold War-interest and due to its small size and vulnerability, Seychelles has always been exceptionally susceptible to foreign pressures, and even though the country's government was officially socialist, René skillfully maintained relatively harmonious relations with former colonizers Britain and France (Ellis 1996: 168).

Table 7.1 Vote Percentage and Seats of Seychellois Parties at Legislative Elections[17]

	SPUP-SPPF-Parti Lepep		SDP		SNP		PDM		Independent or Other		Total
Year	V%	S	V%	S	V%	S	V%	S	V%	S	S
1967	45.5	3	51.5	4	-	-	-	-	3.0	1	**8**
1970	44.1	5	52.8	10	-	-	-	-	3.1	-	**15**
1974	47.6	2	52.4	13	-	-	-	-	-	-	**15**
1979	*98.0*	*23*	*-*	*-*	*-*	*-*	*-*	*-*	*2.0*	*-*	*23*
1983	*100*	*23*	*-*	*-*	*-*	*-*	*-*	*-*	*-*	*-*	*23*
1987	*100*	*23*	*-*	*-*	*-*	*-*	*-*	*-*	*-*	*-*	*23*
1992	58.4	14	33.7	8	-	-	-	-	7.9	-	**22**
1993	57.5	27	32.8	5	9.7	1	-	-	-	-	**32**
1998	61.7	30	12.1	1	26.1	3	-	-	0.1	-	**34**
2002	54.3	23	3.1	-	42.6	11	-	-	-	-	**34**
2007	56.2	23	-	-	43.8	11	-	-	-	-	**34**
2011	88.6	31	-	-	-	-	10.9	1	0.5	-	**32**

Within Seychelles itself, the ruling SPUP, which in 1978 adopted the new name of Seychelles People's Progressive Front (SPPF), dominated political life. Opposition parties were banned, criticism of government was not tolerated, there was very little room for political freedom, and human rights abuses were commonplace (Van Nieuwkerk and Bell 2007: 148; Baker 2008: 280). Political patronage and nepotism were the main instruments of political control, but even though corruption flourished, tourism continued to generate vast economic development on the islands, and Seychelles became one of the most prosperous states of Africa (Campling and Rosalie 2006: 119-121; Yoon 2011: 101). In

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[17] **SPUP** = Seychelles People's United Party - **SPPF** = Seychelles People's Progressive Front - **Parti Lepep** = People's Party (socialist party), **SDP** = Seychelles Democratic Party (centre-right party), **SNP** = Seychelles National Party (liberal, democratic party), **PDM** = Popular Democratic Movement (former SNP-members). Data for 1979, 1983, and 1987 are presented in italics because these elections were conducted under the one-party regime. In 2011 the SNP decided to boycott the parliamentary election, but some of its members still ran as part of the PDM.

November 1985, one of the most prominent Seychellois opposition leaders in exile, Gérard Hoareau, was murdered in London by foreign assassins with numerous indications of links with the Seychellois regime (Baker 2008: 280).

Table 7.2: Vote Percentages of Candidates in Seychellois Presidential Elections[18]

	René (SPUP-SPPF)	**Michel** (SPPF-Parti Lepep)	**Mancham** (SDP)	**Boullé** (SNP-Ind.)	**Ramkalawan** (SNP)	**Volcere** (NDP)
Year	**V%**	**V%**	**V%**	**V%**	**V%**	**V%**
1979	*98.0*	-	-	-	-	-
1984	*92.6*	-	-	-	-	-
1989	*96.1*	-	-	-	-	-
1993	59.5	-	36.7	3.8	-	-
1998	66.7	-	13.8	-	19.5	-
2001	54.2	-	-	0.9	44.9	-
2006	-	53.7	-	0.6	45.7	-
2011	-	55.5	-	1.7	41.4	1.4

The fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the Cold War, and the Harare Declaration of 1991[19] proved to be watershed moments for Seychellois politics. Many of the country's socialist allies and their vital investments in Seychelles disappeared abruptly, and increasing diplomatic pressure from France, Britain, and the United States eventually resulted in the return of multiparty-democracy in 1993, when free and democratic elections were organized (Van Nieuwkerk and Bell 2007: 143; Baker 2008: 280; Campling et al. 2011: 32). Domestically, the influential Catholic and Anglican churches played a major role in advancing the democratization process, and clearly sided with the political opposition (Hatchard 1993: 606). Former President James Mancham returned from exile and reinvigorated the Seychelles Democratic Party, but suffered defeats in both the 1993 presidential and parliamentary contests, as a consequence of which René and the SPPF could remain in power.

As election results presented in tables 7.1 and 7.2 demonstrate, since the return of multiparty-democracy the SPPF has won all parliamentary and presidential elections and is presently ruling the country for thirty-five years. Having been defeated in the pivotal 1993 elections, the position of Mancham's

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[18] **NDP** = New Democratic Party (part of former SDP). Data for 1979, 1984, and 1989 are presented in italics because these elections were conducted under the one-party regime. René never obtained 100% of votes because the electorate could only cast a ballot 'for' or 'against' him; the percentage of the electorate that voted 'for' is presented here.

[19] The Harare Declaration of 1991 was a joint declaration of the member-states of the Commonwealth, in which (among others) the need for democratic and accountable government was being emphasized. The declaration was endorsed by the heads of government of all Commonwealth members.

SDP as the main opposition party has been overtaken by the Seychelles National Party (SNP) of the former Anglican priest Wavel Ramkalawan. In 2004, France-Albert René resigned as President after having been in power for over twenty-five years, and handed over power to his former Vice-President James Michel, who currently still is the nation's President and changed the name of his party into *Parti Lepep* (People's Party in Creole). With the same party and people remaining in power, critics assert that very little has changed in post-1993 Seychelles except for some institutional and cosmetic changes (e.g. Baker 2008: 280-281). Especially with regard to the freedom of expression and judicial neutrality the reputation of the regime has not been very favorable, and there is a perception that the distinction between the ruling party and the government remains hard to determine (Yoon 2011: 101). The 2011 parliamentary elections were boycotted by the SNP because of the government's refusal to revise existing laws on campaign financing, and out of frustration with the supposedly faltering democratization process in general. In table 7.3, the composition of Seychellois governments since 1970 has been presented.

Table 7.3: Composition of Seychellois Governments since 1970

Time Span	Government Party	President
1970 - 1975	SDP	James Mancham
1975 - 1977	SDP & SPUP	James Mancham (& France-Albert René as Prime Minister)
1977 – 2004	SPPF	France-Albert René
2004 -	SPPF – Parti Lepep	James Michel

3. Explaining Democracy in Seychelles

On the basis of the political history and other characteristics of the country, a number of factors that contributed to the present-day electoral democracy in the Republic of Seychelles can be listed. As opposed to St. Kitts and Nevis, Seychelles actually experienced two transitions to democracy; one with the introduction of universal suffrage in 1967, and one with the reinstallation of multiparty democracy in 1993. In many ways, the first Seychellois transition to democracy is comparable to that of the Eastern Caribbean microstates, in the sense that it was gradual and characterized by the interplay between the three groups of the British colonial authorities, the white local plantocracy, and the colored mass of (former) plantation workers. In contrast to St. Kitts and Nevis however, the influence and grip of the British administration on political developments in Seychelles was markedly less significant, as the colonial authorities often felt themselves "alien in their own colony" (Campling et al. 2011: 8). Instead, the

descendants of the French settler families (the *Grand Blancs*) were to a large extent able to rule the colony as they desired. With regard to the influence of colonialism on democratization, the three-hundred years of socialization in the Westminster system that the population of St. Kitts and Nevis experienced is not matched by an analogous process in Seychelles. In comparison, colonialism in the latter microstate was shorter, less intensive, and consisted of the interplay between French, British, and *Grand Blanc*-political cultures.

Whereas St. Kitts and Nevis upon independence undisputedly retained both its Westminster-modeled democratic institutions and its pro-Western foreign policy orientation, Seychelles acquired a political system that incorporated both French and British elements, and faced a great divide between its two main political parties with respect to economics and the country's position in the Cold War-conflict. While the survival of (capitalist) democracy in the Caribbean was furthermore not only closely monitored by the United States, but also by other countries in the generally democracy-friendly region (cf. Domínguez 1993),[20] Seychelles is located in one of the most undemocratic parts of the world, and not in the proximity of any major democratic power. As a matter of fact, nearby regimes like the Nyerere-government of Tanzania actually supported and contributed to the downfall of the democratically elected government in Seychelles (Van Nieuwkerk and Bell 2007: 143). In light of these contextual factors, the initial survival of democracy in Seychelles was uncertain from the start, and the 1977-coup d'état was hence maybe not an improbable development.

