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United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

Case No.: 200701753

MAR 25 2010

I refer to your letter dated March 11, 2007 regarding the release of certain Department of State material under the Freedom of Information Act (Title 5 USC Section 552).

We searched for and reviewed the self study guides that you requested and have determined that all except one of them may be released. They are on the enclosed disc. One of the guides is being released with excisions.

An enclosure provides information on Freedom of Information Act exemptions and other grounds for withholding material. Where we have made excisions, the applicable exemptions are marked on each document. With respect to material withheld by the Department of State, you have the right to appeal our determination within 60 days. A copy of the appeals procedures is enclosed.

We have now completed the processing of your case. If you have any questions, you may write to the Office of Information Programs and Services, SA-2, Department of State, Washington, DC 20522-8100, or telephone us at (202) 261-8484. Please be sure to refer to the case number shown above in all correspondence about this case.

We hope that the Department has been of service to you in this matter.

Sincerely,

for Margaret P. Grafeld, Director
Office of Information Programs and Services

Enclosures:
As stated.

Subpart F – Appeal Procedures

§171.52 Appeal of denial of access to, declassification of, amendment of, accounting of disclosures of, or challenge to classification of records.

(a) *Right of administrative appeal.* Except for records that have been reviewed and withheld within the past two years or are the subject of litigation, any requester whose request for access to records, declassification of records, amendment of records, accounting of disclosure of records, or any authorized holder of classified information whose classification challenge has been denied, has a right to appeal the denial to the Department's Appeals Review Panel. This appeal right includes the right to appeal the determination by the Department that no records responsive to an access request exist in Department files. Privacy Act appeals may be made only by the individual to whom the records pertain.

(b) *Form of appeal.* There is no required form for an appeal. However, it is essential that the appeal contain a clear statement of the decision or determination by the Department being appealed. When possible, the appeal should include argumentation and documentation to support the appeal and to contest the bases for denial cited by the Department. The appeal should be sent to: Chairman, Appeals Review Panel, c/o Appeals Officer, A/GIS/IPS/PP/LC, U.S. Department of State, SA-2, Room 8100, Washington, DC 20522-8100.

(c) *Time limits.* The appeal should be received within 60 days of the date of receipt by the requester of the Department's denial. The time limit for response to an appeal begins to run on the day that the appeal is received. The time limit (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal public holidays) for agency decision on an administrative appeal is 20 days under the FOIA (which may be extended for up to an additional 10 days in unusual circumstances) and 30 days under the Privacy Act (which the Panel may extend an additional 30 days for good cause shown). The Panel shall decide mandatory declassification review appeals as promptly as possible.

(d) *Notification to appellant.* The Chairman of the Appeals Review Panel shall notify the appellant in writing of the Panel's decision on the appeal. When the decision is to uphold the denial, the Chairman shall include in his notification the reasons therefore. The appellant shall be advised that the decision of the Panel represents the final decision of the Department and of the right to seek judicial review of the Panel's decision, when applicable. In mandatory declassification review appeals, the Panel shall advise the requester of the right to appeal the decision to the Interagency Security Classification Appeals Panel under §3.5(d) of E.O. 12958.

The Freedom of Information Act (5 USC 552)

FOIA Exemptions

(b)(1) Withholding specifically authorized under an Executive Order in the interest of national defense or foreign policy, and properly classified. E.O. 12958, as amended, includes the following classification categories:

- 1.4(a) Military plans, systems, or operations
- 1.4(b) Foreign government information
- 1.4(c) Intelligence activities, sources or methods, or cryptology
- 1.4(d) Foreign relations or foreign activities of the US, including confidential sources
- 1.4(e) Scientific, technological, or economic matters relating to national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
- 1.4(f) U.S. Government programs for safeguarding nuclear materials or facilities
- 1.4(g) Vulnerabilities or capabilities of systems, installations, infrastructures, projects, plans, or protection services relating to US national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
- 1.4(h) Information on weapons of mass destruction

(b)(2) Related solely to the internal personnel rules and practices of an agency

(b)(3) Specifically exempted from disclosure by statute (other than 5 USC 552), for example:

ARMEX	Arms Export Control Act, 22 USC 2778(e)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency Act of 1949, 50 USC 403(g)
EXPORT	Export Administration Act of 1979, 50 App. USC 2411(c)(1)
FSA	Foreign Service Act of 1980, 22 USC 4003 & 4004
INA	Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 USC 1202(f)
IRAN	Iran Claims Settlement Act, Sec 505, 50 USC 1701, note

(b)(4) Privileged/confidential trade secrets, commercial or financial information from a person

(b)(5) Interagency or intra-agency communications forming part of the deliberative process, attorney-client privilege, or attorney work product

(b)(6) Information that would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy

(b)(7) Information compiled for law enforcement purposes that would:
- (A) interfere with enforcement proceedings
- (B) deprive a person of a fair trial
- (C) constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy
- (D) disclose confidential sources
- (E) disclose investigation techniques
- (F) endanger life or physical safety of an individual

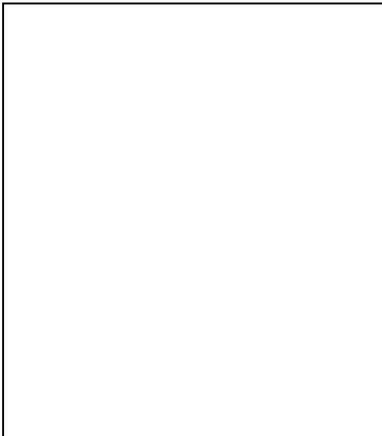
(b)(8) Prepared by or for a government agency regulating or supervising financial institutions

(b)(9) Geological and geophysical information and data, including maps, concerning wells

Other Grounds for Withholding

NR Material not responsive to a FOIA request, excised with the agreement of the requester

SURINAME
SELF STUDY GUIDE



GEORGE P. SHULTZ NATIONAL FOREIGN AFFAIRS
TRAINING CENTER
School of Professional and Area Studies
Foreign Service Institute
U.S. Department of State

SELF-STUDY GUIDE TO SURINAME

The **Self-Study Guide:** Suriname is intended to provide U.S. Government personnel in the foreign affairs community with an overview of important issues related to Surinamian history, geography, politics, economics, culture, religion, media, and international relations. The Guide should serve an introductory self-study resource.

The topic is far too complex to be covered in depth using only the text in this Guide. The reader is encouraged to explore the questions and issues introduced, using the Internet and bibliographic sources provided in the text and in the resource sections. Most of the referenced material can be found on the Internet or in the Foreign Service Institute or Main State Libraries.

The first edition of this Guide was prepared by. Gary Brana-Shute, Ph.D., adjunct professor at the Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies of the National Defense University at both the Special Operations School at Hurlburt Field, Florida and Defense Institute Security Assistance Management, Wright-Patterson Field, Ohio.

The views expressed in this Guide are those of the author and attributable sources and do not necessary reflect official policy or positions of the Department of State or the National Foreign Affairs Training Center (NFATC). Staff members of the NFATC made final but minor edits to the draft study submitted by Dr. Brana-Shute.

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First Edition
September 2002

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FOREWORD

This self-study guide is designed as an essential resource for personnel who cannot take Area Studies training at The Foreign Service Institute in preparation for their country assignments as well as for officers at post who may seek additional current material. Although the text parallels the Advanced Area Studies course available at The Foreign Service Institute designed for personnel assigned to the Republic of Suriname, it cannot be the full equivalent of that course. Efforts will be made, however, to provide the officer with access to knowledge not contained here. Supplementary reading is suggested in the bibliography and useful internet websites are pointed out at appropriate places in the text.

The Guide hopes to provide basic background material and serve as a foundation for attaining cultural literacy on the multi-cultural Republic of Suriname. The subjects discussed include geography, history, culture and anthropology, languages and linguistics, religion, social issues, economics, politics and background on foreign affairs and policy.

The language of scholarship and journalism on Suriname is Dutch, a legacy of Suriname's more than 450 year colonial association with the Netherlands. English language resources are few, checkered in quality and tend to focus on what is perceived of as "exotica" (Suriname Maroons, for example), "hot" issues (such as the 1980's dictatorship and civil war) or contemporary matters with "appeal" in the United States (rainforest preservation). Thus this Guide will attempt to place the complexities in a context of understanding that makes sense in Suriname terms and also allows the officer to "make sense" of the realities which they are entering. The preparation of this text relied on consulting the voluminous Dutch language literature. Suggestions for further reading will emphasize what material there is in English and also cite several Dutch/Suriname sources which were draw upon heavily.

Finally, each chapter and, in some cases, sections of chapters will end with a series of questions designed to engage readers in a thought provoking interaction and engagement with the text. A learning device and exercise, thus. The questions will be followed by suggested readings keyed specifically to the questions at hand.

Good luck.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The chapters that follow in this self-study guide on the Republic of Suriname treat the experience of that country comprehensively. That is, the material aims to trace the emergence of Suriname as a northern European colony, through its colonial period of slavery and indentured labor and through the country's difficult years of independence, conflict and strife.

The chapters that follow are both descriptive and analytical, and cover the events and major themes of Suriname's history and political experience. This guide is written not

only with a Suriname-oriented audience in mind but also a broader hemispheric readership so as to avoid inadvertent isolation and provincialism. Thus I have introduced and concluded each chapter with a thematic essay that locates the unique Suriname experience in the larger context of an issue that has occurred in or afflicted many countries in the Inter-American system. For example, Chapter One profiles the emergence of modern Suriname and inevitably incorporates ethnicity and Suriname's unique multi-ethnicity into the text. However, I did not want to simply mention ethnicity and leave it at that, with no clear conclusions and broader understandings. Thus I concluded Chapter One with a statement on "pluralism, Development and democracy." Other chapters are structured in a similar fashion.

I hope thus that this self-teaching guide will serve to introduce officers to the Republic of Suriname, and add to the hemispheric discourse on maintaining and strengthening peace and democracy. The self-teaching capacity of the text will be reflected in the learning device of ending each chapter and, sometimes, chapter section with interactive and thought provoking questions and issues to "test" and challenge the reader's knowledge and command of Suriname issues. A mini-bibliography of additional sources keyed specifically to the questions and issues will be appended here as well as in the cumulative bibliography at the end of the Guide.

The material is structured in the following manner.

A Guide to Suriname introduces the reader to the basic demographics of the country and includes up-to-date (2000) social, political, cultural and economic data; a snapshot profile if you will.

A List of Acronyms follows. The official language of Suriname is Dutch, although many other languages are spoken there as well. We have left the acronym in the original abbreviation and then translated it into English and followed in parentheses by the original Dutch (or, in several cases, another language which will be identified).

Chapter One locates Suriname in time and space and describes the evolution of a plantation society which at once places Suriname in the colonial conquest of the Americas and also makes an effort to point out Suriname's differences. One trope that runs through this chapter, and indeed the entire guide, is that in addition to Suriname's multiethnicity, there are in effect, two Surinames. One is coastal Suriname with its diverse, cosmopolitan population living in a modern market-oriented city, Paramaribo, and smaller towns and villages along the coastal savanna. The other Suriname is rainforest occupying 80 percent of the country's land surface and home to groups of Maroons (rebel Africans who escaped the plantation system) and Amerindians. An effort is made to point out that these are "kin-ordered" societies and are fundamentally different in organization from the coastal market economy. Kin ordered societies also have special needs and if not attended to can result in misunderstandings at best, or conflict at worst. The chapter is closed with a discussion of the challenge of independence and the May 25, 2000 elections.

Chapter Two examines the period of political instability that characterized the 1980's and 1990's in Suriname, the civil war of that period, the Peace Treaty of 1992 and the fragile democratic aftermath.

The so-called internal conflict of the late 1980's and early 1990's brought to the forefront the deep gulf between the needs, perceptions and aspirations of the interior and those of the coastal area. At root, the Jungle Commando and his fighters had as their immediate goal the removal of the commander of the military and the military-backed government. These conditions presented a fertile environment for the emergence of Ronnie Brunswijk and his men. The immediate oppressive conditions preceding hostilities coupled with the intervention of external actors supporting the insurgency were but the immediate instigators of action in pulling together the long simmering grievances.

The FRONT government attempted peace efforts in the late 1980's. However, the civilian backed efforts were not supported by the military which itself recruited a shadow army of the Tucajana Amazones to fight a counter-insurgency along with the regular army. Nor was the Jungle Commando willing to strike peace and end hostilities while a still formidable military dominated the elected civilian government (of 1987). Under these conditions there was no chance or serious possibility to talk of strengthening democracy and stabilizing the country until a cease-fire was struck and a peace treaty (Agreement for National Reconciliation and Development) in 1992. The chapter ends with a discussion of "incorporating peace-building in development."

Chapter Three deals with efforts to strengthen democracy in the post-civil war period. The chapter opens with a brief discussion of some of the generally agreed upon tenets of democracy, and the options and experiences they can provide for strengthening democracy in Suriname. From there, the text moves to identifying the problems in Suriname's recent past which interrupted the democratic process and, also, the strengths in Suriname which helped in the transition and return to democracy.

The chapter summarizes four periods of military rule during the 1980's and points out that during the regime the military/military-dominated governments never were able to mobilize the support of or participation of a broad-based sector of civil-society, a basic requirement of democracy. The road to reform and rebuilding thus required strengthening existing institutions in society and creating new avenues of communication in order that Suriname could re-stabilize. Several case studies are offered, both for the interior (land rights and the recognition of traditional tribal authorities) and the coast (strengthening of the parliament—National Assembly—and the elections commission) to address weaknesses in governance.

Chapter Four summarizes, since after the Second World War, the sometimes divergent foreign policies of the Republic of Suriname (independent 1975), the Kingdom of the Netherlands (of which Suriname was a part from 1954 to 1975) and the United States.

Chapter Five makes a modest attempt, based on years of experience in Suriname, to summarize the valuable lessons learned and to offer them as options and ideas to keep in mind for the furtherance of democracy in Suriname.

The guide concludes with a modest bibliography outlining the most salient texts used in the preparation of this guide, and which could be usefully consulted by officers wishing to pursue further study. Websites and internet links are included here as well.

INTRODUCTION, ACRONYMS AND MAP

Suriname is a tropical Caribbean country located on the north east of South America and bordered by Guyana, Brazil, French Guiana and the Atlantic Ocean. With a land area of 164,000 square kilometers the country is roughly the size of the state of Georgia. Best

estimates place the population of Suriname at about 425,000 although this is uncertain due to a huge resident population of illegal Brazilian gold miners and the fact that a census has not been undertaken since 1980. The average yearly temperature is about 27 degrees centigrade and seasonal variations revolve around two rainy seasons (roughly January and June) and two dry seasons (roughly March and October). The 350 kilometer long coast is marsh, mud bank and tangled mangrove swamp and gives over to a savanna area ranging inland from 10 to 70 kilometers. The rest of the country, some 80 percent, is largely thick jungle rain forest cross-cut by major river systems draining the Amazon basin.

Called the "wild coast' by early Europeans, various settlements were attempted by British, French and Dutch colonists until a British settlement was established in 1650. The Dutch acquired Suriname in 1667 as a peace concession and created a full blown plantation economy system based on African and, in rare instances, Amerindian slavery. By the mid-18th century the population of the colony was about 50,000 with about 10,000 residing in Paramaribo, the only city. During this period the population was composed of Europeans, free persons of color and free blacks, urban and plantation slaves, free Maroon communities and Amerindians.

Slavery was abolished in 1863. Ten years later the Dutch turned to importing East Indian contract labor from (British) India, an importation that continued until 1916 resulting in the relocation of about 35,000 East Indians to Suriname. The quest for cheap labor also siphoned off Javanese from the island of Java in the Netherlands East Indies (Indonesia). Indonesian contract labor was imported from 1893 to 1939 and brought in some 33,000 persons. In the mid-19th century several hundred small scale Dutch farmers ("boers") migrated to Suriname and joined almost 4,500 Chinese contract laborers. In the early 1920's, and continuing sporadically to the present, Christian Lebanese entered Suriname voluntarily. At this writing (2001), estimates place the percentage of the population in the following ethnic mix:

East Indians:	38%
Creoles:	30%
Javanese:	15%
Maroons:	10%
Amerindians:	3%
Chinese:	2%
Other:	2% (Chinese and European)

These figures do not include Brazilian gold miners or Guyanese guest workers.

As will become clear in the following, Suriname's social organization, sense of national identity and political behavior, in terms of political party choice and preference, is defined largely by ethnicity.

After a centuries long experience as a colony of the Netherlands, Suriname became a member of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1954 ("Het Statuut"), along with the Netherlands Antilles. As a "co-equal" member Suriname become internally self-governing in that year and modern Suriname politics began. The country obtained its independence in 1975.

Questions and Issues:

1. Prepare to think about the "Dutch Caribbean" as different from and similar to the Spanish, French and British Caribbean.

2. Did the Dutch have a specific and peculiar colonial policy?

3. Do other Caribbean countries have the degree of "cultural pluralism that Suriname does?

4. Suriname obtained independence in 1975. Is the country's sovereignty older or younger than that of the English-speaking Caribbean?

Sources:

Brana-Shute, Gary, 1989 "Introduction," Resistance and Rebellion in Suriname. Gary Brana-Shute, ed. Williamsburg, VA.: College of William and Mary.

Dew, Edward, 1978 The Difficult Flowering of Suriname. The Hague: Martinus-Nijhof.

National Geographic Magazine, 2000 "Suriname," National Geographic Magazine, Vol. 197(6-May), pp. 38-55.

Organization of American States, 1987 Suriname Planatlas (Suriname Planning Atlas). OAS: Washington, DC

Website: *www.lanic.utexas.edu/la/sasuriname* search under topics which appear by category.

Finally, when you get a little Dutch under your belt consult the Suriname/Dutch journal OSO ("house"); a journal of "language, letters, culture and history," Volume 20, number

1 (May 2001) for a 25 year bibliography of "Surinamese studies" in Dutch and English. OSO is widely available throughout Suriname.

ACRONYMS

The following acronyms have been used throughout the text. Each acronym is defined first in English and then followed by the Dutch (or other language used in Suriname) rendering, which the acronym reflects in italics. If the acronym is of an English phrase no such rendering in Dutch will follow.

ABOP	General Liberation and Development Party (*Algemene Bevrijdings en Ontwikkelings Partij*)
AG	Action Group (*Actiegroep*)
ALCOA	Aluminum Company of America, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
APS	Suriname Amazon Party (*Amazone Partij Suriname*)
BVD	Basic Party for Renewal and Democracy (*Basis Partij voor Vernieuwing en Democratie*)
CBB	Central Bureau of Civil Registry (*Centraal Bureau voor Burgerzaken*)
CDI	Council for the Development of the Interior
CMPA	Central Main Polling Authority (*Centraal Hoofd Stembureau*)
D-21	Democrats of the 21st Century (*Democraten van de 21ste Eeuw*)
DA '91	Political coalition Democratic Alternative '91 (*Democratisch Alternatief '91*) joining Alternative Forum – AF - (*Alternatief Forum*) and Brotherhood and Unity in Politics – BEP – (*Broederschap en Eenheid in de Politiek*)
DOE	Democracy and Development in Unity (*Democratie en Ontwikkeling in Eenheid*)
DNP 2000	National Democratic Platform 2000 (*Democratisch Nationaal Platform 2000*)
FRONT	Political Party Coalition run in the 1987 elections. Composed of NPS – the National Party of Suriname (*Nationale Partij Suriname*), the VHP – the United Reform Party (*Verenigde Hervormde Partij; later changed to Progressive Reform Party – Vooruitstrevende Hervormde Partij*) and the KTPI – Party for National Unity and Solidarity of the Highest Level (*Kerukunan Tulodo Prenatan Inggil*).
HPP	Renewed Progressive Party (*Hernieuwde Progressieve Partij*)

IDOS	Institute for Extension Services, Research and Study Support (*Instituut voor Dienstverlening Onderzoek en Studiebegeleiding*)
ILO	International Labor Organization
JC	Jungle Commando
KTPI	Party for National Unity and Solidarity of the Highest Level (*Kerukunan Tulodo Prenatan Inggil*). See FRONT (1987), NEW FRONT (1991 and 1996) and MC (2000)
MC	Political coalition Millennium Combination (*Millenium Combinatie*) composed of NDP, KTPI, and DA – Democratic Alternative (*Democratisch Alternatief*)
NA (or DNA)	National Assembly (*Nationale Assemblée* or *De Nationale Assemblée*)
NDP	National Democratic Party (*Nationale Democratische Partij)*
NEW FRONT	Political party coalition run in the 1991, 1996 and 2000 elections. In 1991 and 1996 the coalition was composed of the NPS – the National Party of Suriname (*Nationale Partij Suriname*), the VHP – the Progressive Reform Party (*Vooruitstrevende Hervormde Partij*), the KTPI – Party for National Unity and Solidarity of the Highest Level (*Kerukunan Tulodo Prenatan Inggil*), and the SPA – Suriname Labor Party (*Surinaamse Partij van de Arbeid*). In 2000 the KTPI was replaced by Pertjajah Luhur (Highest Trust) who joined the coalition after the KTPI left to join the MC.
NHP	National Reform Party (*Nationale Hervormings Partij*)
NK	Naya Kadam (New Choice – *Nieuwe Keus*)
NPK I and NPK II	National Combination Party I (1973) and II (1977) (*Nationale Partij Kombinatie*)
NPLO	National Party for Leadership and Development (*Nationale Partij voor Leiderschap en Ontwikkeling*)
NPS	National Party of Suriname (*Nationale Partij Suriname*). See FRONT (1987) and NEW FRONT (1991, 1996 and 2000)
OKB	Independent Electoral Office (*Onafhankelijk Kies Bureau*)

PALU	Progressive Laborers and Farmers Union (*Progressieve Arbeiders en Landbouwers Unie*)
Pertjajah Luhur	Highest Trust - See NEW FRONT (2000)
PL	Pendawa Lima
PNP	Progressive National Party (*Progressieve Nationale Partij*)
PNR	Party for a Nationalistic Republic (*Partij Nationalistische Republiek*)
PSV	Progressive People's Party of Suriname (*Progressieve Surinaamse Volks Partij*)
PVF	Political Wing of the FAL [Federation of Laborers and Farmers] (*Politieke Vleugel van de FAL [Federatie van Arbeiders and Landbouwers]*)
FAL	Federation of Farmers and Farm workers (*Federatie van Agrariërs en Landarbeiders)*
ROB	Council for the Development of the Interior (*Raad voor de Ontwikkeling van het Binnenland*)
RVP	Revolutionary Peoples' Party of Suriname (*Revolutionaire Volkspartij Suriname*)
SDP	Suriname Democratic Party (*Surinaamse Democratische Partij*)
SKM	Suriname National Army (*Surinaamse Krijgsmacht*)
SLA	Suriname Liberation Army
SLF	Suriname Liberation Front
SPA	Suriname Labor Party (*Surinaamse Partij van de Arbeid*). See FRONT (1987) and NEW FRONT (1991, 1996 and 2000)
SURALCO	Suriname Aluminum Company, a wholely owned subsidiary of ALCOA
VHP	The United Reform Party, later changed to Progressive Reform Party (*Verenigde Hervormde Partij*, later changed to *Vooruitstrevende Hervormde Partij*). See FRONT and NEW FRONT

VIDS	Association of Indigenous Leaders of Suriname (*Vereniging van Inheemse Dorpshooften Suriname*)
WIC	(Dutch) West India Company (*West Indische Compagnie*)

CHAPTER I

A PROFILE OF SURINAME

When Suriname became independent in 1975 the new nation faced several challenges inherited from its pre-colonial and colonial past. In the ongoing discussion about how to structure the Suriname government after independence, in order to ensure adequate representation of the different groups or social categories, the focus has been on the problems associated with ethnic pluralism and/or the widening gap between rich and poor. There is a third factor, however, which should be given more attention: the cultural, economic and political gap between the coastal area and the interior. The challenge of incorporating kin-ordered societies into the nation state is no less daunting than balancing ethnic identity and overcoming poverty. These three themes will be used to link the wide range of information covered in the sections of this guide.

The social, political and economic history of Colonial Suriname has been shaped by the mineral and soil potential of two broad geomorphic zones: a coastal plain consisting of recent sedimentary deposits, and a shield area consisting of Precambrian rocks, which covers about 80% of the country. Before turning to the historical survey, therefore, a brief geographical orientation may prove helpful to the reader. After surveying the natural setting, the following outline will be used to present a brief historical sketch of the human settlement of Suriname:

1. The Pre-Colonial Period (prior to 1650)

2. The Making of Separate Worlds (1650-1875)

3. Attempts to Sustain and Unify (1875-1975)

4. The Challenge of Independence (after 1975)

1.1 The Natural Setting

The coastal plain can be described in terms of three zones: the young coastal plain, the old coastal plain and the savanna belt. The coastal plain, made up of these three formations, is about 30 kilometers wide in the east and about 170 kilometers in the west.