Both my own interviews and the secondary academic literature on Seychelles explain the country's return to democracy in 1993 largely on the basis of international factors. Not only in Seychelles, but on the entire African continent, the collapse of communism and the end of the Cold War generated the demise of Soviet-aligned one-party regimes, and instigated a shift to democracy.[21] Authoritarian socialist regimes in other small African island states like Cape Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe crumbled in the first years of the 1990s as well, and in these countries a successful transition to democracy

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[20] In the previous chapter, it was described how various far-reaching judicial, monetary, security, and economic cooperation agreements have been established between the small island states in the Eastern Caribbean. The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States of which St. Kitts and Nevis is a member has for example played a significant role in the preservation of democracy among its members. Seychelles, by contrast, is only a member of the Indian Ocean Commission (together with France, Mauritius, Comoros, and Madagascar), which is a much less formalized and less active organization.

[21] Together with Latin American, Asian, and Southern and Eastern European states, these African states form part of Huntington's third wave of democratization (1991).

subsequently unfolded. Since the financial and economic support from the Soviet Union and its allies suddenly subsided, and in light of the international economic dependence of small states in general, the attainment of aid from Western donors at once became a crucial factor for these African microstates. [22] With regard to Seychelles, multiple publications assert that French, British, and American diplomats in 1991 pressured the regime to organize free and fair elections, and threatened to suspend their provision of aid to the country (Van Nieuwkerk and Bell 2007: 143; Baker 2008: 280).[23] Being crucially dependent on foreign investments and especially tourist inflows, it appears that the 1993-return to multiparty elections in Seychelles was primarily a result of international developments (Hatchard 1993: 602).

Just like St. Kitts and Nevis and most other microstates in the developing world, the foreign policy of Seychelles can by and large be identified according to the international patron-client model (cf. Carney 1989). Already in the early 19th-century De Quinssy-era, Seychellois leaders proficiently and advantageously played out Britain and France against each other, and in the 1970s and 1980s the René-regime played the same game with the two Cold War-superpowers (Ellis 1996: 166-168; Van Nieuwkerk and Bell 2007: 152). In the past two decades, Seychelles has acted as a client state of among others the United States, the United Kingdom, France, South Africa, India, China, and most recently the United Arab Emirates.[24] Since it is not located in the sphere of influence of a major international power, Seychelles arguably has a greater degree of freedom in the formulation of its foreign policy than for example the Caribbean and Pacific microstates. Seeing that Seychelles' most important international partners are

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[22] Hatchard specifically points out that "René acknowledged the increasing linkage of aid to democratic change by Western donors" (1993: 602).

[23] Specifically, Baker asserts that President René "was confronted with the resident ambassadors of Britain, France and USA who handed him a letter giving him until 5 December 1991 to announce the restoration of the multiparty system or else they would denounce him in public in Seychelles itself. Under political pressure, therefore, from the Commonwealth, exiles and domestic critics, and with the economy in trouble, President René announced a return to multiparty government at the Extraordinary Congress of the SPPF in December 1991" (Baker 2008: 280).

[24] The UAE have become an important trading partner of Seychelles, especially with regard to oil and gas, and their national airline company (Emirates) has become the second most significant airline serving Seychelles. Most significant, however, is the recent construction of a colossal six-storey palace on the site of a former US satellite tracking station on Mahé, which was built as a secondary residence for the President of the Emirates and the Emir of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Khalifa. Not only are the dimensions of the palace and the surrounding land gigantic in proportion to the size of Mahé itself, but the behavior and influence of Sheikh Khalifa have caused a lot of antagonism among the Seychellois population. Many people I talked to fear that the Emiratis will attempt to impose Islamic rules and traditions on Seychellois society, and opposition parties and newspapers have turned this into one of their most prominent political tools in attacking the ruling party.

however Western democracies, especially since these deliver the wide majority of tourists, these countries now function as major promoters of democratic government in the microstate.

Whatever the reasons for the 1993-return to democracy and the current status of Seychelles as an electoral democracy may be, various scholars point to a number of considerable deficiencies in the archipelago's democratic system. First of all, the ruling party of Seychelles (the Parti Lepep) is now in office for thirty-five years, and a political change through the ballot box has as of yet never occurred in the country. As Van Nieuwkerk and Bell argue, this means that "the ghost of Seychelles's one-party past lingers on" (2007: 146), primarily because the ruling party continues to dominate the opposition and various elected and non-elected institutions. According to Yoon, the Parti Lepep uses state resources to finance its election campaigns and distributes government jobs as part of political patronage, which provides the party with excessive advantages at the polls (2011: 101). In addition, restrictions on the freedom of the press and the freedom of assembly are believed to impinge on political rights in the microstate (Baker 2008: 288). Last but not least, Baker asserts that electoral district administrators are commonly confusing their role with support for the governing party, the Seychellois army plays an excessively dominant role in the country's public life, and "judicial abuse now arguably constitutes the single most serious governance issue requiring reform" (2008: 282). In short, on the basis of secondary sources the political system of Seychelles appears rather distant from democratic ideals.

4. Political Institutions of Seychelles

The mixed French-British colonial heritage of Seychelles is clearly visible in the country's present-day political-institutional structure. The country had a Westminster-modeled parliamentary system during the decade that is now known as the 'First Republic' (1967-1977), but upon independence this was changed to a semi-presidential system that aimed at power-sharing between the SDP and SPUP (Campling et al. 2011: 17). During the so-called Second Republic (1977-1993) power gradually became more and more concentrated in the hands of René, who in addition to President also became Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, and headed a cabinet of only five members. The new constitution of the Third Republic (1993 until the present) that was adopted after the return to multipartyism turned Seychelles into a presidential republic, with a directly and separately elected President and legislature (Van Nieuwkerk and Bell 2007: 144;

Campling et al. 2011: 32). As in other presidential systems, Seychellois government ministers are appointed by the president, who is both head of state and head of government of the country (Constitution of Seychelles 1993: Art. 50).

According to the Constitution, presidential elections are organized once every five years, and the same person cannot be President for more than three subsequent terms (1993: Art. 52). In 1996, a constitutional amendment established the office of Vice-President, and prospective Vice-Presidential candidates have to be announced by presidential candidates (as 'running mates') in advance to the presidential election (1993: Art. 66A). The additional ministers in the executive are appointed by the President, and have to be approved by a majority of the members of the National Assembly.[25] Ministers are accountable to the President, and can also be removed by the President (Constitution of Seychelles 1993: Art. 71, 73). In addition to the ministers, the President has the duty to appoint the Attorney-General, the Auditor-General, the electoral commission, judges of the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court, and the ombudsman of Seychelles.[26] According to the Constitution, the President furthermore has the competence to dissolve the Seychellois legislature and to declare the state of emergency (1993: Art. 41, 110; Van Nieuwkerk and Bell 2007: 144).

Presidential elections in Seychelles are organized under the rules of the two-round runoff system that is also used in France, but as table 2 demonstrates so far no second rounds in presidential elections have been necessary, since SPPF-Parti Lepep-candidates have always obtained an absolute majority of votes in the first round. For legislative elections a mixed electoral system is being employed, in which the country is divided in at least twenty-two single-member constituencies, in which the first-past-the-post plurality system is used.[27] In addition, political parties that acquire at least ten percent of the nationwide votes have the right to nominate one additional member of parliament for every

[25] In addition to the President and the Vice-President, there are currently eleven ministers in the Seychellois government (source: www.gov.sc).

[26] Most of these appointments are based on candidates proposed by the Constitutional Appointments Authority (CAA), which consists of 1) one member appointed by the President, 2) one member appointed by the leader of the opposition, and 3) one member (and chairman) appointed on the basis of consensus between the other two members. If the two members however disagree on this last appointment, they have to propose a list of potential candidates to the President, who then can appoint the chairman (Constitution of Seychelles 1993: Art. 143: 3). Until 2007, the chairman of the CAA was also a member of the executive committee of the ruling party.

[27] In the four most recent parliamentary elections (since 1998), the country was carved up in twenty-five constituencies that each delivered one MP. Of these constituencies twenty-two are located on Mahé, two on Praslin, and one remaining district for the Inner Islands (among which La Digue, Silhouette, and some smaller islands).

ten percent of the votes that they obtained (Constitution of Seychelles 1993: Schedule 4; Yoon 2011: 100).[28] In practice this has mostly lead to a total number of nine 'proportionally elected' MPs, but due to the opposition's boycott of the last election, only seven additional MPs were appointed. Whereas the Seychellois National Assembly thus used to consist of thirty-four members, after the 2011 elections it has only thirty-two MPs. This means that each MP on average represents nearly 3.000 Seychellois citizens.

The legislature of Seychelles, the National Assembly,[29] is a unicameral parliament that is directly elected once in every five years. Under the rules of the presidential system with its strict separation of powers, MPs can since 2007 not be simultaneously members of the executive branch, and vice versa. The National Assembly selects a Speaker and a Deputy-Speaker from amongst its members, and the MPs who are not member of the party that nominated the President have the right to select the leader of the opposition. Subsequent to a referendum on the issue,[30] the approval of two-thirds of the members of the National Assembly is necessary for constitutional amendments. Since 1993, all Speakers have been members of the SPPF-Parti Lepep, and this party has always managed to obtain more than two-thirds of parliamentary seats at elections. Furthermore, since all presidential and all parliamentary elections since the return of multiparty democracy have been won by the SPPF-Parti Lepep, the executive and legislative branches of government have always been dominated by the same party, and a situation of divided government has so far never occurred.

In addition to the national layer of government, Seychelles consists of twenty-five local administrative divisions, which also function as electoral districts. Since the 1990s local governments have progressively gained more power, and they have generally been a-political (Commonwealth Secretariat 2010: 178). Since 1991, each district has obtained its own elected council, but from 1999 onwards the members of these assemblies are appointed by the Minister of Local Government (ibid.). The judicial branch of the Seychellois government consists of the Court of Appeal, the Supreme Court, and several

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[28] Although various academic publications and reports discuss these appointments as if it were a separate election under PR-rules, they are actually *post hoc*-appointments by political parties, especially since the candidates for these appointments are unknown in advance to the elections.
[29] *Lasanble Nasyonal Sesel* in Creole.
[30] According to the Constitution, a referendum in which a constitutional amendment is proposed needs to result in approval of at least sixty percent of the votes cast (1993: Art. 91). Since the reintroduction of multiparty democracy, two such referendums have been held (in 1992 and 1993).

subordinate courts,[31] of which the magistrates are all appointed by the President upon the advice of the Constitutional Appointments Authority (CAA). Many of the Seychellois judges are foreign nationals, and in contrast to Seychellois judges they are appointed for a specific term, which can be prolonged by the President (Constitution of Seychelles 1993: Art. 131: 134).[32]

When looking at the constitutional arrangement of Seychelles, and the structure and institutions of its presidential republican system, no antidemocratic elements can be observed. This however contrasts markedly with reports from organizations like Freedom House and the Commonwealth as well as with the academic literature on the political system of the country, in which quite a few reservations about the democratic nature of the Seychellois system are being expressed (Van Nieuwkerk and Bell 2007; Baker 2008; Yoon 2011). In previous chapters on San Marino and St. Kitts and Nevis, it was demonstrated how the size of these microstates creates certain political dynamics that are hard to notice if the institutional structure of the country alone is taken into consideration. For the political system of Seychelles, however, it is the question whether the non-democratic features that have been observed in the scholarly literature are a consequence of the small size of the country, or whether they are a legacy of the one-party era instead, and are therefore also similar to less democratic characteristics of larger states. In the analysis in following paragraphs, an attempt will be made to find answers to this question.

5. The Influence of Size on Democracy in Seychelles

When the political system of Seychelles is measured up to Dahl's conditions for polyarchy, it can firstly be remarked that Freedom House's classification of the microstate as an electoral democracy can be considered justifiable. Presidential and parliamentary elections are organized and held at regular points in time, and according to Commonwealth-reports elections are "credible" (Commonwealth Expert Team 2006), "well organized and peaceful" (Commonwealth Expert Team 2011) and are "generally viewed as having met basic international norms" (Freedom House 2012). Despite these positive qualifications, none of these reports uses the labels of 'free' or 'fair', and all of them express major concerns and list quite a number of recommendations for future elections. According to

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[31] Five magistrate courts that deal with lesser criminal and civil cases exist, of which four are based in the country's capital Victoria on Mahé, and one on Praslin.

[32] Freedom House-reports stipulate that "the impartiality of the non-Seychellois magistrates can be compromised by the fact that they are subject to contract renewal" (Freedom House 2012). At present, the President of the Seychellois Court of Appeal is a Mauritian citizen, whereas the Chief Justice originates from Uganda.

the Constitution however, all registered Seychellois citizens of at least eighteen years old who reside in Seychelles have active voting rights (1993: Art. 113, 114), and similar conditions apply to passive suffrage rights (1993: Art. 80). This means that the inclusiveness of Seychellois citizens is at least legally safeguarded.

In the following sections, an in-depth analysis of the influence of size on the nature and quality of contestation and inclusiveness in the Republic of Seychelles will be offered. First, attention is paid to the role of socio-political cleavages, ideology, and political parties in the archipelago. Subsequently, the balance of power between different political and societal institutions will be highlighted, which is followed by an analysis of the effects of closeness and face-to-face contacts on the characteristics and quality of political inclusiveness. The final section is devoted to an assessment of elections and the degree and nature of participation of citizens in Seychellois politics. On the basis of these four paragraphs, in a concluding section the main findings are summarized and an assessment of the influence of size on Seychellois politics is provided. In addition, the conclusion briefly draws a comparison between Seychelles and the two microstates that were analyzed in earlier chapters.

5.1. Contestation: Cleavages, Ideologies, and Political Parties

Political contestation in Seychelles occurs in the form of parliamentary and presidential elections that are organized once in every five years. Since the elected President has the constitutional duty to form his own cabinet and appoint government ministers, the presidential election can actually be regarded as a vote for the entire executive branch of government. Furthermore, since public officials in the most important non-elected bodies of the Seychellois political system are also appointed by the President and some of them by the leader of the parliamentary opposition, political contestation for these institutions is indirectly present as well. Active and passive suffrage rights for Seychellois adults furthermore ensure that every eligible citizen can take part in contestation, either by influencing the outcome of political competition (by casting a ballot) or by entering the competition itself. Whereas all the conditions for political contestation are therefore constitutionally upheld, it is necessary to also examine the nature and content of political competition in order to fully comprehend the influence of size on political contestation in Seychelles.

As Dahl argues, contestation first and foremost refers to the "extent of permissible opposition" (Dahl 1971: 4). In this respect, it can be noted that alternation in office has occurred only once in post-independence Seychelles, but

this was thirty-five years ago and happened by means of a military coup. Since the same power is now in office for thirty-five years, political change through the ballot box has yet to occur for the first time. With regard to the presence of a parliamentary opposition, it can be noted that, since re-democratization in 1993, on average about one third of MPs in parliament has been affiliated with the opposition. The 2011-boycott of the parliamentary elections has however altered this balance, since at present the parliamentary opposition consists of only one out of thirty-two MPs. Whereas the effective number of parties (ENP; cf. Laakso and Taagepera 1979) since 1993 has always been around 1.80, after the 2011-election it has become 1.06.[33] This means that the extent of opposition in parliament has declined significantly since the last election, and it remains to be seen whether this will change after future elections.

As several of my respondents have emphasized, the Seychellois political system is characterized by the absence of major socio-political cleavages. Although the country's population is both ethnically and religiously rather heterogeneous,[34] ethnic and religious cleavages have remarkably never been politicized by any of the main Seychellois political parties. In this respect, Scarr's observation that "Seychelles never had a color question" (2000: 4) is accurate, and is remarkable especially in light of the historical tensions between the white plantocracy and the colored plantation workers. At present, Seychellois citizens and politicians I talked to proudly refer to their 'melting pot'-society, and although no data on this issue are available, people I talked to pointed out that interracial relationships and marriages are for instance relatively common.

As tables 1 and 2 demonstrate, political contestation in Seychelles commonly occurs on the basis of competing political parties. With exception of the one-party era in which no political parties other than the ruling party were allowed to compete for votes, in the First and Third Republics two parties have been represented in parliament most of the time, and at elections over ninety percent of the votes have usually been divided between only two parties.[35] In

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[33] Based on own calculation using data of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) 2011).

[34] Seychelles has a rather low score of 0.20 in Alesina et al.'s fractionalization index, which measures ethnic, religious, and linguistic fractionalization, and ranges between 1 and 0 - with 0 indicating the absence of fractionalization and 1 indicating a completely fractionalized society (Alesina et al. 2003). Since 'Creoles' are however treated as one group here (constituting almost 90% of the population), in my opinion this index fails to recognize the significant differences between the various segments of the Creole population (i.e. Creoles from mixed African, Arab, Indian, Chinese, or European descent).

[35] Although small parties and independents (such as the NDP or the independent Presidential candidate Philippe Boullé) have contested elections, this has never led to actual representation in either the legislature or the executive.

this two-party system, the left side of the political spectrum has always been occupied by what is now the Parti Lepep, but used to be the SPUP (1963 - 1977) or SPPF (1977 – 2006). Founded as a pro-Soviet socialist party, the Parti Lepep ruled Seychelles during the one-party regime and has continued to win elections after the restoration of multipartyism in 1993. At present the party continues to present itself as a spokesperson for the common people, and emphasizes socio-economic equality and the redistribution of welfare in its election manifestos. In addition, in the 2011 elections the party claimed to be the party for the 'true Seychellois', and thereby tried to portray the opposition as outsiders.[36]

Even though the party changed its name twice and transformed from an authoritarian, antidemocratic, and pro-Soviet grouping into an allegedly pro-democratic and ideologically more pragmatic party, key functions in the Parti Lepep- apparatus are still occupied by the people who headed the one-party regime (Yoon 2011: 102). Former President René still is the chairman of the party, and in this role continues to exercise a great degree of influence within not only the Parti Lepep but also the Seychellois government (Baker 2008: 290). In addition, the current President also had a prominent role in both the 1977-coup and the subsequent authoritarian regime, as one of the officials I talked with aptly points out;

> "The Parti Lepep has been in power for over thirty years. (…) And even though they have changed from SPUP to SPPF and now to Parti Lepep, it's the same leopard, the same people. James Michel, the current President, took part in the coup d'état; there are pictures of him with his Kalashnikov."