Amazonian currents deposited the fertile clay of the *young coastal plain*. Here and there narrow sand and shell ridges, remnants of former beaches, cut through the clay in an east-

west direction. Natural vegetation consists of mangrove forests, open swamps with aquatic weeds, and low thin-stemmed swamp forests.

The genesis of the *old coastal plain* is similar to that of the young coastal plain, but it is slightly higher. It is surmised that the sea level was higher when the silt was deposited along this belt, it shows more form and relief as creeks carve their way through this landscape. The vegetation consists of swamps with grasses, high swamp forest, marsh forests and dry-land forests.

Further south one comes across the striking white sands of the *savanna* belt. It is surmised that this gently rolling landscape was formed by eroded quartz sands and other sediments from the hills further to the south. The high rainfall is quickly absorbed by the permeable soil, accounting for the savanna vegetation. About 10% of the savanna is made up of white sun-bleached sand. These areas are thinly covered with shrubs and herbs; the remainder is covered with low thin-stemmed or high savanna forest.

The *shield* area roughly corresponds to what is known today as the “interior” of Suriname. The area is covered with dense tropical rainforest with a closed canopy of about 40 meters. As one moves south, the elevation gradually increases and here and there mountain ranges and granite domes protrude above the plateaus and the green canopy, varying in height from 500 to 1.200 meters. The meandering rivers of the interior are difficult to navigate due to the large number of rock formations and cascading rapids.

1.2 The Pre-Colonial Period

During the Pre-Colonial Period (prior to 1650) Amerindians settled in almost every part of Suriname, from the coastal plain to the southern highlands along the Brazilian border. Over the years the different communities adapted quite well to the heterogeneous and complex ecological systems of the coastal areas and the hilly rainforest further inland. They developed subsistence strategies and sustainable technologies appropriate to the regions they lived in. The land and forest was always able to regenerate after communities moved on the new locations. Guides of Amerindian communities suffering from food shortages under this subsistence system are hard to come by.

It was the mineral potential of the Precambrian Guiana Shield that lured the first Europeans to Suriname. This shield has been tectonically stable for a vast period of time and hosts valuable minerals such as bauxite and gold. The myth of Eldorado, featuring a king living in the town of Manoa along the Parima Lake who bathed in gold dust, was the driving force behind the first efforts of the Spanish conquistadors to explore the Guiana coast. Eldorado turned out to be an elusive dream, and gradually the emphasis shifted towards agriculture. Between 1500 and 1650 several attempts were made to colonize the region. It was not until 1651, however, that the first European settlement in Suriname survived the hot, humid climate, disease and attacking Amerindians. Up to that date the indigenous population fully controlled the region known today as Suriname.

Very little is known about the political systems, which existed among the autochthonous populations prior to the European incursion in the 17th century. There are some indicators, however, of what may have existed. Some scholars have suggested that there was no strong leadership among the Amerindian communities. Others have argued that this was not the case, that strong leadership did indeed exist, and that the role of leader was often combined with that of shaman or healer. Oral sources also suggest that pan-societal leaders existed among the Arowak and the Caribs. [1[1]] It is clear, however, that during periods of conflict identifiable leaders emerged and played a pivotal role in dealing with the colonists.

The Amerindian population of Suriname consists of the groups of the coastal area and the interior. The Caribs and Arowaks live in the coastal area. Many of their settlements are in the savanna belt. The Caribs living along the sandy beaches of the Marowijne river maintain close ties with their relatives across the border in French Guiana. The Trios and Wayanas live in the "interior" of Suriname, as far south as the Brazilian border. The Trios of Kwamalasamutu maintain relations with their relatives across the border in Brazil, and the Wayanas of southeast Suriname have close ties with their relatives in French Guiana. A small number of Akurios and Wai Wai have also settled in the Trio villages of the interior.

1.3 The Making of Separate Worlds (1650-1875)

After 1650 the demographic development of Suriname evolved along two tracks. Europeans transported thousands of Africans to Suriname to develop plantations in the coastal area. Hundreds of plantations were established, first on higher ground of the old coastal plain further up-river, and then on the low-lying fertile clays of the young coastal plain. While the plantations were being established rebel slaves used the cover of the dense tropical rainforest to flee and establish themselves above the treacherous rapids of the inland rivers, beyond the reach of the colonial establishment. The rebel slaves relied on their knowledge of African tropical environments to sustain themselves, and drew on their cultural heritage to establish matrilineal kin ordered societies in the hinterland of Suriname.

The Colonization of the Coastal Plain

In 1651 Lord Willoughby of Parham sent first 100 British planters from Barbados to settle in the coastal plain of Suriname along the Suriname and Commewijne rivers. They already had some experience in tropical agriculture. In 1664 the British were joined by a group of experienced Portuguese-Jewish planters who were forced to leave Cayenne and settled in Suriname. They settled 70 kilometers upriver on high ground and established Torarica, the original capital of Suriname. A few years later the capital was relocated to a

1[1] For example, in 1674 the Amerindian leader Kaaikoesi led a revolt against the planters. In 1686 Governor Cornelis Van Aerssen Van Sommelsdijck signed a peace treaty with the Amerindians. From that time on the Amerindians no longer presented a threat to the plantations.

fort on the left bank of the Suriname river some 10 kilometers inland from the coast. This garrison evolved into Paramaribo, the current capital city. When the Dutch took over Suriname in 1667, there were already 175 plantations in the colony, and the population had grown to 4.000 (including slaves). Many English planters left Suriname and destroyed equipment and plantations on the way out.

Until the end of the 18th century (1792), the colony of Suriname fell under the direct authority of the Dutch sovereign, but was administered by several commercial consortiums, which functioned as a kind of privately owned public authority. Government was in the hands of the private sector, and this guaranteed the colony a certain measure of autonomy.

During the first 15 years of the colony's history, the foundation for this trend was laid. The establishment of the first permanent European settlement in 1650 was a private initiative. Lord Willoughby financed this effort. As noted above, English planters joined him in this venture. A few years after establishing the colony, these planters played an important role in establishing local government.

The period of “commercial government” continued under the Dutch, after they took over in 1667. In 1674 the second Dutch West-Indian Company (W.I.C.) was established, and in 1682 this consortium gained through its charter not only commercial, but also political control of the colony. Its principal aim was to exploit the resources of the colony of Suriname through a few, though significant, import and export monopolies. Only the W.I.C. was authorized to import slaves into Suriname, and to export sugar and other agricultural products. The charter, however, also contained provisions regulating the Government of the colony - it functioned as a kind of constitution of the colony. The W.I.C. appointed the Governor, who was assisted by one or more councils.

Slave labor was the key to the economic development of the coastal plain. First under the British, and then under the Dutch, Africans were forced to toil under sub-human conditions to develop the plantation economy of the coastal plain. After the Dutch takeover in 1667, investors began to develop the young coastal plain. Dutch settlers originating in the province of Zeeland began to import flood control technology and built irrigated plantations with dikes, sluices and transport canals in the young coastal area. The alluvial clays of the lowlands turned out to be very fertile, and the plantation economy shifted northwards. On account of this economic shift northwards, Paramaribo replaced Torarica as the capital city of Suriname.

After 1682 the Governor was assisted by a representative assembly consisting of ten members. The candidates for the body were elected by the white colonists, and then appointed by the Governor. Together these bodies formed the Government of the colony. A great deal of the local political power, however, was in the hands of the planters. For example, as representative of the W.I.C., Governor Mauricius (1742-1751) tried to improve the defense infrastructure and the legal apparatus of the colony, but ran up against the power of the planters, who objected to the costs of these efforts. He ended up leaving the colony, even though his policy efforts were supported by the W.I.C.

In 1700 there were about 100 active plantations in Suriname. In 1740 this number increased to 250, in 1750 some 300 plantations were in production, and in 1770 this number reached 500. The peak production year was 1765, when 10.000 tons of sugar, 7.000 tons of coffee, 100 tons of cocoa and 50 tons of cotton were produced. After the crash of the Amsterdam stock market in 1773, funding for Suriname investments dried up and the number of plantations declined steadily.

In 1792 the W.I.C. was formally abolished, precipitated by, among other things, the disastrous collapse of the economy of Suriname in the second half of the 18th century. The Maroon wars, covered below, further damaged the colonists and drained off more resources.

At the end of the 18th century, during the Napoleonic wars, the British occupied Suriname, and this presence ended in 1814. From 1816 onward the Governor of Suriname represented the King of the Netherlands, and not a commercial enterprise. The country was governed by royal decrees, and it ceased to have its own currency.

In 1865 a major change took place: Suriname acquired a renewed measure of autonomy with the installation of the Colonial Parliament. Four members of the Parliament were appointed by the Governor and nine were elected by a select group of eligible voters. The executive powers remained with the Governor. Another major change took place in 1865: Suriname was divided into districts, each headed by a District Commissioner.

When slavery was abolished in 1863 about 200 plantations were still in production. Particularly telling is the rapid decline immediately before and after the abolition of slavery in 1862. Without the free labor of slaves the Suriname plantation economy was destined to perish. Herewith an overview of this development:

Year	Number of Plantations
1700	100
1740	250
1750	300
1770	500
1820	416
1840	383
1862	216
1872	131

1900	82
1950	24
1975	1

The African population had paid a tremendous toll to develop the coastal plain. About 325.000 Africans had been transported to Suriname to work on the plantations. When slavery was abolished in 1863 a mere 33.621 African-Surinamers gained their freedom. Overwork, mistreatment and disease had resulted in the death of thousands of slaves. After leaving the plantations many African-Surinamers headed for Paramaribo and settled in the outskirts of the quickly expanding town. Names of neighborhoods such as *Frimangron* ("the land of the free persons") reminds us of both manumission and the abolition of slavery. The urban Africans had access to better education and soon acquired the skills to take up positions as government administrators, teachers and employees in the commercial sector. The better educated became lawyers and doctors. The Moravian Church managed to win many converts among the town Creoles. However, elements of African religion remain to this day prominent in the Creole community.

The World of the Interior

As soon as plantations were established in Suriname, Africans were transported to Suriname to work on these establishments. Suriname planters were notorious for mistreating their slaves, and the dense tropical forest provided excellent cover for those who were no longer willing to accept exploitation and mistreatment. The escaped slaves settled along the upper reaches of the interior rivers above the treacherous rapids. In those days travel with a loaded canoe could require up to three weeks of rowing to reach interior destinations.

Throughout the 1700s the Colonial Government tried to subdue the rebel slaves. Military expeditions were outfitted to locate Maroon settlements and to destroy them, or to engage and capture rebel slaves, but all with limited success. The Colonial Government sued for peace and in the 1760s peace treaties were signed with the major Maroon groups. The African rebel slaves were now free to live in the interior, alongside the Amerindian communities, and develop distinct and autonomous socio-cultural and political entities. Smaller Maroon communities were established after the treaties of the 1760s, but it was not until the second half of the 19th century that the leadership of these Maroon groups was formally recognized by the Colonial Government.

As the 19th century drew to a close, the interior - originally populated only by indigenous Amerindians - was now the setting for six Maroon nations. The Saramaka and Matawai were living on the Upper-Suriname and Upper-Saramacca rivers, while the Ndjuka and Paramaka had settled along the Marowijne and Tapanahony rivers. The smaller Boni group ended settling on the Lawa river, and the Kwinti established themselves along the Coppename. The Trio Amerindians lived along the Palumeu river and in the Sipaliwini savanna, while the Wayana lived along the Middle-Tapanahony and Lawa rivers. Caribs

and Arowaks resided largely along the coast. Several other smaller groups lived in the southern fringes of the interior along the Brazilian border.

All these communities have a common characteristic – the Maroons and Amerindians live in kin-based societies in which descent and kinship are important ordering principles in the cultural, social, economic and political spheres.

Among the Maroons, political offices are also tied to the matrilineal descent system. During the past century the offices of the Paramount Chiefs (*Gaaman*) of the major Maroon societies have been passed down along matrilineal lines within a given lineage. The same applies for the office of regional chief (*ede kabiten*), village chief (*kabiten*), and assistant to the village chief (*basya*). Although leadership positions are respected in all regions or villages, the jurisdiction of a village chief is tied to a specific descent group and their settlements, while that of a regional chief is tied to the descent groups which make up the region for which he is accountable.

Currently, newly appointed traditional authorities are confirmed by the Government. Beginning after the Peace Treaties in the 1760s the Government agreed to pay tribute to the leaders of the Maroon societies, but during the 19th and 20th century this tribute was converted to payment in cash. The fee received by traditional rulers is an allowance and not a salary - they are not civil servants. The fact that the traditional leaders are not civil servants helps them retain a certain measure of autonomy historically accorded to them. The paying of this stipend implies official recognition, but it also creates a certain measure of dependency. Further, no mention is made of traditional authority in any of Suriname's Constitutions.

Decision making procedures also observe the societal levels outlined above. At the lowest level, the family elders, whether they are a village leader or not, convene to make decisions about family matters. At the lineage level, palavers (*kuutu*), are convened to discuss matters with a broader impact. A more inclusive village meeting is also common, whereas a regional or societal gathering occurs less frequently. During a *gaan kuutu*, which considers, among other things, pan societal matters and external relations, all elders, village and regional chiefs must be present. Recently the term *gaan kuutu* has also been used to refer to meetings between leaders of interior societies convened to discuss issues affecting the entire interior population.

The table below outlines some of the differences between the more western oriented nation-state and kin-based societies.

Characteristics	NATION STATE (modern)	KIN ORDERED SOCIETIES
BASIC SOCIAL UNIT	Nuclear family	Clan, lineage
OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY OR WEALTH	Primarily Individual (though collective responsibilities do persist)	Collective ownership of land and resources (individual ownership of

		personal items)
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION	Individual, special interest groups	Through descent system
MORAL AND ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES	Primarily individual	Primarily collective
ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION	Individual, investment based on profit motive	Collective, subsistence oriented

In sum, with the exception of military incursions aimed at destroying rebel slave settlements, the functional presence of the European colonizers did not extend beyond the plantation economy of the coastal area. This is why the period 1650 to 1875 is described with the phrase *"the making of separate worlds."* During this interlude the British (from 1651 to 1667) and the Dutch (after 1667) "owned" Suriname, but they never managed to take full possession of the colony. During this period the natural boundary between the lowlands of the coast and the highlands of the interior[2[2]] also became a political and socio-cultural frontier, setting apart the world of the European controlled coastal communities and the Amerindian and African communities of the interior.

1.4 Attempts to Sustain and Unify (1875-1975)

This period is characterized by important demographic and economic transitions on the coastal plain, and the political and economic incorporation of the interior with the rest of the country. More than 60.000 laborers were brought from India and Indonesia to replace the slaves freed in 1863, but to no avail. After their contract period expired most contract immigrants abandoned the plantations and settled on small farms in the coastal area. The reluctance of labor led to the further decline in the number of plantations, and during the first half of the 20th century small-scale farming gradually replaced plantation agriculture. The once prosperous colony was now facing trade deficits. During the slave era the value of exports exceeded the value of imports by 30% or more. After abolition Suriname began to experience trade deficits and began to rely more and more on subsidies or development aid from the Netherlands to sustain itself.

After 1900 a general shift occurred in the economy. Small farming operations replaced the plantations. These plots were cultivated by ex-slaves, East Indians – known in Suriname as Hindustani -- and later Javanese. Around 1900 90% of the agricultural products were grown on plantations, 10% on smaller farms. In 1950 the reverse was true. Between 1875 and 1900 interest in gold mining was strong, but the boom did not last. The sector reached its zenith in 1908, after which a steady decline set in. Around the turn of the century there was a substantial production of natural rubber (balata), but this activity also dwindled quickly.

[2[2]] This boundary was marked by the lumber plantation Berg en Dal, located along the Suriname river at the foot of the first prominent elevation as one travels from the coastal area into the interior.

Bauxite mining, on the other hand, turned out to be a steady source of income and employment. From 1922 onwards, production increased almost yearly, and during World War II Suriname became a major supplier of bauxite to the United States. The bauxite was used for the production of aluminum, much of which went to the construction of war material. In the 1960s further investment in a hydro-electric dam, and an alumina and aluminum plant assured Suriname of many years of steady foreign currency income. Mechanized rice farming took off after the 1950s. Between 1955 and 1974 rice production rose from 64.000 tons to 175.000 tons, while the production share of the large-scale farms increased from 20% to 60%. As the century wore on, timber and wood products, as well as shrimp and fishing, became increasingly important.

The developments in the gold mining and bauxite sector had a major impact on the societies of the interior. After 1875, the boundary between the coastal area and the interior began to be challenged by exploration and economic incursions, and by the time Suriname gained independence in 1975 the central Government wielded much greater political and economic influence in the interior. These transitions will be surveyed next.

Transitions on the Coastal Plain

With abolition in sight, the planters expected a massive exodus of African-Surinamers from the plantations and an extreme shortage of field laborers. Their assessment of the situation was correct. Most of the African-Surinamers left the plantations when they could. Attempts were made to obtain laborers from Netherlands-Indies, Madeira, China and the West Indies, with limited success. Between 1853 and 1870 about 4.500 Chinese were brought to Suriname to work on the plantations as indentured laborers. As soon as their contract period expired, the Chinese left the plantations. Most of the Chinese became active in the retail business (40% around 1900, 70% in 1970).

In 1870 the Dutch Government signed a treaty with England and in the period 1873-1916 some 34.000 East Indians were transported to Suriname to work on the plantations as indentured laborers. The period of indentured labor was not without incident. On two occasions around the turn of the century the Hindustani rioted against the plantation owners. These revolts turned bloody when they were struck down with force.

In order to lessen their dependency on the British, the Dutch decided to look for alternative labor sources. Between 1890 and 1935 almost 33.000 Javanese were transported to Suriname to work on the plantations.

Both the Hindustani and the Javanese settled in the coastal area after leaving the plantations. Many did not exercise the option to return to their country of origin because the Government offered them agricultural land. Most of the Hindustani settled in the districts of Nickerie and Saramacca. The Javanese settled in Commewijne, but also in the outskirts of Paramaribo and in some locations in Saramacca.

The demographic make-up of the coastal area after World War II reveals the following picture. In 1950 Suriname had 196.000 inhabitants, the population of Paramaribo was

about 80.000. The urban coastal population was predominantly Creole (about 70%), with a smaller contingent of Europeans and Chinese. Most of the rural coastal population was Hindustani and Javanese, with a smaller number of plantation Creoles who stayed on or settled near plantations after abolition. The population figures for the coastal area in 1950 were as follows:

Creoles	82.408	42.1 %
Hindustani	66.829	34.1 %
Javanese	38.165	19.5 %
Chinese	2.849	1.5 %
Other	5.390	2.8 %
Total	195.641	100 %

Most of the rural settlements were relatively isolated and became ethnic enclaves. The Hindustani and Javanese maintained their language, and despite efforts of the Europeans to Christianize them, most retained their original Hindu or Muslim religion. The temples and mosques developed not only as places of worship, but also centers of educational (especially for language courses) and social activities. Between 1936 and 1937 a law was passed, which recognized and structured village communities, and the Asiatic Marriage Law was also passed. Under this law, marriages concluded under Muslim or Hindi traditions were formally recognized by the Government. Efforts were also made to ensure that the Hindustani and Javanese could have separate representation in the Colonial Parliament. As time passed, the Hindustani and Javanese had increasing contacts with other Surinamers, especially through economic activities, but they retained their language and religion due largely to residential and occupational segregation.

While plantation agriculture faded away major undertakings in the mining industry were initiated. Around the turn of the century bauxite deposits (aluminum ore) were found in the coastal area and mines were established in the Moengo area, about 100 kilometers east of Paramaribo. In 1922 the first shipment of bauxite took place and a period of steady growth followed. In 1938 a processing plant was established at Paranam, some 30 kilometers upriver from Paramaribo. Bauxite mines were opened in the area. Just before World War II the Billiton Company started exploration activities in the Onverdacht area, and in 1953 the company was formally established.

In 1958 the Brokopondo Agreement was signed with ALCOA Aluminum, and in the early sixties, after the construction of the hydroelectric dam, an alumina and aluminum refinery got underway. In addition to the natural resources, Suriname made available the land and agreed to take care of the relocation of some 6.000 Maroons to locations below or above the hydro lake. The investment costs of the dam and the processing plants, including the infrastructure (roads and bridges), were covered by Suralco, a subsidiary of

Alcoa in Pittsburgh. Under the agreement the Government of Suriname would receive part of the electrical power at reduced cost. Ups and downs notwithstanding, over the years the bauxite industry has remained by far the most important foreign currency earner for Suriname (70-85%). Recently the aluminum smelter was taken out of service, but Suriname remains an important producer of alumina. [3[3]]

Other important sectors in the economy after World War II were rice farming, timber products and shrimp fishing. Mechanized rice farming took off after the 1950s. Between 1955 and 1974 rice production rose from 64.000 tons to 175.000 tons, while during the 1990s some 250.000 tons of rice were produced. As noted above, mechanization brought about a shift from small-scale to large-scale farming. During this period the production share of the large-scale farms increased from 20% to 60%. Two banana plantations were established, one in Saramacca and one in Nickerie. Production in this sector rose in the 1960s and in 1968 two million boxes were exported. As the century wore on, timber and wood products, as well as shrimp fishing, became increasingly important.

During the period 1875 to 1975 the political system of Suriname went through a number of major transitions. From 1865 to 1901 the local Government enjoyed a considerable measure of autonomy. The government policy was one of assimilation, primary education was made mandatory (ages 7–12) and the Christian religion was seen as a mechanism for promoting the Europeanization of the local population. In 1874 a decree was issued outlawing “heathen” African rites. This policy of assimilation lasted until the 1930s, when Governor Kielstra brought about a turn-around. He favored protective measures for Asiatic population, and this represented a reversal of the assimilation policy carried out by his predecessors. His efforts were controversial and resulted in several conflicts, especially the introduction of the above-mentioned Asiatic Marriage Law and the law regulating community organization.

In 1901 the appointed membership of the Colonial Parliament was discontinued. All members were to be chosen, but universal suffrage would not be introduced until 1948. After 1908 candidates had to be fielded by political organizations and this brought about the birth of the first political organizations. Despite these “improvements,” the number of political conflicts actually increased after 1900. With the further democratization of the political system, light skinned Creoles began acquiring more influence. One of the new political organizations even fielded socialist candidates and the plantation owners tried to organize their interests by starting their own political organization.

During World War II the Dutch Government promised to introduce a greater measure of autonomy with regards to internal affairs. In 1948 universal suffrage was introduced, and a general council was installed which had executive powers. In 1949 the first general elections were held. In 1954, Suriname acquired political autonomy with respect to internal affairs, while foreign affairs and defense continued to be handled in the context of the Charter and Constitution of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The separation of powers was formalized. Since the introduction of universal suffrage, general elections

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[3[3]] Alumina is first extracted from bauxite and is then used to produce aluminum ingots.

were held eight times before independence. The political parties were based generally on and represented specific ethnic groups.

Here follows a brief overview of these elections held after universal suffrage was introduced:

Election Results by Party: 1949-1973

Year	Political Party – see Acronyms									
	NPS	VHP	KTPI	SDP	PSV	PNP	AG	PNR	Other	Total
1949	12	6	2	.	.	.	.	.	1	21
1951	13	6	2	.	.	.	.	.	.	21
1955	2	6	2	5	3	.	.	.	3	21
1958	9	4	2	0	4	.	.	.	2	21
1963	14	8	4	2	4	.	3	0	1	36
1967	17	11	0	2	0	3	4	0	2	39
1969	11	17	1	0	1	5	.	1	3	39
1973	13	16	2	.	3	0	.	4	1	39

The Suriname parliamentary system is a variation of parliamentary systems found elsewhere. Under this system the Government was held accountable to the Parliament for the approval of its policies. The elected representatives were also responsible for monitoring the implementation of the approved government policy and could draft and approve legislation. In practice, however, most legislation was drafted by technical commissions working at the various ministries and was sent on to the Parliament for approval.

When the Government could not rely on the support of a majority of the elected representatives in the Parliament for the implementation of its policies, it would step down. In 1951, 1958 and 1969 early elections were called after the Government resigned.