While the leadership and internal organizational structure of the Parti Lepep have in several ways remained similar, the party has experienced a major transformation in terms of its ideology and economic orientation. Originally founded as a socialist party with a Soviet-style economic program, the party is now persistently advocating and acting upon free-market principles, and has therefore become as capitalistic as the opposition (Campling et al. 2011: 33-34). According to an academic I interviewed;

> "I must say that the main differences have slowly merged, in the sense that we have seen the ruling party moving from being a communist party to adopting a Western-style economy."

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[36] The slogan of the Parti Lepep in the 2011-elections was *'En Nouvo Sesel'*, which translates into "a new Seychelles", and is also the title of this chapter. Members of the opposition and the general public with whom I discussed it pointed to the irony of this slogan, as they did not expect the development of a new Seychelles to arrive at the initiative of the party that has been in office for thirty-five years.

Whereas the party historically opposed the influence of foreign companies and governments in the Seychellois economy, the present government actively supports this, and Chinese companies and workers have for example executed momentous land reclamation projects that were deemed necessary due to urban sprawl.[37] In terms of the indicator of interest articulation by political parties, it can therefore be noted that the Parti Lepep has moved from a staunchly left-wing ideological position to a much more pragmatic and capitalist party.

The right wing of Seychellois politics used to be occupied by James Mancham's Seychelles Democratic Party (SDP), which initially was opposed to independence from the United Kingdom, advocated business interests, foreign investments, and the development of tourism to the country, and promoted a pro-Western foreign policy orientation. After disappointing election results in the early 1990s, the party was however surpassed by the newly established Seychelles National Party (SNP) as the leading political opposition group, and this latter party has since 1998 been the main opposition party of Seychelles.[38] In contrast to the center-right SDP, the SNP is generally considered to be a center-left liberal party that primarily advocates greater transparency and accountability in politics, and opposes the alleged abuses of power and exploitation of state resources by the Parti Lepep (Campling et al. 2011: 32-33).[39] Instead of emphasizing and advocating a specific socio-economic platform, the party can therefore primarily be perceived as a pro-democracy or anti-Parti Lepep grouping, as one of its supporters mentions;

> "The current main opposition party came about primarily in 1993, with the return of multiparty-democracy, and they were designed primarily in my opinion to basically deal with all the thing the government was not doing right. So there is not really an ideological aspect to it, it is more pragmatic."

Rather than advocating a substantially different policy-orientation than the ruling party, the SNP therefore primarily emphasizes more meta-political issues about the functioning and legitimacy of the political system.[40]

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[37] In the last decade the new islands of Île Aurore, Île du Port, and Île Perseverance were in the process of being reclaimed from the sea, and two Chinese construction companies constructed a new National Assembly-building and new houses on Île Perseverance.

[38] Even though the party boycotted the 2011-parliamentary elections, the presidential election that same year demonstrates the continuing electoral appeal of the party and its leader Wavel Ramkalawan.

[39] The SNP also has formal links to the British Liberal Democrats (Campling et al. 2011: 32).

[40] In countries that are in transition to democracy, it is common to find that the opposition is primarily vying for liberalization and democratization, and that its position on more substantive (socio-economical) political issues is either undefined or of lesser importance. If the transition to democracy is successful, this united opposition often falls apart in multiple factions with differing

Although the two Seychellois parties thus formally or rhetorically advocate and articulate different policies and claim to represent different socio-economic interests, according to all respondents whom I asked the question, the substantial political differences between them have decreased significantly over time. On the basis of a survey of their election manifestos for the 2011-election, the differences between the Parti Lepep and the SNP indeed appear to center on the organization of politics and the country's institutional-political structure, whereas no major differences can be noted with regard to other issues. At present, twelve of the thirteen respondents argued that no clear programmatic differences between the parties exist, and as the following academic points out;

> "One party was based on a socialist ideology, the Parti Lepep, whereas the SNP tended to follow the liberal-capitalist kind of ideology. But at the end of the day it seems that both of them are merging. It is pretty much blurred now, the only difference being that one bears the green color and the other one bears the red color."

Just like in San Marino and St. Kitts and Nevis, the absence of ideological demarcations between the parties of Seychelles seems to induce a personality-focused form of contestation. Like in the other two microstates, the preponderance of personalistic over programmatic politics seems to primarily be a causal effect of the country's population size. As a consequence of the small size of Seychelles, people know their politicians personally, which means that style and personality become key aspects of politics, as one of the journalists points out;

> "I don't think there are great differences between parties, but everything is in how you behave, you see? It's the personal touch."

In the absence of ideology, personalistic intra-elite relationships in Seychelles also determine the conduct of politics. This sometimes obstructs a rational political debate about problems and potential solutions, and an example is offered by one the country's senior political officials:

> "In the political arena here, if I come and talk about climate change, nobody will come and debate carbon emissions. Instead they will attack my personal life, which is totally not the way we should do it."

As the following minister argues, the fact that people within the Seychellois elite also know each other through multiple roles has significant consequences for the conduct of politics;

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political platforms (Huntington 1991: 122-124). The current situation in Seychelles to a certain extent appears to resemble this pattern.

> "Because people know each other personally, the politicians that are your adversaries – you went to school with them. You know a lot of funny stories about them. So the politics can be more personal sometimes than it needs to be."

Although some scholars who study the effect of size on democracy have suggested otherwise, the small size of Seychelles and the absence of ideological demarcations does not bring about a more consensus-oriented or harmonious conduct of politics. Due to the intimacy and interconnectedness of Seychelles society, and the prevalence of multiple-role relationships, people are generally well aware of each other's political adherence, as one of the journalists I interviewed explained to me;

> "With such a small population, it's the case that everybody knows everybody. So if somebody has political affiliations then that person will basically be known for being supportive of such and such party. So as opposed to bigger countries where you would not easily know where ones interests or loyalty lies, here you do."

Since eleven out of thirteen respondents pointed to either personal connections or (family-) traditions in explaining party loyalties, Seychellois society appears to be by and large divided in two groups that support the two main political parties. As in St. Kitts and Nevis, a quite extensive degree of polarization appears to exist between these two groups. In such an environment, people are also recurrently branded as belonging to one of the two sides, which means that a neutral position in politics is hard to maintain. As one public official asserts;

> "People are cast as supporting one party or the other. In the eyes of normal people (…) you are either this or that. You know, you are automatically classified as one or the other. (…) Remaining independent is almost a new concept here. What is independence? We are all political. And when you say you are political, you are either or."

The smallness of Seychelles facilitates the broad public awareness about people's individual political preferences, which means that political privacy and anonymity are much less easily maintained, as a result of which political branding and the treatment of people on the basis of their partisan affiliation becomes more common. In fact, because of these reasons most respondents stressed that Seychellois politics is highly divisive and polarized, especially because personal conflicts can be a lot more emotional and bitter than substantive political ones. Furthermore, just like in St. Kitts and Nevis strong and personality-based polarization sometimes leads to the victimization and pestering of political opponents, as an opposition supporter told me;

> "You see, if you are being told – maybe not directly but indirectly – that if you want a scholarship you need to be careful, that is a form of victimization, a form of harassment. If you are in a government job and you are working for promotion,

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again there is pressure. If you are in the private sector and apply for a license or want to diversify your business, again you have to be careful. So there are many subtle ways in which people are checked in order to ensure that they are toeing the party line."

Although many political similarities can thus be observed between St. Kitts and Nevis and Seychelles, a major difference can be observed with regard to the freedom to support the opposition. Whereas Kittitian-Nevisian opposition supporters might be victimized for their political preferences, I observed that these people nonetheless (proudly) display their partisan affiliation and also participate in opposition rallies and meetings. In addition, due to the intermittent alternation of power, these people were convinced that a change in their situation would arrive somewhere in the future. In Seychelles, the freedom to publicly support the opposition seemed markedly less present, and the opposition supporters I talked to generally appeared fearful or at least hesitant to express their support for the SNP. As the 2011-Commonwealth election report notes, the only party that organizes campaign rallies is the Parti Lepep, as the SNP-campaign appears more focused on one-on-one campaigning and canvassing (Commonwealth Expert Team 2011: 16). In conclusion, the political climate of Seychelles, to a greater extent than its Caribbean counterpart, appears to be characterized by fear and the unequal position between the parties.[41]

In conclusion, the Seychellois case demonstrates that the predominance of personalistic contestation over ideological and programmatic competition leads to a rather divisive political environment. In effect, this is essentially caused by the small size of the country, and the close and direct interpersonal (political) and multiple-role relationships and that evolve from it. Although Seychellois politics in this sense shares many features with St. Kitts and Nevis, a major difference is that whereas Kittitian and Nevisian parties have at various points in time alternated in government, and therefore more clearly assume a somewhat equal position with regard to their chances of gaining office at elections, the Seychellois parties have been unequal in this sense, as alternation of power has so far never occurred by means of free and fair elections, and the opposition is as of 2011 only marginally represented in parliament.

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[41] Since it is publicly known who supports the opposition, it might seem illogical that opposition supporters are hesitant to openly support the SNP, especially in comparison to the vocal and visible PAM-supporters in St. Kitts. This can however possibly be explained as a legacy of the authoritarian period, in which a climate of fear existed due to human rights abuses and torture. Baker argues that this climate of fear has not ceased to exist after the return to multipartyism (2008: 286).

5.2. Contestation: The Balance of Power between Institutions

In light of Dahl's condition of 'institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference', the present section will discuss the horizontal balance of power between both elected and non-elected political and societal institutions in the Seychellois system. In the previous two chapters, it was shown that the theoretical expectations with regard to the supreme position of government in small states and the absence of institutions that can effectively function as a check on governmental power were largely corroborated for the cases of San Marino and St. Kitts and Nevis. As the preceding section has illustrated, the Seychellois socio-political environment is characterized by a great degree of polarization between supporters of the two main political parties in the system. In combination with the effects of the small size of the archipelago, this characteristic means that Seychelles is no exception when it comes to the supreme position of government in the microstate's political structure, and the shortage of neutral and autonomous institutions that can effectively restrain the power of the executive.

According to the Constitution, the President of Seychelles is the head of state, head of government, and commander in chief of the defense forces (Constitution of Seychelles 1993: Art. 50). In addition however, the President has the constitutional prerogative to appoint the members of the executive, and to make appointments to a host of other positions. Although some of these appointments require the consent of the CAA, as described before, the President has a decisive vote in the composition of this institution itself. As a consequence, the President of Seychelles occupies a supremely powerful position in the country's political system, and his powers are only to a very limited degree controlled or counterbalanced by other institutions or players in the country (Hatchard 1993: 607). Furthermore, because of their political dependence on the President, the other ministers appear to be mostly in a subordinate position to their head of government. As one minister illustratively explains:

> "I think the President is clearly the authority. As a minister I am conscious that the President is elected by the people; he chose me to be in his cabinet, and he can fire me. And basically that's it; you have to follow his guidance, try to understand where he wants to go, and try to align yourself with a direction that he has set as the leader, as the President."

Whereas the preeminence of the President vis-à-vis other members of the executive is a common feature of presidential systems, the one-party legacy and in many ways still uncompleted transition to democracy of Seychelles means that the President continues to wield great and virtually unchecked powers, that

according to some scholars are disproportionate for a democracy (Van Nieuwkerk and Bell 2007: 146; Baker 2008: 280-281). In some ways, the size of Seychelles exacerbates the pervasiveness of government, in the sense that the resulting weakness of other institutions enables the Parti Lepep's continuing domination of Seychellois society.

According to both academic case studies on Seychelles and country reports of international organizations, the primary legacy from the one-party era in the country is the persistently blurred boundary between the ruling party and the government. The synthesis between the Parti Lepep and the state primarily manifests itself in the functioning of institutions that are controlled by the state, such as the Seychellois army, the police force, the civil service, local governments, and the state broadcasting channel, which all are perceived to operate primarily in the interests of the Parti Lepep (Yoon 2011: 101-102). Just like in St. Kitts and Nevis, the perception of partiality of these institutions is further exacerbated by the previously discussed personalization, polarization and divisiveness of the Seychellois society, as a consequence of which institutions and persons are rapidly and constantly branded as supporting one side or the other. Other than its Eastern Caribbean counterpart, however, the partiality of Seychellois institutions is broadly seen as persistently favoring the same party, and this partiality is also confirmed by multiple sources outside of Seychellois society (Van Nieuwkerk and Bell 2007: 149-150; Commonwealth Expert Team 2011).

Primarily as a result of the fact that the Parti Lepep currently controls the government and parliament of Seychelles for over thirty-five years, the National Assembly of Seychelles is broadly seen as obedient and compliant with the agenda of the government (Baker 2008: 284). The Speaker of parliament remains a very active and prominent party member, and does not take the required distance from the party in order to be perceived as somewhat neutral, as one of the opposition members asserts:

> "The Speaker is an active member of the governing party, who is out campaigning against the member of the opposition sitting in parliament. He attends all the party caucuses, so basically he is also the coach of the members of the ruling party. He is both the coach and the referee."

In addition to the alleged partiality of the Speaker, both interviewees and secondary sources assert that parliamentary committees exist more in name than in function, and that MPs have a very limited amount of time to research and evaluate bills before they are put to a vote (Baker 2008: 284). During the interviews, a wide majority of respondents confirmed the superiority of

government in executive-legislative relations, as the following public official mentions;

> "I think the executive is much stronger than the legislature. Often the legislative branch of government is just an extension of the executive. If the executive wants something to become law, parliament usually just passes it through."

This finding is remarkably also supported by members of the ruling party itself;

> "Obviously in the history of Seychelles our party has traditionally always had a majority in parliament, so there has been a tendency to see that the executive can push things through the parliament."

Whereas MPs until 2007 were also allowed to occupy positions in government, a modification of the law has introduced more dualism in this respect (Yoon 2011: 101). Nevertheless, many MPs of the governing party continue to exercise many other societal functions, which contributes to multiple-role relations and potentially generates conflicts of interest. In summary, it can be concluded that the National Assembly is largely ineffective in controlling the actions of government.

Although the previous paragraph has determined that a political opposition does exist in Seychelles, as Yoon argues "the opposition cannot compete with the ruling party on a level-playing field" (2011: 101). This is not only a result of the fact that the government controls a large proportion of the country's resources and labor market, which will be discussed in further detail in the following section, but also because the opposition does not have access to state media, and cannot effectively exercise its parliamentary role in controlling the actions of government. This is of course especially true for the situation in the aftermath of the 2011 elections, which were boycotted by the SNP, as a result of which the Parti Lepep now controls 31 of the 32 parliamentary seats. However, also when a significant proportion of parliamentary seats were still occupied by the SNP, the opposition was mostly ignored by the ruling party, and the former opposition leader told me that their proposals were almost by definition voted down instantaneously:

> "Basically the assembly is a rubber stamp; whatever government wants is not questioned, it just goes through. What we have also realized is that when the opposition brings a motion to the House, their [the Parti Lepep MPs, WV] first reaction is to throw it out. But then a couple of years down the road, they will come back with those same proposals and accept them."

Although the 1993-return to multipartyism allows for the existence of a parliamentary opposition, both the enduring dominance of the Parti Lepep and

the ensuing inferior position of the legislature versus the government undermines its position as an effective counterbalance to the government.

The unequal position between government and opposition is primarily reflected in their uneven access to the media. The only television and radio station of the country, the Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation (SBC), is controlled by the government, and multiple sources confirm that the opposition has only very limited access to it (Baker 2008: 287; Yoon 2011: 101; Commonwealth Expert Team 2011: 17). In addition to the SBC, the government's newspaper (*the Seychelles Nation*) also reports primarily in favor of the government. This tendency was denied by respondent who are affiliated to the Parti Lepep, but was confirmed by the other respondents:

> "The state media, the Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation, is basically run by the ruling party. (...) Local news is dominated by the President, so it's very much a publicity tool for the ruling party. But in any democracy the state-sponsored media should be covering news and giving all opinions the possibility of being heard."

In addition to the government media, the main political parties of Seychelles publish their own newspapers; *The People* for the Parti Lepep, *Regar* for the SNP, and *Le Nouveau Seychelles Weekly* for the SDP and later NDP. Opposition newspapers (and especially *Regar*) have repeatedly been sued for libel, and have been intimidated in various ways as a result of which *Regar* eventually ceased to be printed (Baker 2008: 287; Freedom House 2012). Due to these pressures and in order to protect themselves, Seychellois journalists often maintain some degree of self-censorship, as one journalist explained to me:

> "Maybe the journalists need to stop self-censoring themselves, which happens a lot here. (...) There are things you just don't put in; you don't know who will be offended and what the consequences may be, so you just decide to leave it out."