It should also be noted in this context, that with the passing of time, a shift in power relations occurred. Up to 1900 almost all of the political leaders were white. Between 1900 and 1958 light skinned Creoles, many of them elite, gradually took over as senior leaders in the political arena. In the early 1950s Johan (Jopie) Adolf Pengel made his entry into the Creole dominated NPS. Though a dark skinned lower class Creole, his political astuteness, excellent oratory skills and charisma brought about his rise in the

NPS. After 1959, when J.A. Pengel formed the government, the predominant position of the light skin Creoles had come to an end.

The urge to become independent was not shared equally by all Surinamers. The most outspoken supporter of the idea was a group of young Creole intellectuals who formed an association “Wi Egi Sani” (“Our Own Property/Thing/Heritage”) and championed the idea of an independent Suriname. In 1961 the largely Creole PNR was created and it was suggested that Suriname would become independent in 1963, exactly 100 years after slavery was abolished.

Up to independence it was generally assumed that the country was governable on the basis of the democratic system, which evolved as a hybrid of the Dutch and other parliamentary systems. The political reality after 1975 proved otherwise. It seems that the differences in the political vision of the members of the various ethnic groups and classes, but also the conceptual gap between persons from the interior and the coastal area, had been underestimated or overlooked altogether.

The chart above, outlining election results suggests, at least numerically that the three main, ethnic-based parties –the Creole NPS, the Hindustani VHP and the Javanese KTPI—voted as ethnic cartels. This is substantially the case as the smaller ideologically-based parties did not fare well in garnering votes (the PNP of 1967 and 1969 was substantially a break away Creole party while the PSV was a smaller Creole party with long standing roots). Notable during this period was the Creole tendency to establish broader ideological choice for its ethnic constituents; by 1969 four Creole parties of differing ideological persuasion had won seats in parliament. Hence, the two Hindustani and Javanese parties give the appearance of a more bounded and solidified ethnic conglomeration. To a real extent this is true but the blunt edge of ethnic-centric focus masks more subtle means of cooperation and coalition building. It is almost a cliché in the political discourse of Suriname to say that the Javanese block often functions in the role of government-maker by aligning with the larger parties who need their support to form a strong majoritarian government. Equally a cliché is to say that a government which excludes Hindustani is doomed to collapse or will, at least, not function well. The Creole-dominated governments of 1967—which collapsed—and 1973—which saw rancorous ethnic disagreement—are testimony to this observation.

Yet, there was established in the 1960’s and early 1970’s a tradition of Creole-Hindustani cooperation which continues to today. Called the “politics of brotherhood” (*verbroederingspolitiek*) or “broad basis” formation (*brede basis*) the ideas undergird the inter-ethnic collaboration which characterizes periods of stability. The reality of politics in Suriname, the preference to vote for “one’s own,” has never resulted in a large, corporate multi-ethnic political party based more on ideology and common cause than the primordial identification of one’s own group. However, mobilizing on the basis of ethnicity does not prohibit inter-party cooperation and coalitions. Ethnicity, one can argue, is merely a cultural resource, not in itself good or bad but merely a building block like age, gender, and residential location in society.

The Political and Economic Incorporation of the Interior

The second economic phase of the colonial period (1875-1975) saw mining replacing agriculture as the main source of income for Suriname. After new deposits of gold were announced in the 1870s, thousands of fortune seekers headed for the interior. Between 1875 and 1925 the economic focus of Suriname was on gold. A 175 kilometers long railroad track was built to the gold fields of the interior. In 1908 production peaked at 1.210 kg. Thousands of fortune seekers flocked to the interior and despite the threat of malaria, worked long hours in the gold fields. Young Maroon men enjoyed relatively high incomes transporting the miners through the rapids to the remote mines in the interior. After the peak in 1908 gold production declined steadily until 1969, when the last mechanized operation was shut down. At the onset of the 20th century thousands of Creole men from the coastal area worked as rubber tappers in the interior, but competition from Southeast Asia and the invention of synthetic rubber brought about the demise of this industry.

Other developments also had a major impact on the life of the Indigenous and Maroon communities. In the 1940s and 1950s outboard motors were introduced, reducing travelling time to the interior from two to three weeks to two to three days. Operation Grasshopper began in 1959; a project to establish landing strips through the interior for the purpose of exploration. In the 1960s American missionaries established missions in the interior and began building small runways. Air transport reduced travel to the interior from two to three days to one to two hours.

Universal suffrage was introduced in 1948, and in theory, every adult citizen of Suriname was entitled to vote. However, in order to participate in elections, an eligible voter would have had to be registered. Since the majority of the interior population was not registered during the late 1940s and the 1950s, participation by persons from the interior was minimal. Moreover, there was no residence requirement for candidates, as a result, many persons elected to the Parliament did not have ties or a strong commitment to the people they represented.

Prior to the elections of 1963, a registration campaign was held in the interior, and during these elections, persons from the hinterland were in a position to cast a vote. Since that time, persons from the interior have participated in national elections. The involvement of the interior population in the national political process had a number of consequences for traditional rule (e.g., the *Gaaman*). From the very beginning of the involvement of the interior in the national political system, there was a noticeable association of traditional rulers in party politics. Persons living in the interior objected to this partisanship, and these associations seem to have contributed to the erosion of authority of the traditional rulers.

For better or for worse, the Amerindian and Maroon communities of the interior had become part of the national economic and political system. Some members of Maroon and Amerindian societies have adopted more western norms and customs and live in nuclear families. But traditional customs continue to play a role in the village setting, and

the challenge of integrating the kin-ordered societies of the interior into the nation state remains a formidable challenge. As major socio-cultural, economic and political incursions into the interior continue, further changes in the distribution patterns of resources will take place, and new power relations will be asserted. The accompanying stresses and strains of these changes harbor the potential for conflict. The resulting tensions are an inherent part of development, and democratic and other institutional instruments will have to be created to cope with the latent threats to stability and development. These needs would become particularly evident after 1975.

The cultural life of the interior Maroons and Amerindians remained largely unaffected by European ideas until the last years of the 19th century, when the first major economic incursions began to take place. To be sure, direct lumber trade between Maroons and Dutch merchants of the coastal area, and the contribution of Maroons to transport and exploration activities in the gold- and bauxite-mining sectors, structured the money economy of these predominantly subsistence societies. Missionaries had some influence in selective areas. All-embracing cultural, social and political influencing, however, only began in earnest when travel times were significantly reduced after the introduction of outboard motors, roads and air links. And yet, the cultural gap left behind by almost 250 years of development in relative isolation, makes incorporation of these societies into the nation state a significant challenge. The challenge posed by this gap would become manifest during the interior conflict in the 1980’s and 1990’s.

The challenges posed by ethnic pluralism, poverty and the ideological gap between the coastal area and the interior surfaced as key issues during the years immediately prior to and after independence.

The Road to Independence

In early 1933 one of Suriname’s first nationalist and political activists, Anton de Kom, arrived in Suriname with his family. From the moment he arrived he was tracked by the authorities, which feared that the labor strikes of 1931 would be rekindled by his political gatherings. He was prohibited from holding public rallies. In 1933 he was arrested. His supporters, both unemployed and poor town-Creoles and Javanese from Commewijne, took to the street demanding his release. Some 30 persons were shot during a public demonstration and de Kom was deported to the Netherlands. After returning to the Netherlands he published We Slaves of Suriname. This work, fundamentally a denunciation of colonialism, critical of labor conditions and poverty, and promoting a nationalist identity, became the canon of the nationalist movement.

Throughout the fifties and the sixties the idea of independence surfaced from time to time in different circles. In 1951 the association *Wi Egi Sani* (“Our Own Heritage”) was established by young Creole intellectuals studying in the Netherlands. Eddy Bruma, Henny de Ziel and Jo Rens were the leading figures of this movement. Literary works were produced heralding the cultural heritage of Surinamers. In the early 1950s Johan Adolph Pengel, who was to emerge as the undisputed leader of the NPS, wrote several

articles with strong nationalist overtones. In 1961 the PNR was founded by Bruma and young intellectual supporters.

A serious move to independence would not take place until the NPS, PNR and the PSV (Progressive Peoples' Party of Suriname), all parties with nationalist roots, formed the NPK I coalition. One of the goals of this coalition was to achieve independence by the end of 1975. The Netherlands Government willingly supported the independence effort. Once the realization dawned on the people of Suriname that independence was inevitable, thousands migrated to the Netherlands out of fear for an uncertain economic and political future. Resistance to independence came from the VHP and its Hindustani following, who feared political domination by the Creole groups advocating the creation of a new nation. Tensions flared and several cases of arson occurred, leading to fears that serious civil unrest would erupt pitting the major ethnic groups against each other.

Initially the VHP opposed independence. Three members of the ruling NPK I coalition joined the opposition and technically the Government had lost its majority in Parliament. The Government did not budge and a 20-man delegation, headed by Jagernath Lachmon head of the VHP, flew to the Netherlands to plead their case. The impact of the trip had the opposite results. Leading politicians in the Netherlands convinced members of the delegation that independence was feasible. One of the members of the opposition, George Hindorie ended up supporting the coalition. The year preceding independence a number of colonial wooden buildings in the old section of Paramaribo were set on fire. Hindorie said that he did not want to be responsible for the possible violence and looting, which would break out if the independence effort was thwarted. He crossed the floor, supported the NPK I, Prime Minister Henck Arron got his way and the route to independence was secured. Suriname became a sovereign state on November 25, 1975.

1.5 The Challenge of Independence

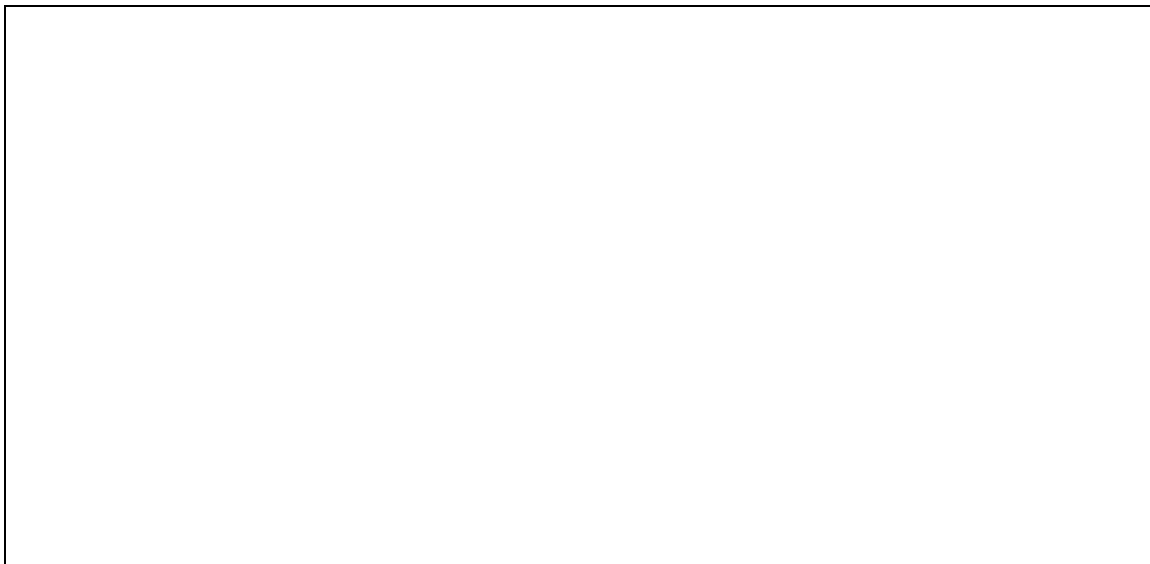
On November 25, 1975, Suriname became independent from the Kingdom of the Netherlands. A bilateral treaty fund was set up by the Netherlands and Suriname as an aid-program totaling 3.2 billion Dutch Guilders (approximately 1 billion U.S. Dollars) to be spent over a period of ten years. Suriname became a parliamentary democracy with a clear division of powers: the legislative, executive and judicial branch. The President of the Republic was elected by the Parliament, which had 39 members. The executive powers, however, were in the hands of the Council of Ministers, which was headed by the Vice-President. The Ministers were accountable to the Parliament for their political actions.

However, the new Constitution for the new Republic was a flawed document. Foremost, it contained no provisions to bridge the gap between the coastal area dominated by the merchant-city of Paramaribo and the hinterland, an omission which would be exploited a mere 11 years later with the outbreak of the internal conflict. Specifically, the new Constitution left the interior insufficiently represented by minority candidates as there was no residence requirement to ensure that members of the then Parliament had close ties with and strong relationships to the people and the region they represented. Also,

representation was only at the national level, a highly centralized membership in the Parliament, with no means for local and regional participation, representation, and mobilization. It was only after the period of military rule, in the Constitution of 1987, that such bodies as the local council (*ressort comite*) and district council (*distrikt comite*) would be designed and implemented.

The First Five Years (1975-1980)

The first post-independence period (1975-1980) started with optimism. A steady foreign currency income from the bauxite sector could be counted on, and development aid flowed into the State coffers at a rate above the absorption capacity of Suriname's institutions.



Graph 1: Development Aid 1954 – 1980 (in millions Sf)

The economic future of Suriname was to be assured by investing large sums into the West-Suriname project. Two interconnected hydro-electric dams and a river-diversion project would generate a total of 800 MW and this energy was to be used to fuel a new alumina and aluminum plant in the region, and also for other economic activities such as lumber, pulp and paper mills, gold, rubber and agriculture. In 1975 the construction of a 60-kilometer railroad got underway connecting the future bauxite mines in the Bakhuys Mountains to Apoera, an Amerindian village along the Corantijn river, some 150 kilometers inland from the coast. One outcome of the project would be the growth of a new residential area in Apoera, with modern houses and services.

As the seventies wore on, optimism gave way to pessimism. Persons began to doubt that the million-dollar investment in West Suriname would come to fruition. Too many questions remained unanswered and the Government did not seem to be in a hurry to administratively justify the ongoing million dollar spending sprees. Arron and his coalition partners were re-elected with a narrow margin in 1977, bringing the NPK II

coalition to power, and the Government seemed as reassured as ever. And yet, the ever-widening gap between the promises made at independence and their realization led to skepticism and dissatisfaction. Few new jobs were created and the gap between the rich and the poor increased. It was a labor conflict in the military, however, which ended the term of NPK II just prior to the scheduled elections. The non-commissioned officers in the armed forces tried to establish a union, an effort that was not supported by the government. The central issue concerned salary increases.

Military Rule: 1980-1987

On February 25, 1980, the military took over the country. Between 1980 and 1987 four phases of rule can be recognized. Throughout this entire period, however, the ultimate authority resided with the military leaders. During the first phase (1980-1982), a military council was supported by civilians who assisted *a titre personnelle*. During the second phase (1983), the military leaders were supported by proponents of the small socialist parties (the RVP and the PALU). The third phase (1984-1985) saw unions and business associations join forces with the military leaders. During the final phase (1986-1987) the unions, business associations and the old political parties joined the military in the transition to democracy.

At the time of the take-over the population took a wait-and-see attitude. Within a week the President and the Military Council issued a press release saying that in undertaking actions the new rulers would try to adhere to the Constitution as much as possible. But as time wore on, things turned out differently. By the end of March of 1982 four counter-coup attempts had been thwarted and the military leaders began to worry about personal and state security. By mid-1982 the movement to restore democracy became increasingly vocal: church organizations, labor unions, students and teachers began to demand a timetable for the return to an elected government. In December of 1982 the military cracked down and executed fifteen leading opponents of the military regime. The group of victims included the President of the Bar Association, the Dean of the Social Science Faculty, a labor union leader, and several journalists.

When the military took over in 1980 they inherited a considerable foreign currency reserve, partially due to the influx of development aid in hard currency. In 1983, however, the economy suffered several setbacks. Development aid was suspended due to the events of December 8, 1982. A worldwide recession reduced the demand for aluminum and alumina, Suriname's most important export commodities. Moreover, monetary financing of the government deficit increased the money supply and fueled inflation. In the period 1981 to 1985 monetary reserves declined from about US $ 225 million to US $ 25 million and the value of the Suriname florin began to slide, a trend which would alternately accelerate and slow down, but continue to this day. The Central Bank, however, continued to maintain the official rate of Sf 1.77 to the US Dollar, resulting in an ever-increasing gap between the official and the parallel rate. Gradually, several "official" exchange rates were introduced, making it very difficult to bring the monetary situation under control.

The military-dominated governments of the period initiated measures to mobilize support outside of the traditional political party structures. A mass movement, which was to presage the emergence of the military's own political party – the NDP—and called variously the Stand Fast (*Standvaste*) or the 25 February Movement (*25 Februari Beweking*) mobilized supporters through previously untried means. Also, the forerunner of local and district level committees was designed, the People's Committee's (*Volks Comite*), which sought local in-put through institutionalized organs aimed at decentralizing communication, participation and decision-making.

In September of 1987 a new Constitution was approved by a referendum and in November of 1987 elections were held. The old political parties, now in the multi-ethnic FRONT coalition, received an overwhelming majority (40) of the 51 seats in parliament. Under the new Constitution the president and the vice-president are to be elected by the National Assembly by a 2/3's majority. If the required majority is not achieved, the president and vice-president are elected by the United People's Council, consisting of the 51 members of the National Assembly, as well as by the 104 members of the newly created District Councils and the 710 members of the Local Councils. These two bodies were called into existence under the new Constitution in an effort to bring about a higher degree of administrative decentralization. Under the new system the president received a greater measure of executive authority. He appoints and dismisses the Ministers.

The 1987 Constitution, which served as the basic document to guide the country during the transition to democracy, remedied, in part, the flaws of its predecessor. It was a precondition, placed by the NDP, that local and regional committees be recognized and included in the Constitution as law. At the same time the statutory inclusion of these decentralized organs broadened the participation of the masses in governance and simultaneously weakened the centralized control of the traditional political parties. This is an important addition to the governing of Suriname and this positive development was in part a result of the process of decentralization and mobilization begun under the military. A residency requirement for National Assembly members promoted the idea that parliamentarians be recruited from minority groups with close ties to the interior and rural regions.

The Country Divided (1986-1992)

The year 1987 was marked by the transition to a weak form of democratic governance which was to last only until December 1990. Weak because the newly elected Front government of 1987 had only partial control over the strong and influential military. In fact, the 1987 Constitution guaranteed the military the military privileges embodied in two clauses of the Constitution, principally that of maintaining its role as defender of the revolution. These two clauses would not be removed until the 1992 advent of the Venetiaan New Front government, and only then in the context of a dangerous confrontation between the military and the civilians.

In 1986 a conflict broke out in eastern Suriname, which spread in the subsequent years to central and western Suriname. The conflict involved the national army and the Jungle

Commando, an insurgent group consisting mainly of Maroons. At the end of 1986 and during the first half of 1987, severe fighting took place in and around Maroon villages in east-Suriname. Some 10.000 inhabitants sought refuge in neighboring French Guiana, and another 13.000 people from the interior fled to Paramaribo. Lumbering, bauxite and gold mining, and the palm oil industry suffered major setbacks or closed down temporarily or for extended periods in the areas of conflict. In 1989, other illegally armed groups entered into the internal conflict: the Tucayana Amazonas (Amerindian group), Mandela, Angula and Koffiemakka (other Maroon groups).

It is important to note that the war broke out precisely at the time the country was preparing for the complex and delicate transition to democracy, when stakes for both the military and the civilians were very high. Although the war has been called an "internal" conflict, and it was fought out over serious internal issues, there was external involvement of partisan countries whose position was that Commander Bouterse and his military had to be put under pressure to assure the return of the traditional democratic parties. The actions of the Netherlands, the United States, and France appear to have been important sources of relief and support for the insurgents. It is further important to note that foreign support dwindled after the election of the civilian government in 1987 and the insurgency declined sharply in its ability to undertake combat. The insurgency never completely gave up arms during the late 1980's. On the one hand the military was unwilling to endorse a peace treaty signed with a group they still considered to be dangerous, unpacified rebels. Equally, the Jungle Commando was unwilling to give up arms with a powerful military still in place. The situation would remain so until 1992.

During the late 1980's tension between the elected Government of President R. Shankar and Commander D. Bouterse of the Armed Forces mounted. In July of 1989 the Government signed the Kourou accord, without the support of the military, with the intent to bring a halt to the interior conflict. The stresses and the strains culminated in the so-called "telephone" coup of December 1990, which dispatched the elected government with one telephone call from a senior ranking military officer. During the weeks thereafter the take-over was sanctioned by Parliament and new elections were called within six months.

Consolidating Peace and Democracy (1991-2000)

With the elections of May of 1991 democracy was restored. The traditional political parties once again united in the "New Front for Democracy and Development" and won a majority that proved sufficient to survive five years in office. The NDP, associated with the military, did well as did the private sector-associated DA '91. This diversity of political choices reflected the complexity of Suriname's interest groups. The results of the elections were as follows:

Party	New Front	NDP	DA'91	Total
Seats	30	12	9	51

The first two years in office, however, proved extremely challenging to the government of President Ronald Venetiaan. Among other destabilizing events the huge hydro-electric dam was occupied by terrorists and workers held hostage. The successful effort to place the military under clear civilian authority almost resulted in a military coup d'etat (it would have been the third) and take-over. The president first had to have the two clauses providing military privilege removed from the Constitution by the National Assembly. Secondly, which is covered in the following chapter dealing with threats to peace, he moved to relieve Commander Bouterse from control of the military. He succeeded on both counts. On the positive side, the Accord for National Reconciliation and Development (Peace Accord) was signed in August 1992, bringing an end to the interior conflict.

In 1993, the Venetiaan Government started a structural adjustment program, in an effort to bring the economy under control. A single official floating rate replaced the numerous fixed currency exchange rates, foreign exchange rules were liberalized, monetary financing of the government budget was halted, the government debt to the Central Bank had been consolidated and a repayment schedule agreed to, subsidies were eliminated and tax collection improved. These measures were not taken without a price. The introduction of a floating rate brought about wild fluctuations in the exchange rate. In January of 1994 the US Dollar was exchanged for 85 Suriname Florins. By November the rate peaked at 600, but in 1995 the rate declined and finally settled at around 400. The rate stayed at this level for about two years (1996 – 1998) until skyrocketing to over 2000 by the end of June 2000.

The early nineties also saw considerable pressure exerted on the communities of the interior. With the signing of the Peace Accord the process of restoring security in the interior got underway. With an adjustment program underway, the Government was eager to develop the gold and lumber resources of the interior, in order to create jobs and supplement the foreign exchange earnings of the bauxite industry. The rapid devaluation of the Suriname currency prompted thousands of young Maroon men to seek employment in the gold sector, where salaries are paid in grams of ore and not Suriname currency, a hedge against the ongoing loss of purchasing power.

One gold exploration company alone secured almost one million acres in prospective lands, and plans for issuing million acre lumber concessions circulated. Vast tracts of tribal lands ended up in gold and lumber concessions. At the same time, thousands of Brazilian gold miners flocked to the interior and joined Maroon men already active in the sector. The pollution of rivers and creeks caused by the effluent of the small-scale miners took on major proportions. Lawlessness and gangs began to take the upperhand in some mining areas. Foreign lumber companies began extracting huge amounts of lumber at rates well above the prescribed cutting limits, established by law to allow for the natural renewal of the fragile tropical rainforest.

Instead of enhancing the social and economic security of the interior population and promoting national development, a partial implementation of the Peace Accord seems to have had a disruptive socio-economic and environmental impact at the local level. The

Government was not able to restore a functional presence in all areas of the interior and the status of chieftaincy remained in limbo. The lack of clear-cut lines of authority resulted in uncontrolled mining and forestry activities creating the problems mentioned above. The critical issue of land rights was totally ignored.

The outcome of the 1996 elections for the interior were an indication of the dissatisfaction of the population with the failure of the Government to implement the land rights provisions of the Peace Accord. The New Front lost ground in the interior to parties that promised to secure land rights for the population of the interior in the future.