In considering the shortcomings of media freedom in Seychelles, the country acquires a score of 56 (or 'partly free') in the Freedom of the Press-index (Freedom House 2012). [42]

In addition to the problems that were mentioned before, the freedom of the press in Seychelles is further undermined by the regulation that radio stations need a government license in order to be able to broadcast (Commonwealth Expert Team 2011: 17). The cost of such a license is US $80.000, which is exorbitantly high in light of the small revenues that an inexorably small audience could ever bring about (Yoon 2011: 101-102).[43] As a result, no other radio station than the SBC have so far acquired television or radio broadcasting

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[42] Based on a scale ranging from 1 (completely free) to 100 (completely not free).
[43] A Seychelles journal typically sells close to a thousand copies a day.

rights in the archipelago, which limits the availability of alternative sources of information. In 2010 a Seychelles Media Commission was established with the aim to preserve media freedom and a high quality of journalism in the country. All eight members of this commission are however appointed by the President[44], which has led to a great degree of skepticism about its neutrality among the opposition (Commonwealth Expert Team 2011: 17). In similar fashion as in the other microstates, the strength and quality of Seychellois newspapers is undermined by the country's smallness, in the sense that most journalists are not professionals (but mostly politicians instead), and therefore profess journalism only as a hobby or secondary line of work.

The position of the judiciary in the Seychellois system is also a source of concern. Whereas interviews revealed that the Sammarinese and Kittitian-Nevisian judiciaries are broadly believed to be impartial and neutral, this is not the case for the Seychellois judiciary. More than half of my respondents asserted that government interference in the judiciary does occur, and this idea is confirmed by secondary sources (Baker 2008: 282-283; Freedom House 2012). According to Baker, "certainly the pattern of judgments that have flowed from the judges suggests that they do what is expected of them" (ibid.). As one of the legal officials I interviewed explains;

> "Sometimes you will see a letter from a politician to the judiciary, saying something like how disappointed they are about how this case turned out, or politicians actually looking into the affairs of that case. And it happens a lot that the court's case file is then transferred to the executive branch of government for the executive to have a look at the proceedings, but it's really not in their place to look at these things."

Like in the other two microstates, due to size and ensuing interconnectedness, Seychelles primarily hires judges from other countries, primarily in Africa. Although this has the potential to augment (the perception of) their impartiality, various publications and interviewees argue that the principal motivation of this feature is that the government has a greater degree of control on the actions of foreign judges. This is primarily a consequence of the rule that the tenure of foreign judges subject to contract renewal by the government, whereas a Seychellois judge is appointed for life (Baker 2008: 282). According to a politician affiliated with the opposition;

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[44] The Commission consists of one chairperson and seven members, of which two are appointed directly by the President, and one each on the advice of the National Assembly, the Department for Information, the Seychelles Media Association, the Liaison Unit for Non-Governmental Organizations, and the Judiciary.

> "If according to the Constitution you appoint a Seychellois as Chief Justice, you appoint him for life, and he cannot be removed. And the danger with appointing this guy for life is that he might not toe the presidential line; he might assume his independence. And if you look at it carefully, since the reintroduction of multiparty democracy we have not had a Seychellois. It's just a shenanigan, the way things are being run here."

On the basis of this evidence, it can be confirmed that the judiciary of Seychelles not always acts free from government interference. In addition to the media and the judiciary, multiple sources confirm that local governments are dominated by the ruling party, which is a consequence of the fact that local assemblies are appointed by the government (Commonwealth Secretariat 2010: 178). According to one of the opposition supporters:

> "When you look at the local government, basically it is an organization which even though it is part of the civil service, is there to protect the ruling party. District administrators are chosen on their party affiliation, and they go out campaigning with the ruling party-candidate."

According to respondents from the judicial, journalistic, and public sectors, the autonomy and professionalism of the media, bureaucracy, and the judiciary of Seychelles is especially undermined by the lack of finances that these institutions have at their disposal. Due to the size of the country and the relatively small number of people that buy newspapers, the sales revenues of journals are inherently limited. Since *the Nation* however receives state funding, this ruling party-dominated newspaper has an unequal advantage in comparison with other newspapers. With regard to institutions like the judiciary, the ombudsman, and the police, of which the performance is dependent on state funding, both respondents and secondary sources assert that the professionalism of these institutions is severely weakened by the shortage of finances that they receive from the government (Baker 2008: 288). As one of the interviewees from the judicial sector points out:

> "I think the judiciary and police in this country have been neglected for years. I think that if the government would put more resources into the police and the judiciary, this would help them to function much more professionally."

The present assessment of the balance of power between institutions reveals that the Seychellois government, but especially the Parti Lepep and the President, assume an all-powerful position in the country's political system. This not only comes at the expense of the influence of the political opposition, but also of the autonomous and neutral functioning of parliament, the media, and the judiciary. The findings of my field research demonstrate that the presence of Dahl's requirement of 'alternative sources of information' can be severely

questioned, and the same goes for the existence of an impartial judiciary. When it comes to the question in how far this balance of power between institutions is a consequence of the size of Seychelles's population, it appears that the effects of smallness of the country (as they were also observed in the other microstates) in some ways facilitate the enduring control of the Parti Lepep. In light of the limited resources that are available to these institutions as a consequence of smallness, they are arguably more dependent on state financing than their counterparts in larger states, which gives the Parti Lepep additional instruments to influence their actions and diminish their power.

5.3. Inclusiveness: The Consequences of Closeness and Direct Contact
Although the population size of Seychelles is with 90.000 inhabitants somewhat larger than that of San Marino (30.000) and St. Kitts and Nevis (50.000), comparable phenomena characterize the contacts and relations between citizens and politicians. Because both the physical and psychological distance between voters and their representatives is small, direct and reciprocal communication between citizens and politicians is common and occurs constantly. Many Seychellois people have politicians in their families, as their friends and acquaintances, or as neighbors. Furthermore, because political jobs are mostly part-time, many politicians have secondary jobs in for example the private sector, as a result of which people may also know them as colleagues. This means that Seychellois politicians are continuously exposed to questions, demands, and pressure from citizens, as one minister explains:

> "Citizens stop me in the street, and they have my mobile number. As soon as one person has my mobile number, everyone has it. So I get calls in the weekend and in the evenings, I get calls all the time. I go to the beach and have somebody who is coming to talk to me. It's difficult because sometimes you can feel that you are always working."

Although several politicians indeed expressed reservations with regard to the desirability of these face-to-face contacts, with two exceptions all respondents emphasized the advantages it entails with regard to the quality of representation and Seychellois democracy as a whole, as one minister argues:

> "It [smallness, WV] puts government very close to the people. The public has very good access to the highest ranking officials in the government, and here I am talking about the President, Vice-President, and the ministers. We are in contact with our people and are connected very closely with our people."

In similar fashion, smallness offers increased opportunities with regard to the extent and quality of responsiveness, as the following politician explains;

> "I think the positive aspect of it [smallness, WV] is that you gain access. (…) You are very much aware of what is having a positive or a negative impact on the population in terms of the policies that you are implementing in your respective ministry."

As this quote demonstrates, direct contact and face-to-face relations between citizens and politicians definitely generate enhanced opportunities for politicians to estimate and be aware of the political demands of their constituents. Although no data are available to support it, all respondents furthermore argue that as an effect of multiple-role relations and the close contacts between voters and their representatives, Seychellois people are generally very much politically involved.

That being said, in light of the absence of programmatic contestation and the personalistic orientation of Seychellois politics it should come as no surprise that the political demands and preferences of citizens are generally personal and particularistic rather than policy-related. In that sense, the closeness between citizens and politicians as it evolves from the size of Seychelles can be asserted to stimulate the development of particularistic relationships. About three quarters of respondents underlined the particularistic nature of citizen-politician relations, and as one senior public official pointed out;

> "I think the average person sees politicians really as a means by which they can get something of a personal benefit, although you might hear debates about human rights and economy, and so and so. I think that the average person is more concerned with what immediate benefits they can derive, rather than whether someone they don't know is being treated well in prison."

When it comes to the issue of particularism in Seychelles, the situation in this microstate bears a number of resemblances to the state of affairs in San Marino and St. Kitts and Nevis. The smallness of the country increases the proximity between politicians and their constituents, but this primarily appears to entice the Seychellois electorate to pressure their politicians and to demand personal favors from them:

> "Social relations might affect your work; friends and family members may put pressure on you. Sometimes, politicians or other officials do not have the capacity to resist to these pressures. People sometimes want to dictate: "if you do not give me this favor I will go to the President!" They just try, even though they know it's a hopeless mission."

Different than in the other two microstates, clientelism in Seychelles seems to occur primarily between supporters and politicians of the Parti Lepep, because the opposition lacks the resources by means of which to attract potential supporters (Yoon 2011: 101). It is broadly believed throughout Seychelles that the ruling party uses state resources to finance clientelism, which obviously gives

it major advantages at the polls.[45] Since only very few people whom I talked with believed in the possibility of an election victory of the opposition, clientelistic demands of citizens are evidently primarily directed towards the ruling party, and are also addressed to this party by people who actually support the opposition.[46]

In addition to clientelism, government patronage in Seychelles appears to be ubiquitous. According to many sources, the ruling party distributes civil service-jobs as a means to reward supporters, and to attract new ones (Baker 2008: 289; Yoon 2011: 101). Since the government employs more than twenty percent of the Seychellois workforce, and indirectly controls close to seventy percent of the economy, this also means that many citizens are economically and financially dependent on government (Van Nieuwkerk and Bell 2007: 146). As Baker points out (2008: 289), potential new employees in the civil service are screened on their political allegiance, and the existence of this process is confirmed by respondents from the opposition:

> "If a young person finishing his studies applies for a job in government, he goes for the interview and he might be successful. But that does not mean he gets the job. Having been found to be suitable for the post, his name is then sent to the State House, where they have a process of security clearance. And security clearance is not based on your academic ability or your ability to perform the job, but it is based on whether your parents supported the party, and whether you take part in party activities."