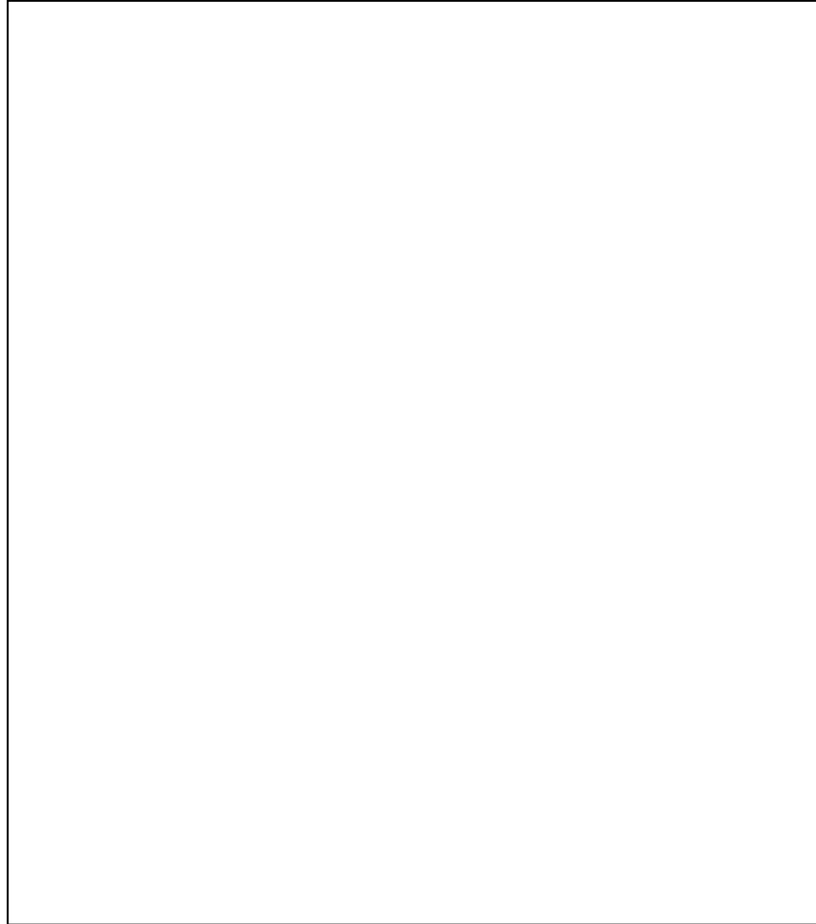
Two new parties won seats: the Javanese Pendawa Lima and Alliantie, a party which had ties to the NDP.

The results of the 1996 elections were as follows:

Party	New Front	NDP	DA'91	Pendawa Lima	Alliantie	Total
Seats	24	16	4	4	3	51

The results of the elections showed that the New Front coalition lost its majority in the National Assembly, even though it had a large majority at the local council level. A coalition of two or more parties would be necessary to elect the president. During the period prior to the attempts to elect the president, friction in the VHP block of the NEW FRONT caused a split. Five of the nine members of the VHP disagreed with the lack of democracy within the VHP and the candidate nominated for vice-president. They did not support the New Front candidate. Two attempts were made and the New Front presidential and vice presidential candidates did not receive the required two thirds of the votes. The United Peoples Assembly was convened and the Candidate of the New Front, Ronald Venetiaan, received 407 votes, while Jules Wijdenbosch, the Chairman of the NDP, received 438 votes. On September 14, 1996, the new president was installed.

The five-year term of the president, however, was reduced by a year after two weeks of street protests in May of 1999. On May 12 the exchange rate reached a record 1400, and even jumped temporarily to 2000. Sales figures plummeted and several businesses closed their doors. The monetary authorities were not able to bring the exchange rates under control. The chart included here gives a clear indication of the dramatic increase in the exchange rates after January of 1995.



Graph 2: Exchange Rates – Suriname Florin to US Dollar

(Compiled by Christopher Healy, Paramaribo, July 2000)

While the crisis was brewing President Wijdenbosch departed with a delegation to Ghana on May 16, 1999. The "Structured Alliance," a civil society solidarity of opposition parties, unions and other civil organizations, convened a meeting and decided to initiate the protest actions again which had been suspended a few months earlier. The Structured Alliance also advanced the idea that an interim government should be installed and several prominent persons in society were mentioned as possible candidates for president and vice-president.

At the same time, "The Union for the Defense of the Constitutional State", consisting of the bar association and several civic organizations, were protesting the planned installation of five new judges by the President of the Courts, Mr. Alfred Veldema. This dispute centered on the alleged unconstitutional installation of the Chief Judge by the president. The appointment of the five new judges would also be unconstitutional, so they argued. The next day four of the five candidate judges were installed. One reneged. That same day, the meeting of the National Assembly was called off when a large number of protesters entered the building.

When the president returned on Sunday May 23, 1999, several days of street protests had already taken place. In the coming days the number of protesters would increase significantly, and by Wednesday May 26 some 150 unions had joined the strike, which had virtually shut down Paramaribo for ten days. On May 27 ten members of the National Assembly called for a meeting to discuss the situation in the country.

On Friday May 28 the president dismissed the entire Council of Ministers. On Saturday the meeting of the members of the coalition was cancelled because one party (the BVD, a break away group of parliamentarians from the VHP) did not attend while many of the members of another major coalition partner (the NDP) were absent. The leader of the NDP, former military commander Bouterse, the largest partner in the coalition, then called for the resignation of the president. On Tuesday June 1 the National Assembly adopted a motion of no confidence against the president. While the motion was being discussed in the National Assembly, the president sent a note indicating that he would be willing to shorten his term by one year and call elections, provided the National Assembly would also agree to shorten its term by one year. This was agreed and the protest actions were suspended. Attempts by the opposition to get André Telting and Eddy Jharap elected as president and vice-president in the National Assembly failed. A simple majority was not achieved. The Structured Alliance faded from the political scene.

On May 25th, 2000 elections were held, one year prior to the expiration of the five-year term of the President. The result of the elections were as follows:

Party	New Front	MC	DNP 2000	DA' 91	PVF	PALU	Total
Seats	33	10	3	2	2	1	51

For the fourth time in less than fifteen years the multi-ethnic (Creole, Hindustani, Javanese, and one labor party – largely Creole) NEW FRONT (and its 1987 predecessor the FRONT) demonstrated that ethnic coalitions could work and function under stress. The "politics of brotherhood" was an essential notion for the construction of stabile politics in Suriname. It would seem, to promote inclusion of all Surinamers in their governance, that the idea must be expanded beyond the three major groups and include all Surinamers as well. During the electoral process the NDP fragmented into the Bouterse wing (MC) and the President Wijdenbosch wing (DNP 2000). DA '91's vote share was reduced, the labor-associated PVF won two seats, and the left-wing PALU won one.

The new Government of Suriname, was installed in September 2000, and faced a future full with possibilities and a mandate from the citizens to implement reforms and measures, to secure and stabilize peace, democracy and development in the Republic.

1.6 Pluralism, Development and Nation Building

In the profile above an effort was made to review the history of Suriname from a perspective that would promote awareness, not only of the obvious and visible challenges

faced by the country, but also reveal some of the underlying causes of the problems and conflicts to date. It was noted at the outset that this type of awareness and understanding was a necessary precondition for inspiring action aimed at achieving peaceful, harmonious and sustainable development in a truly democratic setting. We have also tried to assess the prospects for maintaining peace and strengthening democracy against the background of this historical sketch. The overview was divided into four sections, ranging from the Pre-Colonial period to the present. Some of the lessons taught us by this historical overview are summarized below. Our first theme was ethnicity.

The cultural landscape of the coastal plain was transformed dramatically after 1875. The abolition of slavery in 1863 led to the evacuation of the plantations by Africans who sought their livelihood in the city of Paramaribo or in freehold villages as small farmers. Dutch policy was to replace them with two major groups of contract laborers, Hindustani and Javanese contract. Coastal Suriname was no longer an African-European conglomerate but became increasingly Asian. By 1950 well over half of the population was of Asian decent (Hindustani, Javanese and Chinese). Their population share has increased to this day, making the coastal zone –just in raw numbers—more "Asian" than Creole or European.

Conventional thinking, framed in what has been called "plural society" theory, attributes much of the social and political problems of Suriname (and other countries) to the remarkable diversity of Suriname's population. The assumption of this approach is that the many ethnic groups cannot and will not get along nor accommodate, much less cooperate with each other because they are different and invest their trust, time, and resources in their own group at the expense of other forms of cooperation. Hence, Suriname should be inherently unstable due to complexities associated with its ethnic make-up.

The political history of Suriname, after the introduction of universal suffrage in the 1940's, does not support this view of things. The maturing of Suriname's political parties, from the domination of white and Creole elites in the 1950's, through ethnic political party organization and the constitutional advance to independence in 1975, demonstrates a remarkable stability and consistency of cooperation across ethnic boundaries.

Despite policy disagreements, which were often about economic issues rather than something inherently cultural, and personal feuds which occurred from time to time, the twin concepts of "the politics of brotherhood" (*verbroederingspolitiek*) and "broad basis" (*brede basis*) prevailed from the early 1960's. Strong and stable governments were most likely to occur when the larger political parties representing the major ethnic groups shared power in a coalition.

To be sure, periods of ethnic tension occurred. We saw, for example, that during the years immediately prior to independence tensions flared. Many Hindustani opposed the path to independence set out by the Creole leaders of the time. Several instances of arson occurred, and thousands of Hindustani left the country and settled in the Netherlands. The NPK I government managed to secure a slim margin for its independence proposal when

Mr. Hindorie, a VHP parliamentarian, changed party alliance. This action was motivated by the desire to diffuse tensions between the two major ethnic groups in the country, and it worked.

The democratic tradition which developed after 1948 was interrupted by the military take-over in 1980. Ironically, that occurrence in 1979-1980 was at a time of unrivaled growth in prosperity, supported, among other things, by a large influx of foreign aid (see graph one, 28). Important for the preceding observation on power sharing was that this government, the NPK II, did not include representatives from the main Hindustani party in its coalition. The military coup of 1980 removed a government with only a slim majority in parliament and weakened by lack of representation of one of the largest ethnic groups.

Jules Sedney, former Prime Minister, scholar and himself head of a multi-ethnic government from 1969-1973, has argued that despite the delicate balance of multi-ethnic governance, called “consociationalism” or rule by ethnic cartels, this type of democracy functioned well in Suriname. And, he argued, that despite its shortcomings this type of democracy is to be preferred above the dictatorial military rule of the 1980’s, because it contains the necessary checks and balances needed to ensure governance acceptable to the people of Suriname. The system of rule during the military period seriously limited the participation of the essential associations of society, and pressure emanating from these groups hastened the return to democratic government.

The history of Suriname suggests that that multi-ethnicity is not an obstacle to harmony, cooperation and governance endorsed by the voters, it is, on the contrary, one of the essential building blocks of stable government. In the Suriname reality, the mobilization and management of ethnic balancing is what makes possible any governance at all. The ethnic group is one of the essential associations of society, and this identity is expressed through participation in clubs, churches/temples, sodalities, residential areas and so forth. It seems that the facilitating role of the government in Suriname is actually strengthened by incorporating representatives from the various ethnic groups. Trying to dominate or ignore this social dimension in government seems to promote passive resistance rather than effective participation.

One of the opening positions of this chapter, that awareness building is a prerequisite for effective action, compels us to reconsider the view that ethnicity is necessarily an obstacle to governance. Of course, the associations of society can be manipulated to such an extent that they have a very negative impact on governance and the well-being of the citizenry. However legitimate these fears, ethnic pluralism can also contribute to a stable government, and in Suriname this has often been the case. Cultural and social diversity can also be seen as an irreplaceable source of spiritual and intellectual richness as well as a source of self-esteem and pride for all humankind, an important development resource. Acknowledging the associations of society can help increase control of citizens of their own well-being and at the same time contribute to the process of nation building.

However, the fragile nature of ethnic coalition building leaves many in Suriname feeling uncomfortable. On July 10, 2000 Ruth Wijdenbosch, a leading spokesperson for the Creole NPS party of the New Front coalition, expressed her concern. On Radio ABC she said that she would feel more comfortable if the New Front were a single political party rather than an ethnic-based coalition.

Our second theme was the gap between the rich and the poor and the poverty that can be associated with the economic conditions in the country. Perhaps it is not possible to link the standard of living to occurrences of conflict in the history of Suriname, but one cannot help noting that many of the conflicts which did occur could be associated with rapid changes in the economic situation of the country.

After the collapse of the Amsterdam stock market in 1773 and the rapid decline in plantation output, and despite three peace treaties concluded in the 1760s, the Maroons war flared up again. During the protest actions in 1933 associated with the arrest of Anton de Kom, two persons were killed and 22 wounded. These events transpired during the depression, which also hit Suriname very hard. Large number of Surinamers were unemployed and had trouble sustaining themselves and their families. The socio-economic context of the military take-over in 1980 was not one of economic decline. Surinamers were living well at the end of the 1970s. The population, however, was becoming increasingly apprehensive, as it became clear that the large show projects financed by the massive influx of development aid were not creating a sustainable economic base. No increase of productivity and new jobs were forthcoming, at least, so it seemed. When the military took over, many gave a sigh of relief and hoped that the new rulers would embark upon ventures resulting in increased but sustainable welfare. This did not materialize.

The absence of checks and balances created a situation in which the foreign currency reserves inherited from the last democratic government were quickly depleted, and when development aid was suspended after the December murders of 1982, the economy went into a sharp decline. The shortage of foreign currency resulted in a parallel market, and the subsequent devaluation of the Suriname guilder impoverished the population at a rate hitherto unknown. In 1984 the Suriname guilder traded for US $ 0.56 cents. By 1991 this rate had declined to 0.05 cents. In 1994 the rate dropped below 0.0025 cents, in 1998 the rate sank further to 0.001 and in 2000 we saw a rate of 0.0005 cents for the guilder. The Graph 2 (P. 34) gives a good impression of this devaluation in the 1990s.

The weak demand for bauxite products in the early 1980's forced the major companies operating in Suriname to cut cost and lay off workers. Modernizing operations in order to achieve more efficient production and lower costs was opted for in the bauxite town of Moengo in east Suriname. The labor force was reduced from 1200 to below 300. This massive lay-offs and an increasingly harsh and repressive regime by the military fostered a mood of civil disobedience among the Maroons in the area and in 1986 the interior war broke out. The dramatic decline in the value of the guilder between 1998 and 1999 crippled the Wijdenbosch government and, as we have seen above, after weeks of streets protests, the President agreed to shorten his term by one year.

We can conclude from the historical overview that, during periods of rapid economic decline often resulting in a widening gap between rich and poor, the citizenry suffering from a decline in standard of living and impoverishment, will respond forcefully to seek relief. This type of public response has been often been defined by those in power as unconstitutional. A case in point was the response of the government to the public manifestation surrounding Anton de Kom's arrest during the world depression. When protestors failed to disperse they were fired upon.

A recent example were the mass protests against the Wijdenbosch government in May of 1999. These actions were precipitated by hyper inflation in a rapidly deteriorating economy. In this instance, impoverishment and economic pain led directly to social and political instability making it impossible for the democratically elected government to function. Once economic problems created a political crisis of this magnitude, the risk of escalation resulting in serious conflict increased dramatically, and a peaceful resolution is rarely achieved without major concessions. The impact of economic decline and sharpening cleavage between the haves and the have nots posed a serious threat to peace and democracy. Again, this is not to say that there was an obvious causal connection between economic conditions and conflict or suspension of democracy. It was becoming clear from the history of Suriname, however, that good governance was an important condition for maintaining peace and strengthening democracy. This brings us to our third theme, the challenge of incorporating kin ordered societies into the nation state.

Suriname faces a formidable challenge in the process of nation building. Many Surinamers and outside observers decry that the promise of independence was never fulfilled. And, when the post-independence period is examined, they are correct about the facts of the matter. However, after the elections of 2000 we may be witnessing a new realism on the part of Surinamers and their friends. On the same radio program on which Ruth Wijdenbosch spoke, another NPS leader candidly reported that both Suriname and the Netherlands must share the responsibility for not meeting the development goals set forth in 1975 nor have they succeeded in resolving the dilemmas of decolonization.

Suriname is one of the many developing nations in the world seeking to establish overriding national alliances that transcend regional and ethnic differences. In addition to these complex diversities, however, looms the additional challenge of dealing with the issue of kin ordered societies existing in the context of a nation state modeled on western norms.

As noted above, several kin ordered societies exist throughout the hinterland of the country, and they can be grouped into two categories: the indigenous Amerindian population, which lived in the area long before the first Europeans arrived in the early 1600s, and the descendants of rebel African slaves who escaped from the plantations and settled along the rivers of the interior during the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries.

Opinions on what to do about the situation vary from one extreme to the other. Some believe that kin ordered societies are remnants of earlier forms of organizing society, and that the process of assimilating ethnicities into the nation state will follow a "natural"

course. Through exposure to Western influences, members of these communities will sooner or later abandon their ideology of collective ownership and family-based political participation, and embrace a more individualistic western economic and political order. At the other extreme there are those who believe that kin ordered societies are viable and functional socio-cultural entities and that their members must be afforded the opportunity to preserve their way of life in the context of the modern nation state, but also be granted autonomous administration of their territories.

During the past century, many of the kin ordered societies have disappeared. Some have been incorporated into modern political systems, but a growing number are advocating cultural revival and are seeking formal recognition of their socio-cultural, economic and political traditions. Out of necessity, they are also seeking legal protection of their resource based economy. In Suriname members of kin ordered societies are becoming increasingly vocal and now demanding legal recognition of their social, economic and political institutions. They want rights to land, access to natural resources and recognition of chieftaincy.

The assumption that kin ordered societies will automatically assimilate into the nation state, that this process will follow a natural course, and that their institutions will fade away with time, is not born out by the events of the past two decades. On the other hand, taking on a completely pro-position on the status of the people of the forest at the expense of coastal interests and enterprise will only end up alienating members of the legislative and executive branch, precisely those authorities whose opinions and views will shape modern Suriname, and who are in a position to do something about the future status of kin ordered societies.

To be sure, kin ordered societies are viable and functional socio-cultural entities. The Governments of the modern states need to recognize this. However, this does not mean that all cultural practices must be preserved and maintained at all cost. A traditional chief from Ghana recently argued that "our political institutions need to play a complementary role rather than a competitive role with our traditional institutions (such as chieftaincy) in moving Africa forward." He notes, however, that in order to achieve this

"our traditional institutions need some major reform and empowerment. We must within ourselves eschew avarice, unnecessary litigation and unwarranted autocracy in order to enhance our own credibility. We also need to modernize some of our cultural practices and religious beliefs to make them acceptable to the entire society."

In chapter 2 we explore conflict *and* development as related processes.

Questions and Issues:

1. How has geography and climate affected the emergence of “two Surinames?”

2. If you accept the position of two Surinames, would you consider three or four Surinames? If so, what would they be based on?

3. Did the arrival of Independence for Suriname differ in any substantial way from other countries with which you have experience or knowledge?

4. What was (is?) Suriname's "challenge of independence?"

5. What was the genesis of the 1980 coup? Was this coup more typical of Latin American military coups or the African experience?

6. When did "democracy" conclusively return? With the elections of 1987?, 1991?, 1996? or 2000? We will deal with these questions later but what do you surmise are the difficulties in the transition from authoritarianism to democracy?

7. Is cultural pluralism and multi-ethnicity a problem and extra burden for the emergence of an organic nation-state? How does one get around this? Is ethnicity more problematic that "class?"

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CHAPTER II

ACHIEVING AND MAINTAINING PEACE

Chapter One outlined the events that defined the modern history of Suriname. As we have seen, however, several political events went terribly wrong in the late 1970's and throughout the 1980's. Authoritarianism and war cleaved the country and resulted in the destruction of democracy, life and property. Suriname lives with that legacy today.

The military government, established soon after the 1980 coup, oppressed the coast and soon began to expand its control and implement its revolutionary policies in the interior, the other Suriname. This would result in nearly seven years of bloody civil war; the so-called "Interior War" of the Jungle Commando headed by Ronnie Brunswijk. That story is told here in some detail because as of late 2001 the post-conflict issues are not yet resolved nor are the peace treaty protocols implemented. The interior of Suriname remains unsettled.

2.1 The Conflict: 1986-1992

In order to maintain peace it is essential to understand the nature, the causes, the life cycle, and the post conflict impact of the interior war. Needless to say, this type of analysis demands an impartial examination of the events and a good insight into the recent history of the country. A great deal of this chapter will consider the following questions:

- What type of conflict was the interior war?
- What were the causes?
- How did the conflict emerge, and what conditions and factors contributed to its cessation?
- What are the post conflict conditions in the conflict zone, but also in the country as a whole?

Conflict is defined as a situation in which two or more parties have conflicting interests. These parties can be individuals, small or large groups, or countries. If the divergent interest of countries or groups within a country cannot be integrated peacefully, a violent solution is often sought. Conflict situations vary from a very low level to a very high level; from taking on a hostile attitude to taking actions against the opponent that may

wound or kill and cause extensive material damage to public or private property. Interests can clash over issues related to resources, power, identity, status, and values. Experts active in conflict resolution generally agree that most conflicts are caused by individuals or groups and can be ended by individuals or groups. Conflicts and the prevention of their recurrence can be greatly facilitated by an understanding of the factors that created problems in the first place.

In the preface to a publication of the European Platform for Conflict Prevention and Transformation, Mr. Jan Pronk, former Dutch Minister of Development Aid and prominent figure during Suriname's move to independence, noted that

"[c]onflict and development are two sides of the same coin. Conflict is an inherent part of development. Changes in distribution patterns or in power relations lead to conflict of interest. If the divergent interests of the various groups within society cannot be integrated peacefully, a violent solution is sought ……… In view of the often-disruptive nature of development, peace-building must be incorporated into the development process."

The interior conflict can be divided into two periods. The first covers the period between July of 1986 and August of 1989, when the two main actors were the National Army and the Jungle Commando (JC), a group of young Aukaner Maroon rebels who initiated the conflict with an attack on the army outpost at Stolkertsijver. Most of the fighting took place in East- and Central-Suriname. The second phase of the conflict began in August 1989 when the Tucajana Amazones TA) announced their entry into the conflict, by hijacking the Coppename river ferry with forty vehicles on board. This group consisted for the most part of Carib and Arowak Amerindians. The TA took control of western region of Suriname, but was also active in the Amerindian communities in the districts of Marowijne and Para.

In September of 1989 the Mandela group announced its existence to the media. The group was formed by young Matawai Maroons who operated along the Saramacca River region. Later on, yet another group was formed by Matawai youth, the Koffiemaka. This group also operated in the Saramacca River region.

In October of 1989 the Union for Liberation and Democracy (ULD) took over Mungo. This group was an offshoot of the JC, established to "disguise" the Mungo take-over as an act committed by a group other than the JC.

In May of 1990 the Angula group was formed by several Saramaka Maroons and challenged the JC in the Central Suriname region. Both the Mandela and Angula received technical and logistical support from the National Army.

During the second phase of the conflict, the Jungle Commando was challenged by the forces of the National Army, and also by the fighters of the Tucajana Amazones, the Mandela and Angula. The JC was forced to relinquish control of several regions in Central Suriname.

The First Phase: July 1986–August 1989

The interior conflict in Suriname started out with several direct engagements between the military and the rebels. On the night of July 21, 1986, a group of rebel Aukaner Maroons from East-Suriname attacked the military post at Stolkertsijver. This small outpost is located near the bridge across the Commewijne River, some 50 kilometers east of Paramaribo. Twelve soldiers were taken hostage.At the same time, an attack was launched on the military camp at Albina along the Marowijne River, the border with French Guiana. The group of rebels became known as the Jungle Commando(JC).The conflict quickly spread throughout the entireMarowijne District, one of the ten administrative and electoral constituencies of the Republic of Suriname.

In the months that followed, the JC launched several attacks on the base camp at Albina and on military platoons patrolling the eastern and central part of Suriname. On August 20, 1986, the Suriname Aluminum Company (Suralco) was forced to shut down the bauxite processing plants at Mungo. The next day the JC attacked a platoon of the National Army at Ajumara Kondre along the lower Marowijne River. Several soldiers were killed. The JC fighters were very mobile and moved freely up and down the Marowijne, Lawa and Tapanahoni rivers. In September, the JC hijacked a single engine Cessna at Apetina (Puleowime), an Amerindian village on the Tapanahoni River. This was the first of several hijackings that would take place.

At the end of November the JC destroyed two more bridges along the East-West highway and took over Mungo. A patrol of the National Army entered the area between Mungo and Albina from the north via creeks and attacked the small Aukaner settlement of Moi Wana. Over 30 women, children and elderly men were killed. On December 1, the government issued Decree A-22 declaring the state of emergency for the area. On December 2, the National Army drove the JC out of Mungo. By mid December the French authorities reported that already 5,000 refugees had sought a safe haven in French Guiana. On December 12, the formulation of a new Constitution was announced, paving the way for a return to democratically elected government.

At the end of 1986 the son of Paramount Chief Aboikoni of the Saramaka Maroons was kidnapped on the Upper-Suriname River, indicating that the JC was already active in this area. In January of 1987 the fighting spread to Central Suriname. Several towers of the high-tension power lines between the dam at Afobaka and the alumina smelter at Paranam were blown up. The aluminum refinery was shut down and the capital city of Paramaribo was left without electricity. In February the villagers of Pokigron, the first Saramaka village above the hydro lake, requested protection from the government against harassment by men of the JC.

That same month the JC destroyed the powerhouse at Mungo. The economy of East Suriname had ground to a halt. The refinery of the 3,000-hectare palm oil plantation at Patamacca was destroyed. Fortunately no one was killed. Lumber companies abandoned their forestry camps in the Patamacca area and expensive equipment was lost. Because the bauxite production in Mungo was shut down, the reserves of Suralco were depleted and for the first time in the history of the country bauxite had to be imported. By

February 1987 the number of refugees in French Guiana was 6,500 and by April it had grown to 8,000. Suriname sought assistance from the International Commission of the Red Cross and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

During the month of May some heavy fighting took place in the Mungo and Albina area, but the army consolidated its position and by August the bauxite workers in Mungo were able to return to work. On September 30 a referendum was held to approve the new draft Constitution of the Republic of Suriname. An overwhelming majority approved it and the road to the restoration of democracy was opened.

On November 25, 1987, elections were held for the first time in seven years, and the traditional political parties won forty of the fifty-one seats. The JC would now be fighting the National Army of a democratically elected government.

Positive news notwithstanding, the year closed with a serious human rights violation. The National Army reportedly arrested seven Maroon men in the village of Pokigron. They were driven north along the road to Brownsweg. The truck was stopped and the men were asked to dig a large hole. They were shot and buried in the hole. One of the men rolled down the embankment of the road after being shot and survived a few weeks. He was taken to town by the Red Cross and testified to the killings.

The intensity of the conflict waned somewhat in 1988. There were less direct confrontations between the army and the JC. The rebels did, however, resort to hit-and-run tactics and continued to raid military outposts and police stations in order to secure weapons and ammunition. When two vehicles of Suralco were hijacked in September of 1988 the JC denied involvement. In 1988, there were a number of tragic events involving Saramaka settlements in Central Suriname. There were inhabitants in a number of villages who disliked the authoritative manner of Brunswijk, who was an Aukaner, in dealing with the Saramaka communities of the Upper-Suriname River. There were also Maroons living in villages who had relatives in the army and who sympathized with thepolitical ideas of the revolution. It was also reported that in the case of Pokigron, one of the Chiefs had pointed out suspected sympathizers of the JC to the army, and that these men were arrested and executed by government forces. The JC, in turn, undertook various reprisal actions against inhabitants of several Saramaka settlements. In April of 1989 the JC attacked the village of Pokigron and almost the entire settlement was burnt to the ground. The next day the firsteighty displaced persons arrived in Paramaribo. The JC also attacked the settlement of Brownsweg and a number of houses were also destroyed.

In 1988 several organizations were asked to mediate in the conflict and the first peace efforts were made. The mediation by the Commission of Christian Churches resulted in the Protocol of St. Jean of June 28, 1988, butthe government never formally endorsed the results of this agreement.

A year later talks were resumed and on June 7, 1989, the JC agreed to a cease-fire. A month later, on July 21, the Accord of Kourou, named for the town in French Guiana, was signed. Both the government and the National Assembly endorsed the

agreement, but the army rejected it. There was opposition to the provision under which the ex-fighters would be incorporated into the police force. It was also argued that the accord was not in the interest of the Amerindian population, who would be at the mercy of legally armed ex-fighters of the JC in the police force, if the accord were to be implemented. On July 25, 1989, the Commander of the Armed Forces and chairman of the new political party NDP, Desi Bouterse, announced his disappointment with the Accord of Kourou. The French government, however, indicated that it was pleased with the accord, and that the refugees could now return home.

This disagreement resulted in a number of new developments that considerably altered the nature of the conflict. Four new warring groups would enter the conflict, and the stage of the fighting would now extend westwards, encompassing almost the entire interior region and a large part of the coastal area of Suriname. Only Paramaribo and its immediate surroundings would be considered safe from the threat of death and destruction.

The Second Phase: September 1989–August 1992

On August 31, 1989, the ferry at the Coppename River, 88 kilometers west of Paramaribo, was hijacked. One policeman died and the ferry was commandeered upriver, with forty cars and busses on board. The vehicles were unloaded at the Pikin Saron bridge, some eighty kilometers upriver and were used to take control of Carib and Arowak Amerindian villages along the 300-kilometer road from Zanderij to Apura. At the same time, two Maroon groups announced their existence, the Angula, consisting of primarily Saramaka youth, and the Mandela, manned by young Matawai Maroons. From the onset these groups cooperated with each other, and it was suggested that the National Army supported the new actors in the conflict. A few days after the hijacking of the ferry, Prime Minister Henk Arron told the National Assembly that he had no indications that the TA were armed by the army but, in early 1992, President Venetiaan said that it was clear who had armed the fighters in the western part of the country.

The JC reacted to these developments by taking over Mungo for the second time in October of 1989. This take-over was carried out under the aegis of a new group with a new name, the Union for Liberation and Democracy (ULD) headed by Kofi Ajompong, but Ronnie Brunswijk remained the *de facto* leader of both the JC and the new group. The army wanted to take hard action and drive the new group out of Mungo, while the civilian government seemed to take on a more lenient attitude against the occupiers.

The government of President Shankar backed down on the Kourou Accord, and in November of 1989 the Commander of the National Army, Desi Bouterse, took the initiative to begin negotiations with the JC. These talks notwithstanding, some serious clashes occurred in the weeks after Bouterse began his talks. Early morning December 4, 1989, a group of JC men accompanied by mercenaries attacked the army post at Kraka. Seven soldiers died. Apparently Brunswijk was not happy with the manner in which this attack was carried out and the leading mercenary was guideedly shot through the head when he returned to Mungo. Nevertheless, the talks between Bouterse and Brunswijk continued.

Eventually, the civilian government took the lead again in the peace talks, and on March 24, 1990, a major meeting got underway in the presidential palace. The president himself took charge of the talks. The talks were attended by the JC and the traditional authorities, and even refugee leaders were flown in from French Guiana to participate in the deliberations. The Tucajana Amazones, however, refused to participate in the talks. The mood at the deliberations was tense and when word got out that a few days earlier a mysterious airplane with 1,000 kilos of cocaine had landed in the Mungo area, the talks fell apart.

In a scuffle at the cabinet of the Commander of the Armed Forces, two bodyguards of Brunswijk were shot. The National Army surrounded Hotel Ambassador, where the JC delegation was staying. The refugee leaders fled for a safe haven at the French Embassy until they could be shuttled out of the country. Brunswijk and the other members of the JC delegation were arrested. On March 28, fighters of the JC occupied the dam at Afobaka and the electric power to Paramaribo was cut off. The Marshall Creek bridge on the road to Afobaka was blown up and the production of bauxite in Mungo was halted by the JC. Brunswijk and the other JC members were released, and tension was reduced.

At the end of April the army landed troops in the Amerindian village of Pelelu Tepu along the Upper-Tapanahoni River and armed youth with military weapons. This was probably intended as a strategy to attack the JC strongholds along the Tapanahoni from the south. In May the military began a campaign to dislodge the JC from Mungo. As the army troops were advancing into Mungo, the JC took over the hydroelectric dam again and threatened to open the spillways, thus flooding the Suriname River with millions of gallons of water. At the end of May, the Angula group drove the JC from the dam and the army advanced in the direction of Mungo. The JC undermined Suralco facilities with dynamite and threatened to blow them up unless the president called a halt to the advance of the army into Mungo. The JC attacked Pelelu Tepu and disarmed the militia. Several hundred Trio and Oayanas (Wajana) Amerindians fled across the border into Brazil. Around mid-June the army and the JC were involved in heavy fighting, and on June 20 the army liberated Mungo. The JC blew up the office of Suralco and several other facilities on the way out.

In August the army attacked Langatabiki and tried to dislodge the JC from this island in the Marowijne River, some fifty kilometers upstream from Albina. The fighting continued and the villagers crossed the border into French Guiana, adding several hundred persons to the refugee population. The army finally took Langatabiki over in September.

Meanwhile, in the capital Paramaribo, political events were unfolding; in December of 1990 the so-called "telephone coup" took place, and the democratically elected government of President Ramsewak Shankar was removed from office. International condemnation of the take-over was overwhelming and the interim government promised elections within six months. The Permanent Council of the OAS repudiated the military coup and issued an appeal for reestablishment of the democratic institutional order In May of 1991 elections were held and the Venetiaan-led FRONT returned to power. In

March of 1992 President Venetiaan installed the peace commission and talks to end the conflict began again. A detailed account of this story continues below.

2.2 The Type of Conflict

It is difficult to precisely explain why and how tensions between parties with conflicting interests involve into a violent conflict or war, or to predict when such an escalation will take place. Efforts to achieve and maintain peace, however, will most certainly benefit from insights that can be gleaned from previous experiences. We have reviewed the main events that transpired in the course of the conflict. We will now try to identify some of the characteristics of the six-year conflict.

Force and Coercion

The type of *force and coercion* used included conventional war, guerilla tactics, and intentional displacement of persons, besides destruction of private property and several instances of serious human rights violations. The interior conflict in Suriname started out with several direct engagements between the Suriname national military and the rebels. The first six months of the conflict were characterized by direct engagements between the military and the Jungle Commando. As the conflict wore on, however, the Jungle Commando shied away from direct confrontation and resorted to ambushes and hit-and-run military tactics. The JC did continue to attack military and police outposts and stations in order to secure weapons and ammunition.

Most of the material damage was done with fire and dynamite. Infrastructure, private houses and public buildings throughout the war zone were destroyed, either to protect through isolation areas occupied by the rebels, or to retaliate after demands were not met. For example, the office of Suralco and several other facilities were blown up in Mungo when the government did not halt the advances of the army to the east of the country. The National Army, likewise, used fire to destroy large parts of Albina in order to prevent the JC from using uninhabited structures as a cover for attack on the military camp. The National Army also destroyed houses of persons who collaborated with the JC.

Throughout the conflict both sides took actions against civilian targets. This also contributed an ethnic dimension to the conflict. The National Army burned Mungo Tapu, the largest Aukaner Maroon village in eastern Suriname, to the ground. Only the church and part of the school were left standing. It was also noted that the small Aukaner settlement at Moi Wana was attacked by a platoon consisting for the most part of Amerindian soldiers. Over 30 women, children and older men were shot. The Jungle Commando, in turn, took revenge on several occasions. The most notable was the attack on the Saramaka village of Pokigron in April of 1989. The Jungle Commando burnt this Central Suriname village to the ground as a reprisal for apparent collaboration with the army, and the entire population fled to Paramaribo. The army, in turn, burnt down some twenty houses in the village of Botopasi, as a reprisal for collaboration with the Jungle Commando. During the conflict the army detained over 100 Maroon men suspected of

being collaborators of the Jungle Commando, without ever being taken to trial. They were released after an intervention by the International Commission for the Red Cross..

There was no ethnic cleansing during the conflict, however. In the early stages of the fighting the National Army used public announcements to urge Maroons in East Suriname to move out of their respective areas of residence. As noted above, one village was totally destroyed and houses of other villages were burnt in East Suriname. These actions were not prompted by ethnic hatred, but primarily by the perceived need of the military to prevent the rebels from using communities as cover for their hostile acts. This is typical of a guerilla type war. The JC only maintained a relative small number of regular fighters under arms. In the different areas intermittent use was made of young volunteers to participate in the activities of the JC. The number of men in full time service was a little over 100, but the JC could field between 500 and 1,000 men at the height of its popularity. Communities in which leading members of the JC were born or raised, or were know to have resided, were viewed with particular suspicion.

However, there were several cases of outright human rights violations perpetrated by both the National Army and the Jungle Commando. Killings of civilians at Moi Wana and along the road to Pokigron allegedly by the military are examples of these violations. There were several guides of killing or torture of prisoners. At one point during the war the JC killed two National Army prisoners. It was claimed that the instruction from the JC headquarters in Stoelmanseiland—"do not take prisoners"—were not properly understood. Members of the JC killed the prisoners with machetes. After the war several shallow graves were found of Maroons who were summarily executed.

The conflict also produced a sizeable refugee population. At the end of 1986 and in early 1987 the National Army published announcements urging civilians living in the villages along the Cottica River to move to safer locations. A considerable number of houses along the road between Stolkertsijver, Mungo and Albina were repeatedly sprayed with bullets and many were burnt down. Thousands of residents of East Suriname fled to Paramaribo, while others crossed the border into French Guiana, and the refugee population abroad swelled to over 10,000 persons. Many Maroons living along the border with French Guiana fled across the river and settled in camps on French territory. The number of refugees was high enough to warrant a permanent presence of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Suriname and French Guiana. The number of displaced persons who fled to the capital city outnumbered the refugees on foreign soil. They lived under very poor conditions in makeshift shelters.

Damage to the infrastructure and businesses was also considerable. On several occasions the Jungle Commando hijacked airplanes and held the pilots hostage. The rebels hijacked numerous vehicles belonging to Suralco and private persons. On several occasions power lines between the dam at Afobaka and Paramaribo were blown up with dynamite, resulting in prolonged power outages. When the JC was dislodged from Mungo in June of 1990, the rebels blew up the Suralco offices and damaged several other facilities. In the conflict zone the rebels seriously damaged roads with dynamite during attempts by the rebels to ambush passing military, and destroyed quite a number of bridges during

attempts to fend off the army. The Patamacca palm oil plantation was abandoned and suffered major losses. Almost all lumber activities in the area were shut down. Transport, retail and wholesale business suffered major losses, as entire stores were plundered and burnt down.

The fighting in Marowijne District and the destruction of Albina isolated southeast Suriname during the interior conflict. Maroons living further upriver were forced to turn to towns in French Guiana, such as St. Laurent, to purchase goods and supplies. The devalued Suriname guilders were not accepted on French soil. Maroons and members of the JC were forced to find a source of currency acceptable to French businesses. During the early 1980s the Marowijne, Lawa and Tapanahoni rivers had become preferred locations for gold dredges. Gold was accepted as a method of payment and Maroons living in the areas isolated by the war were forced to take up gold mining in order to be able to purchase supplies across the border. During the conflict the Jungle Commando began to collect impromptu "taxes" from gold miners working in the area, and eventually members of the JC became active in dredging for gold. While the interior conflict had a negative impact on the economic situation in the country as a whole, it spurred considerable activity in the gold mining sector of East Suriname. The conflict also took on an economic dimension, which would become manifest during the peace talks. The representatives of the JC demanded that the issue of access to gold mining concessions be included in the peace accord.

Throughout the conflict the government maintained an intense propaganda campaign against the Jungle Commando, which was depicted as a group of terrorists supported by the Netherlands and mercenaries. Conversely, the Jungle Commando waged a propaganda war in the Netherlands with the support of the resistance groups, and claimed to be fighting for the return of democracy.

In sum, the conflict started out as an all out civil war, with direct engagements and field battles, but as time wore on hit-and-run ambushes replaced direct engagements as the preferred tactic of the Jungle Commando. All-out war evolved into a crisis situation or low intensity conflict. There was a lower level of lethality; however, the level of social and economic disruption grew worse and the conflict dragged on. Government officials, teachers and medical personnel were not willing to risk their lives and their material possessions by residing in the conflict zones. At some locations a humanitarian emergency developed, and assistance was needed to sustain the local population. As it evolved, the conflict took on an increasingly political and ethnic dimension. From an economic perspective, the conflict was very destructive, despite some local upsurges in gold mining to sustain the JC and the local population in eastern Suriname. Serious human rights violations occurred throughout the conflict, and the ethnic make-up of the various groups that challenged each other, did bring about tensions, but fortunately these sentiments seem to have dissipated in the years after the peace was achieved.

Substantive Issues

At the outset the *substantive issues* seemed to revolve around a conflict of governing ideologies. The development of this conflict goes back to the 1980s when the military leadership took over the country. With this take-over the stage was set for a split between the main political ideologies. As the months passed political leaders of the nationalist and socialist parties gained influence with the young military leaders and began to play an important role in policy making. Ideas, which did not find their way into the traditional political platform, were now developed and promoted. These new ideas were fielded in the context of an unrepresentative form of government, which did not promote inclusive forms of power sharing. A manifest of the revolution was produced describing the "rise and fall" of the old political system and the lack of development, and the failures of the development efforts were attributed to colonialism and neo-colonialism and the weak national consciousness of the upper class which dominated the business community.

During the second phase of the conflict a new substantive dimension was added. Three years of conflict pitted the National Army against the JC. The guerilla group consisted for the most part of Aukaner Maroons and it had its support base for the most part in the Aukaner villages of East and Southeast Suriname. As the fighting developed, the Amerindian villages in the conflict zones began to suffer the negative consequences of violence and the lack of government control. They began to search for means to protect their settlement and to secure their interests in the region. It was the Amerindian groups who supported the Tucajana Amazones, and they began to bring into the discussion the causes of conflict related to the status and well being of kin ordered societies. The Accord of Kourou was rejected by the Amerindians because they felt that incorporating ex-fighters of the JC into the police force would side step the issue of the status and well-being of people living in kin-ordered societies. The matter of the status of chieftaincy and land rights would not be addressed. These and other issues would eventually become essential components of the peace accord of August 1992. The rejection of the Kourou Accord was well received by Commander Bouterse and his supporters, who were dead set against any measures which would enhance the status of the JC, or give the ex-fighters some kind of official role in the state apparatus.

Parties to the Conflict

Initially the *parties to the conflict* were the military leadership and the army they controlled, on the one side, and the group of young Aukaner Maroons that formed the Jungle Commando, on the other. The clash started out as a confrontation between the military leadership of the country and a regional indigenous community. But as the conflict evolved, the already tense political situation in the country prompted many to take sides. Those persons and groups supporting the revolution and the military leadership depicted the rebels as traitors and mercenaries, while opponents of the undemocratic government quietly hoped that Ronnie Brunswijk and his men would be able to challenge or defeat the National Army and thus damage the credibility of the military leadership.

The overview of the history of Suriname in Chapter I indicated that Suriname inherited from its colonial past multi-ethnic make-ups as well as a social divide between the coastal

area and the interior. It was also noted that ethnic and regional differences as such do not pose a threat to political stability, but that these conditions may be negatively exploited by one or more parties seeking to advance their interests. The interior conflict did not start as a clash between ethnic groups. Ethnic identity did become an issue, however, as groups living in the war zones were drawn into the conflict. The area in East Suriname where the conflict started is populated for the most part by Aukaner Maroons. However, interspersed between the Maroon settlements are quite a number of Amerindian villages, both Carib and Arowak. These communities ended up in the middle of the fighting. Many Amerindian youths were part of the National Army, and many more were recruited as the fighting continued. This situation ended up pitting Maroons in the Jungle Commando against Amerindians in the National Army.

As the fighting spread to Central Suriname, other Amerindian and Maroon communities were also dragged into the conflict. In fact, the Saramaka Maroons ended up fielding their own guerilla group, the Angula, with covert support from the armed forces. The Matawai Maroons fielded two groups, first the Mandela group appeared on the scene, and then the Koffiemaka announced its existence. These groups also seemed to have been supported by the National Army in their fight against the JC. Even though the conflict did not start out as an ethnic conflict, it did attain this dimension as the fighting spread to Central Suriname and more and more communities were dragged into the conflict.

2.3 The Causes

In discussing the causes of the conflict, a distinction can be made between the more enduring structural conditions that led to the conflict, and the more immediate causes, including the enabling and triggering factors. In the discussion below a distinction will be made between the more enduring structural conditions, the systemic causes, the more recent enabling factors, the proximate causes, and the immediate causes, the triggering events. These distinctions can be illustrated with an example. In the case of the interior conflict of Suriname, over-dependence on development aid could be considered a structural condition, a systemic cause; dissatisfaction about the use and contribution of the aid to the well being of the people could be considered an enabling factor, a proximate cause; while the economic impact of the suspension of development aid after 1982 may have helped trigger the conflict. The suspension itself, however, could also be a proximate cause. After all, development aid can help lessen the negative impact of certain structural conditions on the lives of the people in the country. When aid is suspended, this positive mediating role ceases to exist. These are very fluid concepts that are used to describe hyper-complex situations. It is not always easy to decide if a factor is structural, enabling or triggering. Moreover, the factors that brought about the transition from a political dispute to a violent conflict in 1986 are numerous and difficult to identify. There will be no consensus among experts about the relative importance of the structural, enabling and triggering determinants, and yet, we should try to at least identify what we think are some of the key factors that contributed to the outbreak of the conflict. Let us look first at the structural considerations.

Structural Determinants

As we have seen in the brief overview of the history of Suriname, the countries' colonial legacy left it with a multi-ethnic population, but also with a socio-cultural and economic gap between the coastal area and the interior. These conditions by themselves need not be problematic. In general ethnic relations in Suriname are quite good, and relations between the coastal area and the interior have also been cordial. Ethnicity and the differences between the coastal area and the interior were not the driving factors in the interior conflict, but they became a factor once the conflict was set in motion. The initial conditions for the conflict, however, were set in Paramaribo, five years after the massive influx of development aid had started and had yielded almost no tangible result.

The take-over by the military in 1980 brought into focus the contrasting views entertained by politicians regarding the development of the country. On May 1, two months after the military took over the country, the appointed President Henk Chin A Sen presented a government statement on Independence Square calling for an overhaul of the government and the private sector. A process of renewal involving the political, social, economic, and educational system would be initiated. The statement noted that large-scale corruption, paternalism, deception during elections and electoral fraud had left Suriname a democratic country in name only. It was suggested that in reality the country was not a parliamentary democracy. Under the new system a law regulating internal democracy in organizations wishing to participate in the elections would force the parties to adopt more democratic decision-making procedures. The old political system was to be blamed for the lack of development, or the failures of the development efforts. The military government promised drastic measures to ensure that the conditions prior to 1980 would not return to everyday life. To the supporters of the democratically elected leaders of the past this promise sounded more like a threat than an assurance of a brighter future.

Not surprisingly the military and their revolutionary advisors opted to create ruling and administrative structures, which would serve to consolidate their power at the expense of the traditional political parties, churches, and other forms of assemblage and organization. Two such instruments were People's Committees (*Volks Comité*) and People's Militia (*Volks Militie*), which were largely grass roots organizations to mobilize mass support for the revolution on the one hand, and recruit support for the regime through new channels dominated by the revolutionary elites.

To be sure, regional representation in Suriname to this day is made difficult by language and cultural barriers, especially between the coastal area and the interior, as well as by the large distances. The highly centralized government finance system with limited return of revenues to the contributing regions is also a structural problem that still prevails. The latter highlights the contrast between the coastal area and the districts where major mineral and forestry extraction take place. No formal legislation exists to this day to establish the integration of the kin-ordered societies into the nation state. There is a limited government presence and control of the hinterland. These are all factors that existed then, and still exist today. The claim that the process of state formation is still incomplete, and that the democratic tradition is not fully developed, is reasonable. However, this does not mean that in the period prior to 1980 Suriname was a democracy

in name only. The historical overview indicates that the Suriname's democratic tradition made some important advances in the period 1948-1980. After the restoration of democracy in 1987 and 1991 the process of democratic development continued unabated. The discussion about the need for internal democracy in political parties is slowly beginning to take shape. The newer political parties are strongly advocating internal democracy, but this trend has not yet made significant inroads in a number of established political organizations.

In looking at the causes of the interior conflict at the *local level*, several structural conditions stand out. The fact that the status of traditional leaders is not legally defined, and that there are no territorial safeguards for the Indigenous and Maroon peoples may have something to do with the fact that their traditions were not respected at the time.

In the interior the People's Committees formed alternative governance that ran directly into conflict with the traditional authority of the Maroon chiefs. Pitting the People's Committee against the Chieftaincy and, in fact, trying to displace and ignore the traditional leadership as this revolutionary policy did, would be one of the key issues that led to conflict. Disregard for Maroon practices was widespread and Maroons themselves were stereotyped as retrograde. The coastal military leaders and their clique of supporters tended generally to hold all aspects of Maroon culture—religion, aesthetics, and language—in disregard.

The introduction of the money economy into the production for consumption economy of the Maroons and Amerindians also had a profound impact. As the reliance on imported goods increased, Maroons were forced to spend more and more time in money earning activities. The men were active in the lumber trade; the women in the Mungo area would produce ginger, peanuts and Chinese yams for sale in Paramaribo. This increased competition for resources. The government-owned lumber company and several private firms secured lumber concessions in the traditional residence areas of the Maroons, where they had harvested trees for over 150 years. Very few Maroon women were given title to land, and the gardens surrounding the villages closer to Mungo were often taken over by local residents or persons from town. These circumstances no doubt contributed to the erosion of the authority of the traditional leaders, who could do little to fend off occupation of land or forest by persons with official title from town.