Since the civil service appears to be primarily recruited on the basis of allegiance to the ruling party, respondents who are not related to the ruling party expressed concerns about the partiality and independence of the Seychellois bureaucracy. In addition, since people are employed on the basis of party loyalty rather than expertise or capability, patronage can also be supposed to lead to a less competent and less effective administration. Finally, like in the other microstates patronage in Seychelles has led to an oversized public sector, which according to even government ministers whom I interviewed functions as a drain on state resources.

Another aspect of citizen-politician relations in Seychelles that follows from my interviews is that because of the proximity, citizens tend to ignore of circumvent official institutional channels, and directly contact the politicians

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[45] As a matter of fact, the absence of restrictions on campaign spending led the main opposition party to boycott the 2011-parliamentary elections.
[46] I gathered this information by talking to Seychellois students and other citizens, who privately told me that they supported the opposition, but actually invited me to come to a Parti Lepep-rally. These people told me that their primary goal of attending this rally was to demonstrate their presence to the MP from their district, in order to raise the chances of acquiring some money to renovate their houses.

they know, or directly write a letter to the President. According to the Seychellois ombudsman;

> "There is direct access to the President and the VP. People do not always consult the ombudsman when they should, but sometimes directly call or write to the President to complain about their situation. They do not always use the proper channels as established in the constitution".

Although face-to-face relations between voters and their representatives can be applauded from the perspective of the involvement of citizens in politics, according to respondents working for public institutions the propensity of voters to contact the President instead of these institutions undermines their functioning.

Patronage and clientelism are recurrent features in many African states, and in this light Seychelles is no exception from the rest of the continent (cf. Kopecký 2011). Nevertheless, it can be assumed that the size of this microstate contributes to the development of such relationships. First, it has been described before how the absence of political cleavages leads to a personalized and polarized political environment, in which interpersonal relationships determine the conduct of politics. The direct access of citizens to their representatives enables voters to directly demand personal benefits from politicians. As a consequence of the smallness of the electorate and the increased weight and potential decisiveness of a single vote, the incentives of politicians to construct particularistic relationships are also enhanced. Whereas a large part of the academic literature emphasizes the positive effects of close contacts between citizens and politicians, the Seychellois political dynamics reveal that these contacts can also obstruct the functioning of democracy.

5.4. Inclusiveness: Participation of Citizens and Elections
When it comes to the participation of citizens in Seychellois politics, all thirteen of my respondents confirm that levels of political interest, awareness, and efficacy in the microstate are very high, and many of them ascribe this to the country's size. Because of the presence and directly visible influence of politics in most of the citizens' daily lives, there is a very clear perception among citizens that politics matters, and although no data is available to support it, I gained the impression that levels of detachment or apathy with politics in Seychelles are lower than in larger states. It should come as no surprise that high levels of awareness, interest, and efficacy also result in high levels of political participation, and all the respondents confirmed this notion. One of them mentioned that:

"People are more eager to participate than in larger states, primarily because politics affects people individually and directly. People are also generally more interested in politics than for example in the UK, also because every vote may count, so people are very concerned about election outcomes."

As the previous section has revealed, the fact that every vote may count can be imagined to stimulate clientelism and patronage, but it may also lead to higher participation levels through more conventional and institutionalized channels of participation. Like in San Marino and St. Kitts and Nevis, no data exist on membership of Seychellois political parties, attendance rates at demonstrations or rallies, and other indicators of participation, which means that election turnout data are the only available evidence. Nevertheless, my own impression and that of most of the people I interviewed is that participation rates at rallies and political meetings is high, although this appears to originate more from particularistic motivations than from an interest in substantial political issues.

Table 7.4: Voter Turnout in Seychellois Parliamentary and Presidential Elections[47]

Parliamentary Elections		Presidential Elections	
Election Year	**Voter Turnout**	**Election Year**	**Voter Turnout**
1967	72-77%	-	-
1970	82%	-	-
1974	84%	-	-
1979	*n.a.*	-	-
1983	*59.3%*	*1979*	*96.4%*
1987	*66.0%*	*1984*	*95.9%*
1992	85.3%	*1989*	*91.5%*
1993	86.5%	1993	86.5%
1998	86.7%	1998	86.7%
2002	84.5%	2001	93.3%
2007	85.9%	2006	88.7%
2011	74.3%	2011	85.3%
Average	**83.9%**		**88.1%**

In table 7.4, voter turnout levels at parliamentary and presidential elections have been presented, and an average figure has been calculated and presented in the bottom row. The table reveals that, with the exception of parliamentary elections in the one-party era, turnout in Seychelles generally reaches above eighty percent, which is especially high in comparison to African standards (Blais and Dobrzynska 1998: 243, 247, 250). Voter turnout in the 2011

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[47] The turnout figure for 1967 is disputed (Campling et al. 2011: 16). Figures for elections that were held under the one-party regime have been presented in italics. Averages have been calculated on the basis of post-1990 elections.

parliamentary election was markedly lower than in previous elections, and this is most likely a result of the SNP's boycott of the election. On average, it can also be seen that turnout at presidential elections has been higher than at parliamentary elections (reaching almost ninety percent), and that turnout levels have been rather stable throughout the 1990s and 2000s. In terms of political participation, the size of Seychelles therefore definitely appears to contribute to high voter turnout rates. It is important to mention here that in contrast to San Marino and St. Kitts and Nevis, expatriate Seychellois have no voting rights in the country (Hatchard 1993: 603).[48]

Although the election results presented in tables 7.1 and 7.2 suggest that the gap between the Parti Lepep and the SNP was declining, in the 2011-presidential elections this difference increased somewhat again. According to people from the opposition whom I interviewed, elections in Seychelles are not free and fair, and in various subtle ways the ruling party increases its chances at the polls. Whereas Commonwealth-election observers highlight a number of relatively minor irregularities, one opposition spokesperson argued that these observers miss the most blatant forms of electoral fraud because they arrive too late to be able to monitor the entire campaign;

> "It's what happens before the elections, and this is where too often election observers just miss their target because they come during the election campaign, when in fact they should have been here before the campaign to see what government is actually doing. How government is abusing the media, the state-funded media, how government is just basically abusing its power."

In fact, the election observers do highlight a number of circumstances that could potentially damage the freedom and fairness of the elections, such as the fact that "each party was distributing materials and money to voters as inducements", "a climate of fear existed within society, particularly among civil servants", and "there were allegations by political parties of unfair treatment in respect of coverage of their events and prejudicial portrayal of their views" (Commonwealth Expert Team 2006: 9-10). In the 2011-report, the role of especially the electoral commission, the state-owned media, and the lack of rules with regard to campaign financing are emphasized as problematic (Commonwealth Expert Team 2011: 30-31). The absence of campaign spending

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[48] This issue was one of the key points of contention at the drafting of the new constitution in 1992. Since many SDP-supporters had left the country after the coup d'état (primarily to London), the opposition was strongly in favor of granting suffrage rights to expatriate citizens. Because approximately 13.000 Seychellois live outside their country, the potential electoral influence of this group is highly significant. This is also the main reason that the SPPF opposed the proposition, and as a consequence of the fact that this party won the 1992 and 1993 elections, the Seychellois Diaspora at present still has no voting rights (Hatchard 1993: 603-604).

laws made the SNP decide not to contest the 2011 parliamentary election, and this issue was named as one of the primary faults in the system by members of the opposition:

> "The ruling party has the entire machination its hands; they are using the government institutions to win elections. You see, there is no control on the amount of money that any political party can use in a campaign. And this in itself puts the smaller parties with less funds or no funds at a great disadvantage."

According to Van Nieuwkerk and Bell, the party machinery of the Parti Lepep on the district level and its control and influence on district authorities represents a major additional advantage to this party (2007: 145).