At the *international* level, the over-dependence on external aid for foreign income could also be considered a structural determinant of the conflict. In early 1983 development aid was suspended after the execution of fifteen prominent citizens, including the dean of the bar association, a number of attorneys, several pressmen, and a leading labor leader. Though it represented a minor portion of the overall government budget, development aid was responsible for over 40 percent of the foreign currency earning of the country. Those appalled by the human rights violations committed by the undemocratic military government quietly welcomed the suspension and hoped that it would expedite the return to democracy. Officially, the suspension was depicted by an illegal unilateral act committed by the government of the Netherlands.

The structural over-reliance on the bauxite industry can also be considered a contributing factor. Fluctuations in this sector can and often have had a negative impact on the economy of the country. After Word War II the bauxite industry became the most important foreign currency earner of the government and in the eighties this industry accounted for over 80 percent of Suriname's foreign income. Because it is an extractive industry, the reliance on the bauxite sector carries with it the risk that one day the resource that brought so many good tidings will be depleted. From a structural perspective, that is, in looking at objective changes in parties' material circumstances, we must note the mass layoff of Maroons in Mungo by Suralco in the mid-1980s.

In those days one of the main topics of discussion was the pending depletion of the reserves near the mining town of Mungo. The mines would be relocated further east to the Adjuma Hills, and Suralco, the mining company, would no longer need the infrastructure and facilities of Mungo. Surely the capital city of the Marowijne District would not become a ghost town, but a pullout by Suralco would have a very negative impact on the local economy. The company decided to cut back on services provided to employees and the Mungo community. Many lower ranking employees, such as gardeners and service providers, were laid off, or offered a transfer to new local contractor companies that paid considerably less. The company began negotiations to transfer the infrastructure and utilities to the government.

The enabling factors and triggers

In the case of the interior conflict it is difficult to distinguish the enabling and immediate causes. As the conflict escalated, different factors came into play, some of a more long-term nature and others more immediate. And yet, we will try to identify some of the major issues that fueled the conflict.

As noted above, the unrepresentative form of government of the 1980s did not promote national unity, the situation led to an increase in political tension and instability. The country was ruled by military who had suspended the democratic institutions. Many did apparently not appreciate the impact of this suspension. In a multi-ethnic nation such as Suriname, which is the home to several kin-ordered societies along the coast and in the interior, democratic feed-back mechanisms, which mediate the effect of the structural conditions on peoples' lives and behavior, are essential mechanisms for preventing differences in interests from escalating into conflict. In addition to representing the people, democratic leaders have to be re-elected, and this too forces one to consider up-front the impact of certain decisions on the people who one represents. Under the military leadership of the 1980s few took decisions and a system of direct management of the country's affairs without need for lengthy consultations was the preferred *modus operandi*. The existing social divides, such as that between the coastal area and the interior, were further exacerbated by the approach of the young military leaders not experienced in achieving conciliatory solutions through diplomatic action.

In February of 1986 a palaver of Maroon tribal chiefs (*Gran Krutu)* was held at Poketi, one of the main Aukaner ritual villages on the Tapanahoni River. Several representatives from the government attended the meeting, including the District Commissioner of Marowijne. The Paramount Chief of the Aukaner Maroons called attention to searches by the military in Albina of boats belonging to Maroons about to travel up-river with goods

and provisions. The Maroons living along the Lawa and Tapanahoni rivers had for over one hundred years used Albina as a post for purchasing supplies. The town is located on the Marowijne River, the border between Suriname and French Guiana, and it is very difficult to distinguish a smuggler from a person transporting supplies upriver. The military, on the other hand, claimed that these actions were necessary to curb smuggling. The searches, however, were at times conducted in a hostile manner, with guns pointed at the occupants of the boats. The Chief asked the visiting delegation to convey his concern about the searches to the government.

Once the JC actions got underway, the struggle was depicted as an attempt to dislodge the military leadership of the country and bring about a return to democracy. The Surinamese resistance in the Netherlands, formed by leading figures who fled from the military in the early 1980s, supported the JC and this added an international political dimension to the conflict. The resistance raised funds and helped the JC secure weapons to fight the army controlled by the military leadership of the country. The Netherlands, France and the United States were also supportive of the JC, albeit indirectly or covertly. Over 30 million Dutch Guilders (around US$ 13 million) in Dutch humanitarian aid was channeled into Eastern Suriname through the offices of the Moravian Church in St. Laurent. Some of this support, such as food, clothing, outboard motors and fuel, ended up in the hands of the JC.

The traditional Maroon leaders stood by powerlessly as the young militants in the villages prevailed over the moderates. The military fed the spiral of violence by answering every challenge by the Maroon rebels with a counter challenge. The harmed parties who felt justified in striking back fueled escalation. As the conflict escalated, third parties were drawn into it. The Amerindians probably felt that joining forces with the National Army would provide protection and further their interests, and this view was probably also shared by the Saramaka and Matawai Maroons who fielded their own forces to fight the Jungle Commando.

The situation was further complicated by economic decline at the national level. As noted above, in early 1983 development aid was suspended after the execution of fifteen prominent citizens. As a result of this suspension foreign exchange reserves fell precipitately and this trend continued into the years ahead, until the reserves were practically exhausted. It became harder and harder to secure foreign exchange and a parallel market developed for foreign currency such as US dollars and Dutch guilders. Uncontrolled deficit spending became the trend for the years to come and the high standard of living enjoyed by Surinamese declined as inflation began to take its toll. An almost last straw for interior dwellers was the recall of Suriname paper money at the end of 1985 and its replacement with new bills.

The impact on the economy of the villages was devastating. Some villages were left without a single regular wage earner. In this situation it was not to be expected that a foreign investor would be sensitive to the local impact of their decisions. If they had some advance indication of the events that were about to happen, management might have chosen a different way of doing what had to be done—increase competitiveness of

the bauxite industry, that is, cut costs, increase productivity and efficiency. This meant laying off several hundred workers.

Anthropologist Thoden van Velzen sums up the mood nicely:

> "Armed resistance against the army started as early as 1984, when a small group of young Maroons, led by Ronnie Brunswijk … seized government property and stopped trucks carrying luxury goods for the military elite from Cayenne to Paramaribo. The army retaliated with round-ups and other collective reprisals against Maroon communities on the coast. Maroons traveling from Paramaribo to their homes were stopped at checkpoints, where they had to strip to show they were not wearing any *obeahs* (spiritual icons). At some places, the army desecrated shrines and other places of worship, as if they represented a military threat. These measures caused widespread dissatisfaction and unrest among the population, and readied the scene for more ambitious actions…"

The crack down of the military on people of Mungo Tapu, the home village of Ronnie Brunswijk, seemed to have been one of the most immediate and direct cause s of the conflict. The lack of respect shown for Maroon culture and traditions by the military made the situation worse. In dealing with the chiefs of Mungo Tapu, the military leaders showed no moderation in their words and actions. Perhaps inadvertently the military ended up creating an atmosphere that was conducive to conflict. As a result, Brunswijk and his rebel group received overwhelming support from other Maroon communities in the area, and he began to be depicted as a kind of folk hero. In the early days of the conflict Brunswijk was even supported by elderly Aukaner men, who joined his forces or supported them with religious rituals and with the preparation of charms. As the conflict wore on, this support would erode. His hero image faded as Brunswijk also took to heavy-handed means of dealing with local people and communities. His coercive actions provoked resistance, and the other Maroon groups who originally welcomed him as a hero took up arms to fight his rebel group.

2.4 Early Attempts at Achieving Peace

The military made its position clear after the 1987 election by saying that "You don't negotiate with terrorists." The Front government was powerless and the Jungle Commando swung into action again, launching attacks now in central Suriname. Some exploratory talks between the Jungle Commando and members of the Surinamese Council of Christian Churches were held in French Guiana and at Brunswijk's base at Langatabiki, but produced no results because of lack of government and military support. In 1989 President Ramsewak Shankar called for a general amnesty for all war-related violence in his New Year's address. The National Assembly had passed such a law earlier in the year but had excluded cases involving human rights violations (such as summary executions, torture, and others). This exclusion provoked an angry response from the military that claimed that the law and its exclusions were aimed squarely at them and that they had the most to lose.

Nevertheless, the peace initiative in 1989 would pass from the Christian Council of Churches to the Front government. Members of the Front government had preliminary talks with the Jungle Commando at Schiphol Airport, in the Netherlands, and several months later resumed talks in French Guiana. Nothing concrete emerged until the venerable head of the East Indian party (the VHP) of the Front government, Jaggernath Lachmon, headed a series of negotiations at Portal Island in the Marowijne River, on the border with French Guiana. He and Brunswijk signed a document which called for an immediate cease fire, termination of the state of emergency in east and south Suriname, provision of representation in the National Assembly for war torn areas, and aid for resettlement of refugees. Subsequent negotiations stalled on Brunswijk's demand that members of the Jungle Commando become a unit of the National Police, a position adamantly opposed by the military and not supported at all by the President Shankar. The National Assembly dropped the provision calling for an armed unit of former fighters in the police. However, it continued defying the military—which was in reality against the peace treaty no matter what the compromises or conditions the National Assembly was willing to concede—when it voted in favor of the peace treaty.

The peace did not last long. Shortly after its passage by the parliament, an Amerindian counter-insurgency calling itself the Tucajana Amazones opened hostilities, explaining that their grievance was to protest what had become known as the Kourou agreement of 1989, and to serve as opponents of what they proclaimed was an unconstitutional agreement between the Front government and the Jungle Commando, who they claimed were common terrorists. The government now confronted two armed groups in the interior with the Tucajana, many claimed, acting as allies of the military against the government, and Brunswijk's forces.

With this news, Brunswijk himself withdrew from the peace agreement, leaving the Kourou peace agreement with but one supporter, an increasingly weak civilian government. Remarkably, with the withdrawal of the Jungle Commando from the civilian supported peace efforts, the Commander of the Armed Forces, Desi Bouterse, started making overtures to strike peace with Brunswijk, and met him in 1989 in a town near Mungo. The meeting led to little more than propaganda, but served to illuminate the complex flux of parties and events in Suriname. By the end of 1989 the positions of the active parties privy to the Kourou peace accord saw the Jungle Commando willing to continue a dialogue although still technically at war with the military; the civilian government non-committal and, the military and Tucajana against the peace agreement as it stood.

All of the delicate and sometimes contradictory negotiations were mooted however in December of that same year when the military launched a second coup (the first was ten years before, in February 1980) and sent the Front government home in what has been called variously the "telephone coup" and the "Christmas Eve coup." The military took over again and the abortive redemocratization of Suriname, started in 1987, came to an abrupt end.

The military leadership selected Johan Kraag, a former politician with the NPS block of the Front and elder statesman, as the new president, and Jules Wijdenbosch, a prominent member of the military-aligned NDP, as vice president. Elections would be held by mid-1991 and monitored by the OAS. The main concern then in the diplomatic circles in Paramaribo was that, with elections approaching, if legal procedures were followed and respect was shown for constitutional norms and laws—not only in political but also in criminal matters … then the question of the use of force would not come up.

As the conflict wore on the number of Suriname refugees on French soil caused a political backlash. Crime rates in St. Laurent and in the vicinity of the camps increased and the local French population began to worry about the prospect of a permanent presence of the refugees in the area. With each year that passed the French authorities lost more and more sympathy for the struggle of the JC and hoped for a speedy resolution of the conflict, so that the almost 10,000 Surinamers could be repatriated.

With the demise of law and order in the interior, Maroon groups who had originally supported the JC began to demand the return of a government presence and formal institutions of social control. The heavy-handed manner of Brunswijk and his supporters also germinated an aversion against the situation. As the conflict dragged on, the quality of life in the war zone went from bad to worse. Schools remained closed in the interior and medical care was hard to come by. Young armed rebels could at any time demand support from the local population, and refusal was not taken lightly. With most of the businesses shut down, employment opportunities for those not active in the conflict had become almost non-existent.

The free and open elections of May 25, 1991, yielded the following results: New Front thirty seats, the NDP twelve seats, and the coalition DA ’91 nine seats. The NDP was reasonably pleased with their results; up from three to twelve seats. The New Front coalition was not; seeing its vote share drop from forty-one to thirty. The new coalition DA ’91 enjoyed the fortunes of winning an impressive nine seats and defined itself as a middle block of sorts. With its thirty seat majority the New Front was once again faced with forming a new government, although this time in a more complicated position than 1987. Besides the old challenges of military insubordination, economic collapse, and a guerrilla war still not sealed by a durable peace convention, they now had to negotiate with a new party, the DA ’91 to find the votes for the two-thirds parliamentary majority (thirty-four votes) to pass legislation resulting in a change of the Constitution which also required a two-thirds majority vote.

The first task faced by the New Front government, headed by President Runald R. Venetiaan, was to reduce the power of the military, remove the leadership in place since the early 1980’s and, if possible, return the military to the barracks. This series of negotiations, which resulted in the removal of Commander Bouterse from command in 1993, and replacing him with former officer Arthy Gorre.

With the military more or less under the control of the civilian government in early 1992, the New Front turned its attention to the resolution of the interior conflict. Efforts were

made to restart the Kourou negotiations. Initial discussions were held with Amerindians under the umbrella of the Council of Eight, a group of prominent Amerindians, in an attempt to repudiate the Tucajana and their leadership and to consolidate democratic Amerindian elements. It is far less clear what occurred with the Jungle Commando except to say that by late April 1992 government mediation between the Jungle Commando and the Tucajana resulted in some initial and modest success. A peace agreement was signed between Brunswijk of the Jungle Commando and Thomas Sabajo of the Tucajana, which called for the opening of the interior to travel and trade, with the clause "so long as all economic activity was of benefit to the local population." However, both groups refused to turn in their weapons to the government.

By July 1992 the government reached an accord with the two armed groups agreeing that the parties involved in the civil war (the government, the military, the Jungle Commando, and the Amerindian Tucajana Amazones) would accept and abide by negotiations and agreements. This agreement led directly to the Lelydorp talks of August 1992, and their successful outcome under the Peace Agreement.

In the prolonged series of negotiations there were still many moves to be made and points to be discussed. Would either the Jungle Commando or the Tucajana be allowed to undertake any sort of political-military activity in their domains? What would be done with the armaments of the two groups? How were questions of demobilization, the return of refugees, and resettlement to be addressed? And, finally, what guarantees would be provided for a just and equitable re-development of the interior following years of destruction and erosion of infrastructure?

The Lelydorp Talks

The civil conflict continued with varying degrees of intensity until the Peace Accord, or formally the Agreement for National Reconciliation and Development, was signed between the government, including the military, on the one hand, and the Jungle Commando and the Tucajana Amazones, on the other. The other three smaller groups agreed to become party to the accord after the negotiations had been concluded.

The urge for peace grew stronger and after the second restoration of democracy in 1991 almost everybody agreed that the interior conflict was causing more harm than good. On July 2, 1992, the Minister of Social Affairs and Housing, Willy Soemita, in his capacity as chairman of the Commission for the Advancement of the Peace Process, met with the leaders of the Jungle Commando. President Venetiaan chaired the meeting, held in the locality of Alliance, district of Commewijne. The parties agreed to work towards the signing of an all-inclusive peace agreement by August 1, 1992.

The negotiations, in the village of Lelydorp, outside Paramaribo, started on July 28, 1992, gathering representatives of the Jungle Commando, and the Tucajana Amazones. The government of Suriname was represented by the Peace Commission, composed of members of several ministries and assisted by representatives of the National Police and the National Army. Ronnie Brunswijk, of the Jungle Commando, and Thomas Sabajo, for

the Tucajana, represented the illegally armed groups. The other three armed groups (Angula, Mandela, and Koffiemaka), although not participating in the original deliberations, joined the negotiations in the last stages, when success for the Peace Accord became evident, and accepted the final agreement.

On August 8, 1992, the government and the five illegally armed groups signed the "Agreement for National Reconciliation and Development" in a ceremony at the National Assembly.

Critical to the success of the peace accord was the establishment of a consultative body for the development of the interior, with representatives from the interior communities, further underlining the need to have the Indigenous and Maroon residents of the interior participate in political decision-making. The urgent need to deal with the status of Chieftaincy and land rights were also indicated by the inclusion of such topics in articles 10 and 13. The need for a broader framework under which the incorporation of the Indigenous and Maroon societies into the nation-state could take place was also suggested by article 11, which called for a discussion of the status of these societies in the context of the International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 169. Other levels of complexity were referred to with the inclusion of article 12. While intended to improve regional representation, the two-year residence requirement for being elected to the National Assembly had, according to many persons from the interior, negative repercussions. Indigenous and Maroon representatives are not allowed to use their native languages during the debates in the National Assembly, and are forced to use their second or third language, Dutch. The skill to deliberate in Dutch requires a level of education most persons of the interior did not have an opportunity to acquire. Since most of the Indigenous and Maroon intellectuals lived in town, the two-year provision denied them the opportunity to put their educational skills at the service of the interior.

It should be noted that the need for mentioning the difference between the material conditions (systemic), and the political or institutional factors (proximate) was revealing because the accord assigned high priority to the former, while no obvious sign of prioritizing the latter is indicated. This distinction seemed to have had an impact on the implementation of the relevant provisions. Measures intended to improve material conditions were taken, while the implementation of the provisions related to the political and institutional factors lagged far behind. This most certainly undermined the objectives set out in article 2.2, relevant to the social, economic and political integration of the interior into the nation state.

Appropriately, the title of the agreement—Accord for National Reconciliation and Development—implied that getting the warring parties to lay down their arms was not enough; conditions that led to the conflict also had to be addressed. Measures intended to bring a halt to the immediate crisis had to be followed by structural interventions to ensure that such a conflict did not recur in the future.

The term "reconciliation"in the Accord title referred to the operational measures. These were measures intended to bring a halt to the immediate crises, and included the

demobilization of the illegally armed groups, which, according to the agreement would cease to exist, as well as the turning in and destruction of all military weapons. The return of confiscated property and the amnesty law would also be placed in this context.

The term “development”in the Accordimplied structural measures intended to prevent such a conflict from recurring. These provisions anticipated wide-ranging political, economic and social interventions, including the reintroduction of health care, education, social security, food assistance programs, the rehabilitation of electricity and water services, infrastructure such as bridges and docks, and other transport facilities. Article 6, part 1, of the Accord states that the government should “design and execute a program in order to facilitate the reintegration in society of the former fighters.” Part 2 said that "the government shall, in consultation with other parties, and on the basis of a) the information provided, b) a selection procedure, and, if necessary, c) additional education and training, promote that the chances of the former fighters of the Jungle Commando and the Tucajana Amazones to find employment are enhanced."

Other points and protocols of the agreement were:

- Demining: the Jungle Commando and the Tucajana Amazones would cooperate with the government in the identification, searching and pointing out the location of mines, unexploded shells, weapons, and weaponry placed in the interior by the combatants.

- Disarmament: the objective was to start disarming the illegally armed groups in the two weeks after the signing of the agreement. This was contingent on the publication of the Amnesty Act.

- Amnesty: the Amnesty Act of 1989 (which was not approved at the time) would be granted to those persons who, from January 1, 1985 to the date when the Act enters into force, were involved in hostilities.

- Third party property: the illegally armed groups would return all third party property and belongings confiscated in a 30 day period after the signing of the agreement.

- Security: the government would take measures to optimize security and to enforce

  law and order in the interior through the National Police and military. A special unit of the National Police would be established for the interior, and former members of the Jungle Commando and Tucajana Amazones might be considered to join it. Patrols by the National Army would also be involved in the maintenance of law and order. (The government did not accept this protocol)

- Illegally armed groups: after demobilization the Jungle Commando and the Tucajana Amazones, as well as those illegally armed groups that later became part of the agreement, would cease to exist as operational groups.

2.5 Threats to Peace

Returning to the Barracks

In mid-1991, free and fair elections were held in Suriname, months after the Christmas Eve "telephone coup" of 1990, and eleven years after the original military coup of 1980. The elections of 1991 were the second elections held following the 1980 coup and, like their predecessor in 1987, elected a democratic government seriously weakened by the events of the 1980's. The 1991 victor, President Runald R. Venetiaan and the New Front political coalition, continued to face formidable threats to peace, both from remnants of the ex-fighters, particularly the Jungle Command of Ronnie Brunswijk and from the National Army itself, unhappy with a change in its commanding officer, former authoritarian leader Desi Bouterse, an issue which was to come to a head in 1993.

Desi Bouterse was the unelected, de facto head of Suriname following the military coup of 1980. With the election of the first free government in 1987 since the coup, then Colonel Bouterse became commander (*Commandant*) of the National Army. He continued to wield power and influence over the government of Ramsewak Shankar and his multi-party Front coalition. Following an alleged personal affront at the hands of the president, and sensing that he could capitalize on the growing economic frustration of the Surinamese people, Commander Bouterse launched a bloodless "telephone coup" (the government was telephoned at a Christmas Eve celebration at the presidential palace and dismissed by a senior military leader and associate of Commander Bouterse).

A handpicked civilian government with close associations to the military was installed with the promise that there would be elections in May of 1991. During that time the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) under President Johan Kraag and Vice President Jules Wijdenbosch, and the military under Commander Bouterse, consolidated power and public support.

Although the NDP performed decently in the 1991 elections the government was won by the New Front coalition, basically a revised and expanded version of the 1987-1990 Front government. President Venetiaan had several mandates to undertake in order to secure and strengthen democracy. With his installation, the president had unstable situations on two fronts. The Peace Accords were not yet signed with the warring groups in the interior and, on the urban front, Commander Bouterse was head of an anti-government armed forces.

In the government itself, an emboldened President Venetiaan began efforts in 1992, through his Minister of Defense S. Gilds, to remove Commander Bouterse from office and replace him with an officer whose allegiance was to the elected civilian officials. By early 1993 the situation would become dangerously strained, as the civilian government

feared that the military would oppose the removal of Commander Bouterse and, perhaps, might launch a military operation and once again sack an elected civilian government.

The New Front government realized that without the removal of Commander Bouterse there would be little chance of the military "returning to the barracks" and thereby reducing military influence and threat to democratic governance.

On January 30, 1993, Commander Bouterse was elected party chairman of the National Democratic Party, thus securing a continuing base of power and influence in the national political dialogue. On February 1 he resigned as commander in chief of the National Army (after President Venetiaan signed the resolution of removal on January 29). The acting commander of the military was Ivan Graanoogst, close associate of Mr. Bouterse and one of the principals in the military telephone coup of 1990.

In a March 13 meeting between the president, acting commander Graanoogst, and associate commanders B. Sital and Ch. Mijnals, and minister of Defense S. Gilds, the military officers asserted that the president's and the minister's actions in the removal of Commander Bouterse was a conspiracy to threaten the security of the state. It was further asserted that the minister had attempted to foment insurrection in the ranks of the military by talking with subordinate officers without the approval or knowledge of senior commanders. The president replied that the armed forces were in a transitional stage from the unconstitutional 1980's to the freely elected government of the 1990's, and that the possibility should not be excluded that the question would arise to what extent the commanders of the 1980s would be able to function under the new constitutional relations which had been established between the armed forces and the government.

In April 1993, the government of Suriname appointed former military officer Arthy Gorre commander in chief of the National Army. He returned from civilian life to take the post during the change of military leadership from the authoritarian 1980's to the current situation. Although there was some resistance and defiance by the former military commanders—particularly because Mr. Gorre did not come from within the military hierarchy, but from the outside—the situation stabilized and held. The foundation for a durable peace was laid in Paramaribo.

New challenges

By that time problems also began to arise surrounding the implementation of the Peace Accord. Several challenging issues and problems were itemized:

- Government services in the east Suriname border town of Albina were not able to function properly, due to the lack of manpower, housing, proper equipment;

- Criminal activities in both Albina and Mungo were growing alarmingly, and the populations there were growing increasingly provoked;

- A general lack of coordination was evident between the government and its peace and reconstruction services, and the formerly illegally armed groups who seemed to be at the basis of the problems;

- Smuggling activities between Albina and French Guiana were taking place on a large scale and in an organized manner. Lack of a government security presence made it impossible for authorities to distinguish between legal and illegal river traffic;

- The number of houses occupied illegally was increasing, despite police surveillance;

- Robberies in broad daylight were commonplace;

- Women were forced to travel the streets accompanied by male relatives to avoid harassment;

- The Javanese community in Mungo considered the situation unbearable, and was ready to take the law into its own hands the moment one of its members became a victim;

- Workers in the Mungo Mine Workers Union threatened strike action if schools were forced to close because of the lawlessness, and the police did not intervene;

- Unemployment among the ex-Jungle Commando was extraordinarily high, and businessmen were reluctant to hire them;

- Crimes appeared to be committed also by persons who were not members of the former fighters, but who masqueraded as former combatants;

- Ex-Jungle Commando fighters repeatedly claimed that they did not believe the government was serious about implementing the Peace Accord. Disillusionment was widespread.

The Good Services Commission responded quickly by saying that if corrective measures were not taken the situation among the ex-fighters would escalate out of control. The government was called upon to install relevant services including police, customs, public works, health services, and good faith measures to assure the population that the Peace Accord remained in effect, despite logistical problems with its implementation.

The chairman of the Peace Commission, Romeo van Russel, informed the Mission that it had been exceedingly difficult to make contact with Ronnie Brunswijk, former leader of the Jungle Commando. Nevertheless, the government, concerned about the presence of former fighters involved in illegal activities, redoubled its efforts to locate and convince Brunswijk of the necessity to organize a *palaver*, or meeting (*Gran Krutu*) among all clan dignitaries of the Ndjuka tribe. The conference finally took place on May 31,1993, and was attended by traditional authorities, the district commissioner of the district Sipaliwini

of interior Suriname, representatives of the Peace Commission, and the OAS Special Mission.

Nevertheless, at the end of the first week of July 1993 both the Jungle Commando and the Tucajana Amazones again launched protest actions against alleged lack of action on the part of the government in implementing the Peace Accord. Barricades were erected on the east-west highway in east Suriname. Following a statement by former Tucajana Amazones leader Thomas Sabajo—"in the interior they now think that the peace accord is a big zero," he said—barricades were erected by the former Tucajana Amazones and the Angula on the roadways south of the international airport at Zanderij. The government seemed to lack the resources, personnel, and administrative capacity to effectively implement the Peace Accords it had endorsed. Impatience was growing, and protest action increasing, among the former fighters.

2.6 Nieuw Koffiekamp: A Case Study

The issues raised by the land tenure and mining privileges dispute in Nieuw Koffiekamp resonate throughout the debate over the rights of indigenous people and the privileges of the state. As a case study, Nieuw Koffiekamp encapsulates all of the elements of the debate, namely land rights, and the role of traditional authority.

The main objective of this section is to present basic information on the problem of Nieuw Koffiekamp. The rights to parts of the Gros Rosebel gold concession (where the village of Nieuw Koffiekamp is located) are being contested by the villagers and the Canadian company *Golden Star Resources*. Both parties are claiming rights to the same territory and, if not resolved peacefully, these conflicting claims will continue to be a source of considerable friction, and may escalate.

The Commission for Nieuw Koffiekamp

During the first week of June 1995, the Nieuw Koffiekamp conflict escalated and the government asked the Paramount Chief (*Gaaman*) of the Saramaka Maroons, Songo Aboikoni, to intervene. The Gaaman recruited officials from both Paramaribo and the interior to assist him in the effort to reach a peaceful solution to the problem. The Ministry of Natural Resources and the state-owned mining company Grassalco appointed representatives to this body that became known as the Commission for Nieuw Koffiekamp. Both the village council and the youth organization of Nieuw Koffiekamp were represented in the talks.

The Commission served to bring the parties into a dialogue and achieve a compromise. The issues at play were: Maroon culture, the local environment and pollution, the local economy of the Maroons, the recent large scale developments on the Gros Rosebel concession, and relevant local, national, and international instruments which should function to define and defuse problems such as this.

The National Assembly passed in April 1995 a Mineral Agreement consigning mineral exploration and exploitation rights to *Golden Star Resources* of Canada. It disregarded the presence of Maroons in the village of Nieuw Koffiekamp, located squarely in the middle of the Gros Rosebel concession. The area was calm immediately after the signing of the agreement, but when Golden Star began to ask the small-scale Maroon miners to leave the Gros Rosebel concession, tension built up. Talks were initiated in an effort to solve the problem, but not long thereafter problems surfaced again. Alternating periods of calm and tension followed throughout 1994 and 1995, when the paramount chief of the Saramaka intervened.

By September of 1994, hundreds of small-scale miners had taken up gold mining in the concession. *Golden Star* responded by erecting barriers and gates in order to keep the small-scale miners from reaching two main ore deposits. In late 1994 the Geological Mining Service and the District Commissioner intervened and agreed to set aside an alternative mining area for the small-scale miners.

Tensions flared again and in January 1995 and a government delegation initiated talks that led to another temporary agreement. An area of 8,000 hectares would be reserved for the Maroon miners provided they left the Gros Rosebel concession. Response from the Maroons was negative, as the option of building a new road to the alternative mining area turned out to be too expensive. By March 1995 the miners were returning to the Gros Rosebel concession.

The efforts of the *Gaaman* also highlighted an important concern on the part of government and the villagers. The Ministry of Justice and Police and other government agencies stressed that those persons with ties to the area should be assisted. During initial talks no clear distinction was made between persons with ties to Nieuw Koffiekamp and other migrant small-scale miners. As the talks progressed, the delegation representing Nieuw Koffiekamp began to appreciate the fact that to reach an agreement the rights—whatever they turned out to be—are granted in principle by a legally binding document, the Peace Accord. A peaceful resolution and the mutual coexistence of small-scale and corporate mining interests would require a comprehensive and systematic arrangement to prevent further conflict.

The Legal Context

Article 41 of the Constitution of the Republic of Suriname supports the land rights provisions of the Peace Accord because it grants mineral rights to the local population. The Constitution is the supreme law of Suriname and all other agreements, legislation and arrangements are subsidiary to its provisions. The Peace Accord, although not clearly written, grants villagers a "priority right" to conduct small-scale mining in designated "economic zones" around and near villages. The provisions are outlined in Article 10 of the Peace Accord.

The Mining Decree of the laws of Suriname also figures in the effort to identify zones that could be made available under the Peace Accord and Constitutional guarantees. The

Mining Decree gives the government considerable latitude to define the rights of companies and local populations. In effect, the Mining Decree provides for the right of the government to extend, revise, and alter concessionary agreements to and for miners of every size and scale in order to support and advance the interests of the state. Thus, the Constitution, the Peace Accord, and the Mining Decree provide a framework of understanding that can be interpreted as a course of action to provide a platform(s) for compromise.

Article 25 of the Mining Decree states that requests filed to secure the rights of exploitation must list all tribal villages in or near the requested concessions. The significance of this provision cannot be overlooked. It gives policy and law makers a clear indication of the number of local communities that will be affected by future or planned mining activities.

There are as well international human rights standards applicable to the Nieuw Koffiekamp situation. These call for the protection of the cultural integrity of indigenous and Maroon people, and that some form of land and resource rights be recognized and observed including the protection of traditional resource use patterns. With the signing of the Peace Accord, an important step was taken in the effort to realize these aims as set out in a variety of international instruments. However, the land rights provisions have not been acted upon yet nor in any way implemented with the writing of this guide (late 2001).

The Peace Accord also foresaw the establishment of mechanisms by which indigenous and Maroon people were able to effectively participate in decisions relating to their land and resource use and management. The Council for the Development of the Interior was established under the provisions of the Peace Accord (Article 4.1) with exactly this objective in mind. Unfortunately this body is not functioning effectively because indigenous people are not represented. Indigenous leaders have objected to the way in which the body was incorporated into the government administration, and have refused to field representatives to the Council for the Development of the Interior. This development is particularly unfortunate because the clock is ticking for the indigenous people of Suriname.

Many private firms are moving ahead with their activities in the interior, sometimes with consent of indigenous leaders and sometimes not. The government seemed reluctant or incapable of coming up with a definite policy; sometimes endorsing the activities of companies, sometimes powerless to stop or alter them, and sometimes recognizing the short-term interest of indigenous people. During the Wijdenbosch administration a second attempt was made to implement the Council for the Development of the Interior, in which indigenous people agreed to participate. However, government resources were insufficient to finance serious activities and any practical projects were left wanting. The Council for the Development of the Interior remains on the Venetiaan government's agenda at this writing."

Summary

Government sources on Nieuw Koffiekamp points out the following:

> " a conflict fueled by contrasting ideologies rooted in two worlds very far apart from each other; Maroon and corporate culture. Land is of primary importance to Maroons. The social, political and economic system of Maroon society is deeply rooted in clan ownership of territory, and the threat to what Maroons consider traditional tribal territory is regarded with great seriousness. From the perspective of large mining companies, having full title and unlimited access to concessions under development is a condition *sine qua non* for developing a mine."

At the time of writing this guide in late 2001, the corporate mine at Gros Rosebel has been put on hold indefinitely pending approval for the feasibility and environmental impact studies, approval of permits and economic concessions demanded by the company, and, perhaps an increase in the price of gold on the international market. No agreement has been reached with the community of Nieuw Koffiekamp nor with other villages that find themselves in the same situation. According to *Golden Star Resources*, when and if the price of gold rises, relocation remains the only option for dealing with the community. The Maroons of Nieuw Koffiekamp rejected this position. The situation remains unresolved and in crisis; as it does throughout the interior of Suriname with Amerindians and Maroons alike.

2.7 Incorporating Peace-Building in Development

Several other issues, which were related to the civil war but not caused by it, emerged to challenge peace and disturb the newly elected democratic New Front government. In 1992 President Venetiaan, after overseeing the removal of Constitutional clauses assuring military preeminence, initiated through his Minister of Defense procedures to remove Commander Bouterse as head of the Suriname army. The senior officers reacted with accusations of civilian meddling and threats, claiming that the president would be held responsible for the consequences of removing the Commander. The president held firm and restated the need to make a firm transition from the army of the 1980's to a renewed one appropriate for the 1990's. The situation came to a dangerous head in May of 1993. The government prevailed and civilian control of the military was established; a widely recognized precondition for democracy everywhere.

Several other delays on the way to stabilizing peace occurred in 1993 and 1994. Periodic roadblocks increased national anxiety, especially after the trauma of the civil war had placed people on edge and made them fearful of any activities that placed the security of the newly elected government under threat. The roadblocks themselves were not spontaneous protests of local conditions nor, necessarily, the random manifestations of frustration. There was organization and leadership to instigate pressure against a government that was developing programs designed to establish peace and security in the country as a whole; and to redefine power relationships both in the interior and the coastal area.

The occupation of the Afobaka Dam was a serious and visible problem that could have resulted in tragedy and significant damage to property. Ultimately this problem was defused and the situation normalized. But, these flare-ups and orchestrated events in the aftermath of the Peace Accord indicated that problems still remain in the post-conflict interior and could again lead to the initiation of violence and conflict.

The land tenure and mining privileges dispute in Nieuw Koffiekamp provide us with a case study that encapsulates almost all of the issues at play in the interior of Suriname. Without some sort of code which promotes a more equitable distribution of economic access to resources and a more inclusive and participatory form of decision-making there will likely be more Nieuw Koffiekamp-like disputes in the future. It will be a difficult and doubtless complex process to reconcile the conflicting views of exploitation and development held by coastal government and corporate interests and those ideas held by people in the interior.

The issues raised by Nieuw Koffiekamp will be dealt with again in Chapter 3 when we deal with democracy and development. The short case study was included here precisely because the solution or amelioration of Nieuw Koffiekamp problems were critical in the process of achieving and maintaining peace.

The process of achieving peace is the critical precondition for moving into the following phase (and chapter), that of democracy building and strengthening. The successes of achieving peace and defusing threats to civilian authority now pave the way to democracy building and the options Suriname faces. The options and instruments the country has at its disposal must address many of the root causes which remain and which led to the breakdown of peace and the threats to peace in the first place. The interior of Suriname is where solutions to the problems of land rights, exploitation rights, investment procedures, and the like will have to take place. The role of the state and the rights of its citizens will likely be re-defined here. As well, the over 900 traditional authorities of the interior provide a voice that a democratic government may wish to listen more closely to.

A general state of security has been established in Suriname; economic security, political security, and social and ethnic security. The next step is democracy, its challenges, options and rewards.

<u>Questions and Issues:</u>

This chapter opened by posing a number of questions. Namely, what type of conflict was the interior civil war?; what were the causes?; what conditions contributed to its cessation?; and what were/are the post-conflict conditions in the country? Let us examine these issues more critically.

1. What were the ethnic dimensions to the war? Were more than two ethnic groups involved? Did the insurgency have personalistic motives as well as purely ideological?

2. Did the insurgency have widespread "grassroots" support? Was a refugee population displaced?

3. How did the civilian coastal population respond to the insurgency? Did they lend it support for its battle with a military-supported regime?

4. As early as 1989 the civilian government attempted to strike peace with the Jungle Commando but failed. Why was this? What hand did the military play?

   What was the role of the Tucujana Amazones counter-insurgency?

5. What issues and conflicts did the Peace Accord of 1992 have to deal with?

6. What were the immediate post-conflict threats to peace?

7. The Nieuw Koffiekamp issue included elements of both economic exploitation (gold) and land rights. What is the framework of (contradictory) law surrounding this question?

8. Think about the nature of peace and democracy in Suriname in the early 2000's.

   Can we anticipate more "conflict in development" in Suriname?

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CHAPTER III

DEMOCRACY: CHALLENGES AND OPTIONS

Chapter 2 has outlined the events and issues that resulted in the derailing of democracy in Suriname for more than ten years. Now, in the early 2000's, efforts are seriously underway to strengthen and consolidate democracy in Suriname. Thus, it is useful in this chapter to review some of the basic principles of participatory democracy and to examine and evaluate Suriname's capacity to meet these commonly agreed upon democratic pre-conditions and requirements. Hence, the "challenges and options" of the chapter sub-title.

What support and strengthening does Suriname require to promote its democracy is addressed in this chapter.

3.1 Democracy and Development

Democracy as Structure and Code of Behavior

Let us examine some of the generally agreed upon tenants of democracy, and the options and experiences they can provide for strengthening democracy in Suriname. From that foundation we can then explicitly move to identifying the problems in Suriname's recent past which interrupted the democratic process and, also, the strengths in Suriname which helped in the transition and return to democracy, and which today are deserving of strengthening and consolidation.

We can be guided by the following principles:

- democracy involves the right of people to freely determine their own destiny;

- the exercise of this right requires a system that guarantees freedom of expression, belief and association, free elections, respect for the rights of individuals and minority groups, free media and rule of law and justice for all;

- private institutions and private sectors in free societies can contribute to the development of democracy.

Governance and the Political Process

The Preamble of the Charter of the OAS establishes that representative democracy is an indispensable condition for the stability, peace, and development of the region. Under the provisions of the Charter, one of the basic purposes of the OAS is to promote and consolidate representative democracy, with due respect for the principle of non-intervention. Democracy requires a system of representative government in which leaders are selected in freely contested elections. A precondition for democracy is a multiparty system that allows free competition among different political parties representing diverse interests and viewpoints. Political parties that are weak, internally undemocratic, or incoherent frequently become the vehicles of individual or narrow interests and can be easily dominated by the military or state bureaucracy. Stable democracy, therefore, requires the development of internally strong and democratic political parties which welcome and draw upon civil participation far beyond that of the simple format of periodic elections.

Strengthening the legislative process is key as democracy suffers when a legislative system is weak or when government institutions do work effectively together. The rule of law and the administration of justice figures strongly here. The function of justice is to balance the rights of the State and the individual, to protect these rights, and to make possible the orderly and peaceful governance of society. The executive and the cabinet technically form the government, however they are but one element in the democratic separation of powers principle.

Democratic control of the military and police, the security arms of the state, is an essential precondition for democracy. A military that is committed to a professional as opposed to a political role is a vital asset to any democratic system. Civilian expertise in military affairs must be cultivated and used, not only to exercise civilian control of the military but also to support the security forces when their services are called upon.

Pluralism

Another essential element for democracy is the existence of a variety of independent organized groups representing diverse interests outside of the structures of political party politics. Vigorous, private, voluntary associations serve as interest groups, pressure groups and, ultimately, “schools of democracy,” accustoming their members to free discussion, accommodating differing views, and a respect for procedural rules. Stable and well organized civic associations help form the foundation of a pluralistic society and strong civic culture. Democracy depends on these mediating institutions, the voice of an

informed citizenry, which strengthen links to and participation in their government, to provide avenues for public policy making and in-puts to government.

Trade unions represent an organized force for representing the interests of common people in the political, economic and social life of a country. By giving democratic representation to working people and ensuring their inclusion in the political process by which decisions are made and power is distributed, labor unions help societies avoid the kind of sharp polarization that feeds political extremism and allows anti-democratic groups to exploit worker grievances.

A dynamic private sector with an active small business community can supply a counter-weight to limit state power. The private sector can remain healthy and independent only if it is genuinely free, which is to say, not beholden to a government that controls all the economic resources of society. The large business sector has its strong interests too and can serve to protect and maintain a free and open society which welcomes foreign investment. Also, other less well organized components of society such as women, youth and disenfranchised minorities aid the work of democracy building and strengthening.

Education and Awareness

The consolidation and maturation of democracy occurs only when citizens are knowledgeable about the democratic process and the know-how and willingness to exercise their rights and fulfill their civic responsibilities. Citizens need knowledge to make decisions about the constitutional use of authority, along with the skills and confidence to voice their concerns and to hold public officials accountable.

In this regard, free and uncensored newspapers, journals, public forums and the communications media are indispensable for democratic societies. Public participation through newspaper editorials, call-in talk shows, professional news gathering and guideing, all serve to aid government in the distribution of timely, informative and accurate news.

Democracy in the Two Surinames

Chapter One outlines the political and economic history of Suriname. The latter portion of the chapter considers the historical narrative, primarily political and economic issues, and the unfulfilled promise of independence for Suriname. In this section we take a closer look at the post-independence period but, this time, from a democracy-building point of view. That is, to examine the period in terms of what has been said about the general principles of democracy in the first section of this chapter, in order to come to terms with what democratic institutions failed in Suriname but also how these democratic institutions were renewed and, ultimately, led to the return of democracy.

Dr. Jules Sedney, a former Prime Minister of Suriname, writes that in Suriname democracy is much more than the legal order of things. Democracy rests on five pillars: democratic inclinations, or the socio-psychological commitment; regulations, the juridical

and institutional order; policies, the guiding of state direction; control, or supervision; and correction, or the alteration of government policy in light of prevailing circumstances.

The First Republic, from 1975 to 1980, opines Sedney, failed in these measures and paved the way for the military take over. The 1975 Constitution was a sound document but the pillars became quickly eroded. Democratic inclinations were mortgaged to economic gain. Policy-making fell short in addressing the rapid changes taking place in the country's first years of independence. There was little concern for control and correction was scarcely spoken of. The mentality of "don't worry" (*no span*) prevailed which created an atmosphere of "the devil may care, damn the consequences." Democracy was weak and the agitation of the military for a labor union soon erupted into a small-scale military coup which easily toppled the wounded democratic system.

Four phases characterized the undemocratic period of military rule (Sedney, pp. 115-34). Each of these phases indicates that only some groups in society supported the military government at the expense of other groups at any one time. It was not until all the groups acted in concert that there could be any attempt made to a return to democratic governance.

Phase I: The military supported by the Masses (1980-1982)

There was relief among many citizens that the young soldiers had overthrown the inept NPK II government. Individuals came forth to render support, while the masses gave their endorsement to the military leadership. But the masses were not organized--they were more or less a populist crowd-- since the military had gutted the only institution through which common citizens could participate in politics; the old political parties. With few serious private institutions to voice their needs, fears and ambitions the masses and elites alike watched as the juridical, administrative and institutional infrastructure of Suriname was systematically compromised and rendered dysfunctional. The ardor of the masses for the military would soon cool; but by that point it was to late. Surinamers became observers rather than participants and for some both in the country and outside the only means to remove the military was to itself use armed force. Several counter-coup attempts were launched, and failed.

Newspapers were censored, the police were put under tight control, the National Assembly was stripped of power and most of what would be conventionally called democratic institutions and practices were rendered powerless. The Constitution was suspended and the country was ruled by decree. There were no elections. Civilian Presidents were installed and removed. Government positions were filled by appointment. The head of the largest labor union and 14 other prominent Surinamers who

were agitating for the return to democracy were rounded up and murdered on December 8, 1982.

Phase II: The Military and the Left (1983)

The wide appeal of the masses for the military regime collapsed finally in the aftermath of the murders. The military command began a search for a slender reed of support and found it in two left wing parties. No institutions of democratic governance nor any other of the vital organs of democratic process were consulted in this decision. The military recruited the support of the small political parties PALU and RVP in its attempt to shore up support and develop new internal economic programs and to recruit support in the international community. Suriname's traditional patrons and investors, the Netherlands and the United States, had withdrawn their financial and political support, as had virtually all other democratic countries.

The PALU, which had never won a seat in the National Assembly under democratic rule (nor had the RVP), was a proponent of self-determination, small scale development projects and a renewed nationalism which would guide Suriname to seek more South-South diplomatic ties. The PALU had been an ardent critic of the huge, and fanciful, west Suriname hydro-electric dam project. Development preferences were more in the area of housing developments and the local exploitation of local mineral and agricultural products.

The other small partner, the communist RVP, was far more interested in foreign relations formation and the geo-politics of revolution. They were admirers of the Cuban revolution and the efforts of the New Jewel Movement in revolutionary Grenada, and welcomed the support of the two countries, and a visit by Maurice Bishop. Ties were also formed with Nicaragua and Libya as the isolated military regime sought support and recognition. Following the ascent of these two parties to power it is no coincidence that such exile groups such as the Council for the Liberation of Suriname (*Raad voor de Bevrijding van Suriname*) sprung up in the Netherlands.

More democratic voices were silenced during this period. The University of Suriname was infiltrated and taken over by Marxist scholars. School books promoted the revolutionary agenda. Draconian methods of social control in the name of revolution, such as curfews, nullification of rights of assembly, and unexplained disappearances became routine. The military grip on control was shaken and weakened and the first glimmers of change, that is broader-based participation in the regime, began to appear. It was becoming evident that the military had to solicit and negotiate with the very democratic groupings it had removed from influence and power.

Phase III: Military Leadership, the Private Sector and Labor Unions (1984-1985)

The revolutionary phase of military rule had alienated even those Surinamers who remained willing to give the military government a chance. In its isolation the military command opened negotiations with two groups from the private sector; small scale business owners and producers, and larger business enterprise owners. The goal was to establish a "Think Tank" (*Denkgroep*) and (an appointed) interim government. Willem Udenhout was appointed Minister-President with the instructions to recruit the private sector organizations, the Labor unions and the old political parties to support the creation of "Sustainable Structures of Democracy." A memorandum of 1984 entitled "Basic

Principles and Structures of Democracy" (*Basisprincipes en Structuren van Democratie*), authored by the two largest political parties, the VHP and the NPS, called for the return of democratic rules and participation of political party leadership in any organs or deliberations which would discuss the transition to democracy. The political parties' participation would not be called upon by the military government yet however.

The Udenhout cabinet was composed of the military and their civilian supporters, three labor union representatives and two private sector cabinet members. The National Assembly was appointed and reinstalled with members from the same sectors as the cabinet itself. The National Assembly was not elected. Representatives from political parties were not appointed in either the cabinet or the National Assembly.

The transition and return to democracy was underway. Participation in governance, although not elected, was being slowly broadened.

Phase IV: Military rule, Private Sector, Labor Unions and Political Parties (1986-1987)

In 1985 a political accord was struck between the military leaders and the three major political parties; the VHP, the NPS, and the KTPI whereby they would be represented in cabinet and the National Assembly along with supporters of the military government, the labor unions and the private sector. The unspoken agenda for all except the military was for a return to democracy.

By 1986 the interior war had broken out. The military regime was under stress both by democratic forces along in the coastal area and an armed insurgency in the interior. Foreign involvement became more visible in supporting a return to democracy, while at the same time providing assistance to the armed rebels in the jungle interior. In December 1986, for the first time since the military take over, Commander Bouterse used the word "election" in a public speech.

Preparations were simultaneously underway for the writing of a new Constitution. If all went according to plan the draft Constitution would be approved in a public referendum in September 1987 and national elections would follow in November of the same year. The citizens overwhelmingly endorsed the Constitution. Elections were held and were won decisively by the Front. Democracy, weakened as it was, returned to Suriname. The labor unions were cooperative, the private sector was organized, the press was supportive and positive, and the masses, through their political parties, had expressed their wishes.

Democracy would falter again with the re-intervention of the military in civilian governance in 1990. Elections were again held in 1991 and the New Front again won decisively. The New Front finished its term and elections in 1996 brought President Wijdenbosch to power. Public protest of the deteriorating economic situation in 1999 shortened his term by one year. Elections in 2000 once again brought the New Front to power.