Table 7.5: Vote Differences on the District Level in the 2011-Presidential Election

	Michel	Ram-kalawan	Boullé	Volcere	Diff. Michel-Ramkalawan
Anse aux Pins	**1.489**	1.096	35	65	393 (14.6%)
Anse Boileau	**1.552**	1.077	46	48	475 (17.4%)
Anse Étoile	**1.695**	1.506	57	53	189 (5.7%)
Anse Royale	**1.549**	1.030	47	29	519 (19.5%)
Au Cap	**1.386**	1.302	54	30	84 (3.0%)
Baie Lazare	**1.229**	893	47	32	336 (15.3%)
Baie Ste. Anne	**1.864**	859	27	14	1005 (36.4%)
Beau Vallon	1.236	**1.267**	71	55	31 (1.2%)
Bel Air	**1.105**	864	36	25	241 (11.9%)
Bel Ombre	**1.313**	1.149	59	40	164 (6.4%)
Cascade	**1.461**	785	34	45	676 (29.1%)
English River	**1.262**	912	49	30	350 (15.5%)
Glacis	**1.315**	1.169	50	41	146 (5.7%)
Grande Anse Mahé	**1.115**	721	43	34	394 (20.6%)
Grande Anse Praslin	**1.216**	883	17	25	333 (15.6%)
Inner Islands	**1.116**	509	12	10	607 (36.9%)
Les Mamelles	**1.018**	897	34	30	121 (6.1%)
Mont Buxton	**1.287**	1.124	27	30	163 (6.6%)
Mont Fleuri	**1.142**	995	40	46	147 (6.6%)
Plaisance	**1.416**	1.133	50	44	283 (10.7%)
Pointe Larue	**1.233**	672	22	16	561 (28.9%)
Port Glaud	**882**	614	30	27	268 (17.3%)
Roche Caiman	**1.019**	527	20	21	492 (31.0%)
Saint Louis	965	**1.146**	28	19	181 (8.4%)
Takamaka	**1.101**	748	21	24	353 (18.6%)
Total	**31.966**	23.878	956	833	8.088 (14.0%)

    In table 7.5, the results of the 2011-Presidential election on the district level have been presented. In the last column, the difference between the top-two candidates (Michel and Ramkalawan) in terms of absolute votes and the

proportional difference as part of the total number of votes has been outlined. The table demonstrates that Ramkalawan only won in two districts (Beau Vallon and Saint Louis), which are located in the northeast of Mahé. By contrast, in especially the districts that are not located on Mahé (Baie Ste. Anne, Grande Anse Praslin, and Inner Islands) Michel wins by wide margins, as well as in districts like Cascade, Pointe Larue, and Roche Caiman. The table also shows that the electoral districts of Seychelles are of a relatively similar size, and that between 1.500 and 3.000 people voted in each district. As described before, this smallness allows citizens to directly access their representatives, and also allows representatives to have information on the preferences and demands of their constituents.

Although no data on voter attitudes are available, as a result of the relative insignificance of substantial political issues, the personalistic dynamics of Seychellois politics, and the prevalence of particularistic linkages between citizens and politicians, voting behavior in Seychelles appears to be primarily based on family traditions and particularistic motivations. Political affiliation in Seychelles is in large part determined along the lines of big families, and as one politician explains:

> "We [politicians, WV] know everybody, and for example in my constituency probably five or six groups compose the constituency, and they are all families. There are five big families which comprise the whole composition of the constituency."

When asked about explanations for voting behavior, one respondent from the legal sector illustratively answered as follows:

> "I think it all depends on (...) what they [voters, WV] can gain personally from whoever might be in power. I think when going to the voting stands in a few months, that will be the main thing that voters will be thinking of; "what can we gain personally from whoever gets in power?" (...) The other thing would be that one might have personal grievances against the people inside the parties; "it could be Johnson who was behind the move not to get a planning permission to get my house, so I don't like Johnson. Johnson is with that political party, so I am voting against that party."

Perhaps most tellingly, none of my respondents named programmatic or substantive political issues as a basis for explaining voting behavior.

Like in St. Kitts and Nevis, Seychellois election campaigns occur in the sphere of a national festival, albeit that the ruling party has more resources to finance its rallies than the opposition. Many of my respondents and ordinary Seychellois citizens argued that during campaign rallies and in advance to the

elections, gifts and services are commonly distributed to attract voters. According to one journalist:

> "It's a common thing to see before elections that lots of gifts start coming out, people get lots of things. Right now there is a housing scheme that opens or starts operations just before elections. This housing thing comes up every five years, just before elections. And it's the biggest tactic that the government can use to get people on their side."

The allocation of these gifts obfuscates the motivations behind political participation in Seychelles, because it is unclear whether high levels of participation can be explained by reasons related to size, or whether they are a consequence of the individual benefits that people can obtain by participating.

The present discussion reveals that in terms of inclusiveness, the smallness of Seychelles offers increased chances for citizens to participate in their political system, and that citizens also make use of these opportunities. Turnout at elections in Seychelles is high, and the same appears to be true for other manifestations of participation. However, non-conventional or non-institutionalized forms of participation like clientelism and patronage not only appear to be widespread, but in many ways also seem to fuel high levels of conventional participation. High levels of voter turnout, for example, are likely to be at least partially generated by the individual returns that citizens acquire in exchange for their vote. The findings described here are in line with much of the literature on politics and democracy in small states, in which the prevalence of particularistic relationships in small settings is emphasized as well (Parsons 1951: 508; Benedict 1967b: 7-8; Lowenthal 1987: 39; Srebrnik 2004: 334).

6. Discussion and Conclusion

Different from the two microstates that were discussed in previous chapters, the political system of Seychelles does not appear to fulfill all of Dahl's conditions of polyarchy. In several ways, the stipulations of alternative sources of information and free and fair elections are not fully adhered to, and this makes it hard to disagree with Freedom House's categorization of the microstate as only 'partly free'. This however makes Seychelles a deviant case in relation to the other three microstates that are analyzed in this study, and also makes it somewhat complicated to assess the influence of size on Seychellois democracy. Many of the features that have been described in this chapter are comparable to the observations that were made in the chapters on San Marino and St. Kitts and Nevis, but are also in line with characteristics of larger illiberal, semi-, or pseudo-democracies (O'Donnell 1996; Zakaria 1997; Levitsky and Way 2002).

Table 7.6: Seychelles' Scoring on the Indicators of Contestation and Inclusiveness

Dimension	Section	Indicator	Classification of Seychelles
Contestation	Presence of Political Alternatives and a Political Opposition	Free and Fair Elections	Disputed; governing party has significant advantage
		Party System	Two-party system (ENP < 2); opposition virtually absent after 2011-elections
		(Frequency of) Alternation in Office	Never by peaceful means
		Interest Articulation by Parties	Does occur to some extent in manifestos, but political dynamics are person-oriented
		Freedom to Support the Opposition	Has major negative consequences; victimization and climate of fear hinders supporters of the opposition.
	Horizontal Balance of Power between Institutions	Freedom of the Press	Press partially free (FotP-score 56), weak and unprofessional
		Status of the Legislature	Largely ineffective, not autonomous from government
		Status of the Judiciary	Not impartial, often pressured by government
		Status of the Bureaucracy	Oversized and influenced by government due to patronage
Inclusiveness	Relations between Citizens and Politicians	Contact with and Access to Representatives	Continuous contact and access
		Nature of Contacts between Citizens and Politicians	Particularistic and personalistic
		Political Awareness and feelings of Efficacy of Citizens	Appears to be high
	Political Participa-tion of Citizens	Universal Suffrage	Present
		Turnout at Elections and other Plebiscites	(Very) high at elections
		Party Membership	No data available
		Participation in Political Activities	No data, but appears to be especially high in Parti Lepep-activities

In table 7.6, the main findings of this chapter are summarized on the basis of Seychelles' scoring on the indicators of contestation and inclusiveness. Like in San Marino and St. Kitts and Nevis, Seychellois politics appears marked by the prevalence of personalism, polarization, and particularism. Although the two main Seychellois parties used to advocate entirely divergent ideological and programmatic standpoints, these differences now have all but disappeared, and the parties can primarily be distinguished on the basis of the different persons that lead them. Like in the Eastern Caribbean, the personalistic nature of politics leads to political polarization between the two Seychellois parties. Both because of the enduring dominance of the Parti Lepep and due to polarization and smallness, institutions that are supposed to function as a check on the power of the executive are either weak or to a significant extent controlled or neutered by the government. With regard to inclusiveness, higher figures of political participation can be observed in Seychelles, but participation appears to be to an extensive degree fueled by particularistic incentives.

At present, out of twenty-one microstates with less than 250.000 inhabitants, Seychelles is one of only two countries that are not classified as 'free' by Freedom House (the other one is the Kingdom of Tonga). As long as the Parti Lepep is not voted out of office this situation is unlikely to change, but perhaps it is telling that at least five respondents did not believe that the ruling party would ever accept such a peaceful transition of power. Whereas President Michel in his 2011-reelection campaign promised to work on '*En Nouvo Sesel*' (a new Seychelles), thus far the changes and reforms that his party has implemented have mostly been cosmetic rather than substantial. Although the analysis has revealed that Seychellois political dynamics are as a result of size in many respects comparable to those of the other two microstates, the country's authoritarian past and its enduring political legacy clearly set Seychelles apart from its European and Caribbean counterparts.