The lesson from this narrative, consistent with the opening of this chapter, is that when there is widespread participation in governance, coupled with a serious commitment to the principles of democratic behavior, the democratic system functions.

It is useful at this point to examine the options for supporting and strengthening Suriname's democracy by examining the list of democratic characteristics which were enumerated at the opening of this chapter. The list would suggest that Suriname is well on the way to consolidating its democracy. The list would also suggest that there are additional options Suriname might want to examine to further strengthen its democracy.

The Road to Reform

In early 2000, scarcely six weeks before the May elections, land rights for indigenous people once again became a priority issue. As pointed out in the profile of Suriname, systematic economic penetration of the interior began about 1875, but no serious attention was paid to providing the Amerindians and Maroons with any systematic recognition of title or statuary rights to the land that they had inhabited throughout the colonial period, and for Amerindians, well before that. With the recent re-introduction of large-scale gold and timber exploitation of the interior, particularly by large-scale international corporations, sizeable national corporations both state- and privately-owned, and urban-based local concessionaires, the question of the development of the interior and the rights of indigenous people once again became a burning issue laden with the potential of serious disagreement and possible conflict.

In 1991 a project proposal prepared by the Suriname Institute of Extension Services, Research and Study Supervision (IDOS) and the Faculty of Law, University of Amsterdam prepared a "talking points" document that provided a concept outline for a serious fieldwork project which would lead to land rights policy formation. It was not acted upon but serves here as a basic introduction to the background of the land rights issues at play and the urgent call for their equitable solution to address the needs of the state and the indigenous communities.

For Amerindians there exists no systematic corpus of legislation which explicitly regulates their property rights. In fact, the only operative legislation in documentary form is aimed at the property rights and concessions of the colonial power, with indirect and unclear reference to the rights of indigenous people. At best, this sort of legislation stipulates that the land rights and concessions to colonials should not "inconvenience" or "hinder" the indigenous population. In 1953, twenty-two years before independence, efforts were made to codify lands rights for Amerindians, but only a few communities near the capital of Paramaribo were involved in any meaningful fashion.

In the second half of the 18th century, peace treaties were signed between the colonial Government of Suriname and the warring, rebel Maroons. No special mention is made of land rights in the otherwise comprehensive peace treaties. Following the abolition of slavery in 1863 these treaties were amended but again included no reference to land rights other than an implicit assumption that Maroons could cut timber in the interior. Officials of the colonial government were instructed to encourage Maroons to exploit the

lumber in their residential areas and to sell this lumber in Paramaribo, thus reducing their dependency on subsidies from the Government.

Time and again, in the course of the introduction of new legislation regarding the cutting of timber, the mining of gold, or the harvesting of natural rubber products, the stipulation was made that the residential areas of Maroons and Amerindians should be respected. However, the size and range of the indigenous areas seemed to shrink with each subsequent introduction of new legislation until only the villages themselves were declared off limits. In the case of Nieuw Koffie Kamp a gold concession was granted on and surrounding an existing village. Today, lumber and gold concessions are granted to village and senior chiefs, thus allowing all of the subjects of the chief to profit from the concession. In practice, however, most of the chiefs have sub-leased these concessions to large local and foreign companies and labor. The use of the proceeds from such sub-leasing has been a frequent source of dispute at the village level between rival factions of those who profit and those who do not.

The measures taken in 1962 to accommodate some 6000 Saramaka Maroons (and a smaller group of Ndjuka), who were forced to abandon their traditional residence areas to clear the way for the ALCOA hydroelectric project in central Suriname, is a good indicator of the position taken by the Government with regard to the land rights of indigenous peoples. The Government took the position that it was obligated to compensate only those affected by providing them with an alternative residential area and a small house. Interestingly, one of the villages involved in this relocation program is Nieuw Koffie Kamp, now under threat of being relocated again for the second time in less than forty years. This relocation scenario was repeated in 1975, when the central Government prepared to develop a hydroelectric project in western Suriname. The indigenous Amerindian community was expected to vacate the area without compensation for their lands and gardens in order to make way for the construction of a new mining village. Fortunately for the Amerindians this did not occur as financing for the project did not materialize.

With independence in 1975 no measures were taken in the new Constitution in recognition of past tacit treaties and land rights proposals for Amerindians and Maroons, nor to establish legal recognition of their over 900 traditional authorities. The post-revolution constitution of 1987 failed to address these questions of land, timber and mining rights, and the statutory role of traditional authorities.

The internal war of 1986-1992, which drew Maroons, Amerindians, and the National Suriname Army into the conflict underscored the dangers of ignoring the economic and political needs of traditional populations in a modern nation state. The authority of traditional leaders and their institutions was challenged, young fighters lost a decade of schooling, mining and timber corporations were entering traditional territory at an alarming rate and leaving behind a trail of destruction and pollution. Young indigenous people boldly took action to mine and cut timber in the name of their own economic well-being. Today Maroons and Amerindians are demanding land rights, and the establishment of any serious, durable peace must address the combined problem of land

and mining rights and the need for constitutional recognition of indigenous people as full members of Suriname's polity.

Since the 1991 IDOS guide there have been three conceptual breakthroughs. Although laws have not been signed into force, there are signals that the issue has obtained priority in the eyes of the Government, and that discussions are underway as of April 2000.

The "Frame Work Agreement," signed by the Government and indigenous dignitaries alike on 1 April 2000, provides a number of resolutions upon which a national law can be based. The Agreement lays out in principle three critical areas of concern and guarantees for the Maroons and Amerindians on the one hand, and the Government of Suriname on the other.

The evening newspaper, De West, summarized the three component protocols on 3 April 2000.First, that the collective nature of Maroon and Amerindian societies in the interior should be recognized by the Government. Indigenous people therefore have the right to commonly share and make use of the natural resources, including gold and timber, in their traditional living areas. In forthcoming discussions, expected in 2001-02, the exact boundaries of these "zones of exploitation" will be established and recognized, according to Government announcements.

Second, that questions of the "national interests," vested in the power of the state to use its products and resources for the well-being of the entire national population, have to be discussed and refined. Prior to the signing of the Agreement, indigenous people would often refer to the so-called national interests as the "Paramaribo interests" (urban, capital accumulation) which returned little or nothing in the way of capital or services to the interior of Suriname. The Agreement proposes that when national interests in resource exploitation involve activity on what is recognized as Maroon or Amerindian zones of exploitation, that negotiations have to take place between indigenous leadership and government officials.

Third, and key to the signing of the Frame Work Agreement, is the issue of compensation by government for any natural resource exploitation that takes place on indigenous lands and zones of exploitation. A compensation fund is to be established by the Government based on a percentage of revenues acquired from national concessionaires and companies, as well as international concessionaires. This compensation fund, which derives from capital gains in the name of national interest, is to be used to compensate indigenous people for the intrusion of gold and timber companies on their ground, and will be further invested in infrastructure development and the extension of Government services. This clause and the idea behind it were introduced to the Suriname delegation of Paramount Chiefs (*Gaaman*) when they visited Ghana (of which a discussion follows in section 3.2 "Chieftaincy") and surely influenced the results of the Agreement dialogue by their input and experiences.

Finally, if after continued dialogue and negotiation the Agreement and its resolutions (*besluiten* in Dutch) are agreed upon, they would obtain the status of a Government

decree and enter the law (*staatsbesluit* in Dutch). The Agreement is currently (2001) under discussion and would provide for the first legal recognition of indigenous land rights for Maroon and Amerindian people.

3.2 Kin-ordered Societies and the State

Democracy, Representation and the Traditional Authorities

Civic participation in the creation of public policy and maintaining the standards of good governance is critical for the functioning of democracy. The flow of information from government to its constituent groups and the responses of those groups to their representatives is critical in expressing grievances and concerns, voicing support or dissent, and, ultimately, shaping policy for both citizens and the state. Deliberately ignoring, manipulating or, in some cases, destroying these organs of public communication weakens democracy and often places it in peril.

In 1970, *Gaaman* Aboikoni of the Saramaka Maroons, in a reply to a question about independence for Suriname, replied:

“If you sit in the darkness and someone asks you what time its, you don’t know [what to answer]. In the interior we need information. Just as a child grows to be an adult, then he can say: I can stand on my own two feet and be independent. … We can at this point not determine if Suriname is ‘ripe’ enough for sovereignty; that is a position that the Suriname government has to decide and we ourselves will take into consideration.”

This quotation will serve as an introduction to the ambivalent policies that the central government of Suriname has had, and continues to have, towards the equitable incorporation of Maroons into the State through representative democracy and the equally ambivalent positions most Maroons hold in regard to closer association with the State and its institutions. Policies, incomplete and unimplemented as they were and are, aimed at obtaining this elusive goal from independence to the present, are summarized below.

Several months after independence, Prime Minister Henck Arron in a statement delivered in the main village of the Saramaka, said “… the position of Maroon traditional authorities will be in no way changed after independence. Rather, the Government will make every effort to strengthen their position.” The *Gaaman* , later disillusioned with the unfulfilled promises of independence, mentioned that if he were several years younger he would simply pull up stakes and lead his people across the Marowijne River to French Guiana.

His frustration was based on the fact that the Arron government did not address the question of interior representation and administrative restructuring and opted to do nothing. The Constitution of 1975 did not mention the traditional authorities in the interior at all. Maroon leadership was at best tolerated. No official recognition was

extended to them other than the ceremonial swearing in of already established Maroon leadership and providing them with a small stipend.

The erosion of traditional leadership, the dismantling of their administrative duties and a one-sided incorporation of Maroons into the State is not a creation of Prime Minister Arron alone, but was rather a continuation of State policies reaching back fifty years and more. In the 1950's District Commissioners and their local administrators (*Bestuurs Opzichters*) began more intensive contact with traditional authorities. The presence of police officers in the interior became more widespread in the 1960's creating inroads into the traditional Maroon legal system which had functioned for two and a half centuries. Dislocations were inevitable and troublesome for Maroons. It would not be until the 1980's that serious discussions over the power structure(s) of the interior and their relationship to the State would take place.

One of the first declarations of President Henk Chin A Sen, an early civilian leader of one of the military-dominated governments, was that the revolution called for a renewal of the political and administrative machinery of state. The political philosophy of the "revolution" called for the mobilization of people where they lived and worked, and during this period several models were experimented with. The idea of political decentralization to the workplace and village is not a new one, but for Suriname it was the first time that such policies were given serious consideration.

In January 1981 the Directorate of District Administration of the Ministry of Interior Affairs prepared a policy note which called for an Interior Affairs Division to be established within the Directorate of District Administration. Despite its intentions at restructuring, the note pointed out that traditional authorities were not civil servants and that they would remain subservient to Government. In fact, the policy note went on to contradict its intentions to decentralize and restructure, and actually called for more centralization and less recognition of traditional authorities and their preferred means of organization and administration. The management-thinking of the note was decidedly western and corporate: the traditional authorities must be brought together in a "foundation" where they could "more adequately identify their tasks;" "norms" must be established for the number of traditional authorities to represent standardized population conglomerates; and, among other things, an increase in the number of *Gaaman* to "better" provide administrative support to the Government. Nothing of substance followed from the guide.

In the 1980's, People's Committees (*Volks Comites*) were established in a number of villages in the interior. But, despite the revolutionary intentions to mobilize Surinamers – whether they wanted to be mobilized or not—these structures remained strange and alien bodies in the experiential world of Maroons; something imposed from above, from outside. However, it would not be until the Constitution of 1987 that serious thought was given to participation and representation through Constitutional means rather than artificial revolutionary programs of mobilization. Yet, the policy begged the whole question of mobilization by who and for what?

The earmark of the new effort of political democratization and decentralization, and the one tangible effort aimed at decentralization, and that was embodied in the 1987 Constitution, took place on a regional and sub-regional level through two representative bodies. The District Council (*District Raad*) and the Local Council (*Ressort Raad*). These elected bodies would in turn represent local issues to elected members of the National Assembly and be further supported by the newly established Ministry of Regional Development. However well-intentioned the policy was, several questions remained unanswered. What sort of relationship were these elected bodies to have with the traditional leadership and their administrative structures in the interior? This was not made clear in either the Constitution nor the laws.

In 1983 the number of administrative districts was increased to ten by including the huge interior district of Sipaliwini. In principle, the large interior district would allow for a more effective development of the district and its Maroon and Amerindian populations. Although the geographical boundaries of the State were redrawn, and were sensible, little serious attention was paid to the position which traditional authorities should play. Nevertheless, the interior district was allotted four seats in the National Assembly; a sizable number given the relatively smaller population compared to the coastal area and, especially, Paramaribo. The new Constitution required that candidates for office abide by a residency requirement, further assuring representation by Maroon and Amerindian leadership at the national level. And, in justifying the new district, the Minister of Regional Development, also a Maroon, opined that the Maroons and Amerindians of the interior should not be artificially divided into different Districts by geographical boundaries. Rather, they should be included in one District on the “basis of their common languagesand shared residential areas.”

In 1986 the District Commissioner of Sipaliwini H. R. Libretto, himself a Maroon, called for greater participation and greater representation of Maroon peoples to define their own interests. In no way, he went on, was there an intention of weakening traditional authority but rather to pursue real decentralization. These efforts at policy correction were cut short by the Interior War that lasted from 1986-1992.

With the restoration of peace in 1992 the newly elected President Venitiaan of the New Front once again opened the question of participation and recognition of traditional leadership. In a discussion with four of the Maroon *Gaaman* the President pledged that the traditional administrative structures of the Maroons and the position of their authorities would be taken up in revisions of the Constitutions. However, this pledge was not addressed by President Venitiaan’s government, nor were they considered by the following government of President Wijdenbosch.

President Venitiaan was reelected to the Presidency in 2000. The question of democracy, participation and representation of the interior remains an issue very much alive. Let us examine in more detail the role of kin-ordered and the State.

The Constitution of the Republic of Suriname defines the role and the status of the National Assembly and its members, outlines the responsibilities of the President and the executive branch, and stipulates the tasks of the judicial branch. To be sure, politicians will debate at length how the Constitution and other laws and decrees are to be interpreted, but at least there is a skeleton on which to base such discussions. For the 900 or more traditional rulers with leadership responsibilities in the interior, the situation is less clear cut. Neither the Constitution, nor the organic laws of the Republic of Suriname, mention traditional rule. The country is left today with a colonial heritage of two political systems, the National political system and traditional rule, the latter subordinated to the former, but without a legal basis defining this relationship.

This lack of legal recognition was always a concern to traditional rulers in the interior of Suriname. The recent encroachment, however, of determined multinationals seeking to fix legal claims on vast lumber and mineral concessions - cutting right through what for over two hundred years or more Maroons and Amerindians considered their subsistence resources - has turned this concern into panic. Cries for help and for recognition of some sort of rights, have spurred an abundance of reflection and discussion, but yielded no concrete results to date. Throughout these developments traditional rulers have been faced with the impossible task of trying to answer the questions of their subjects on these issues, questions for which neither the national legal system, nor traditional rule, can provide answers.

In an act of desperation, some traditional rulers appear to have opted for capitalizing on the wisdom conveyed by the adage "if you can't beat them, join them." A number of chiefs were approached by multinational lumber firms - impatient with bureaucratic delays in securing large-scale lumber concessions - and were asked to make available tracks of forest issued in the name of the village chief on behalf of the villagers, against reasonable compensation of course. An added incentive was employment for village youths, who were given equipment and supplies to harvest lumber. These revenues were more than welcome in villages strapped for cash, but here again the lack of a legal framework took its toll. In some villages, the revenues were deposited in the village fund, in others it is not always clear how these revenues were spent. From an environmental perspective, moreover, leasing a concession issued to somebody else has its appeal. The legal holder of the title, and not the lessee, is responsible for observing the forestry code.

In the gold mining sector several options of revenue sharing and partnerships have been explored and developed. Small- and medium-scale miners have approached traditional rulers and secured permission to work in traditional settlement areas, usually after agreeing to pay a 10% royalty to the chief. These agreements have no basis in law, however, since the Constitution specifies that minerals are the property of the State. Moreover, as a consequence of the absence of legislation regulating traditional rule, no formal procedures exist for receiving, monitoring and spending such revenues at the village level.

Due to the absence of legislation defining the authority of the traditional rulers, adjudicating disputes with persons wishing to engage in economic activities in or near

interior settlements can be onerous. To cite a recent example, an ex-civil servant of Amerindian extraction returned to his village near the Brazilian border with mining title in hand, asserting that the ensuing gold extraction activities would bring welfare and development to the isolated village. Within a week or so he returned to town, and complained to a local newspaper that he was abducted and threatened by the village chief. It was reported that the Chief had summoned the miner to put off his mining activities until the water level in the river rose again. The water level was very low, and the silting produced by the tailings would make it impossible for the villagers to use the water from the river. However reasonable the summons of the chief, from a strictly legal point of view he did not have the authority to prevent a holder of a mining right from working near the village.

Several persons from the interior who succeeded in securing legal title to gold prospects have argued that such title gives them the right to work in the interior without having to consider demands made by traditional rulers. Others, without legal title, have simply bypassed the traditional rulers and have gone on to conduct gold mining activities. Also impatient with bureaucratic delays in securing large-scale concessions, a number of gold mining companies have approached senior traditional rulers with proposals involving the leasing or sale of concessions in traditional settlement areas. Several chiefs have secured gold exploration concessions, and have concluded joint venture agreements or simply sold their rights to foreign exploration companies.

Due to the conspicuous absence of legal definition and delineation, and the protection such a framework would provide, the future prospects for traditional rule and the people they represent are disheartening. One observer noted, "in the tumult of the confrontation between global commerce and parochial ethnicity, the virtues of the democratic nation are lost and the instrumentalities by which it permitted peoples to transform themselves into nation and seize sovereign power in the name of liberty and the commonweal are put at risk."

The Government of Suriname, while showing respect for the market ideology, is not pulling back and is getting ready to aggressively intervene. A minerals institute and a national environmental institute are in the making, and several efforts are now underway to order and legalize the small- and medium-scale gold mining sector. If the Government wishes to retain traditional rule, however, in the course of this and similar restructuring efforts, it would do well to also consider the desirability of formalizing traditional rule. Traditional leaders at the local level could then work side by side with representatives of the National Government in forging and preserving the new order. A prominent Chief in Ghana noted: "Our political institutions need to play a complementary role rather than a competitive role with our traditional institutions in moving Africa forward." In order to bring about such a mutual gains approach, reforms and empowerment are needed. Suggesting how to go about this endeavor, the Chief writes:

> "To achieve all this ..... our traditional institutions need some major reforms and empowerment. We must within ourselves eschew avarice, unnecessary litigation and unwarranted autocracy in order to enhance our own credibility. We also need

> to modernize some of our cultural practices and religious beliefs to make them acceptable to the entire society.
>
> On the flipside, our governments and political systems must also restore the respect and power needed to enable our traditional institutions to function effectively, as major catalyst of growth and development. Political leaders in Africa must stop undue interference in their traditional institutions in their greed for absolute power. For, whether we like it or not traditional institutions and cultural values will remain forever with us in Africa."

In Ghana, the country from which at least half of the African-Surinamers originated, four-and-a-half pages of the Constitution are devoted to Chieftaincy and related institutions, such as the National and Regional House of Chiefs. The Chieftaincy act alone consists of 67 articles.

Clearly, the problems of traditional rule in the two countries are not comparable in every respect. Almost every area of Ghana inherited some form of traditional rule, whether the institution is referred to as the "stool" in the south or the "skin" in the north. In Suriname, however, only the interior inherited, by way of the colonial experience, marronage, a system of traditional rule with roots in West- and Central Africa. In the intervening years since traditional rule sprouted roots among rebel slaves, a similar system developed among the Amerindian societies also living in the interior.

In contrast to the interior, however, the coastal and urban areas are inhabited not only by African-Surinamers, but also by descendants of indentured laborers originating in India and Indonesia. These ethnicities are incorporated fully today into the national political system. Nevertheless, a visit to Ghana for the Maroon chiefs seemed a very worthwhile undertaking, even if it was meant to contribute to a more circumscribed discussion on the future status of traditional rule, a discussion that is to be related to the geographical confines of the interior of Suriname.

With this purpose in mind, a delegation of 29 Surinamese departed for Ghana on August 27, 1997. The first week of the visit was dedicated to participating in the Third Pan African Theater Festival - Panafest. During the second week, a smaller delegation of three Paramount Chiefs and two senior Chiefs toured Ghana, seeking to learn more about the ways in which traditional rule has been institutionalized in Ghana. This delegation included a legal expert specialized in traditional rule with 35 years of experience in the civil service, an anthropologist and a sociologist.

On 3 April 2000 the headlines of Suriname's daily morning paper, <u>De Ware Tijd</u> announced, in bold headlines, "Three Centuries of Land Rights Problems Solved." It would seem that the shared experiences of the Chief's and government official's visit to Ghana had some influence and in-put into the policy decision framework. Many of the lessons learned in Ghana were incorporated into the groundbreaking document, and cited in the newspaper.

The land rights problems came to a head in the early 1990's when national and international gold and timber companies received from the government huge concessions to undertake exploitation of huge reserves in the Suriname interior. Often these concessions lay directly adjacent to or on the traditional hunting, planting and fishing areas of the traditional populations. In the case of Nieuw Koffie Kamp, discussed above, the village lay squarely in the middle of a huge gold concession leased to the Canadian-based Golden Star-Cambior multinational gold conglomerate. Conflicts arose throughout the interior over traditional rights to make use of the natural resources and the rights of indigenous people themselves to undertake gold mining and timber cutting on lands they have inhabited since the colonial period for Maroons, and since the pre-colonial period for Amerindians. In addition, mercury pollution of the rivers, destruction of the natural environment, and the by-products of modern fossil-fuel technology wreaked havoc on the traditional life styles and mode of production of the indigenous people.

As made clear in the preceding section on "Land Rights," which opened this chapter, there are a number of conflicting and contradictory constitutional clauses, Peace Accord agreements, resolutions, and laws at play in the question of land rights on the one hand, and the national interests of the State on the other. The experience in Ghana, and the role of traditional leadership there in the affairs of state, provided the indigenous leadership and Government officials of Suriname alike with a common vision of how such disputes could be approached and gave them a common language in which to deliberate it.

The Succession of Indigenous Leaders

The Government of Suriname and the Association of Indigenous Village Chiefs (VIDS) worked on the implementation of a project aimed at drafting guidelines for electing or designating village leaders in the indigenous communities. In many of the Amerindian communities in the interior of Suriname elections took place in the mid-1990's to install new village councils. In several cases, these elections were marred by conflict. There were differences of opinion among the villagers on many issues, including questions related to the boundaries of the village, the eligibility criteria for voters and candidates, the time needed to prepare for the elections and to campaign, the electoral procedures to be utilized, the transition period, the mandate of the village council and the leaders, and the length of the term the village council and leader should stay in office. The indigenous people themselves called for some unification and collective agreement on a form of elected succession, which would be accepted throughout the country.

According to historical sources, Amerindians in Suriname did not have a strongly developed leadership system before colonization. Only in times of war did strong leaders emerge on the scene. In the late nineteenth century, the central Government needed a more clearly defined leadership system in the villages, an identifiable authority that could maintain relations between the village and the national Government. A system was chosen which resembled the traditional authority of the six Maroon groups. The main difference is that Maroon nations in Suriname all have a Paramount Chief (*Gaaman*), while the Amerindians have representation only on the village level; thus, there are no

Paramount Chiefs but only Captains (*kapitein*) for local administration4[4] . Village councils are decidedly local as well and function to maintain peace, order, dispute resolution and external village relations.

The status of traditional Amerindian leaders is not legally recognized in Suriname, but is taken into consideration on a de facto basis. Amerindians say that in the past it was common that when a Captain or village councilor died, the position was inherited by a son. Thus political system was based on succession. This is the case for Maroons as well, whereby leadership positions are inherited through the matrilineal line. Increasingly however, elections have been used to select leadership. The elections were not formal or legalized but largely ad hoc, and elections themselves as still viewed as a relatively modern development. In some villages the inhabitants, often led by young people, or potential rival councilors, organized the elections themselves. When disagreements arose the Government often had to step in.

A series of guidelines for elections was implemented, emphasizing secret balloting, and a set agenda and time table for elections; every five years. Arrangements such as identifying village boundaries and eligibility requirements were also put in place. A representative of the District Commissioner's office was on hand to monitor proceedings.

In the period after the signing of the Peace Accord, a number of indigenous villages held elections to install new village councils or leaders. In several of these villages, the elections were marred by conflicts. There were differences of opinion among the villagers on a number of issues, including questions related to the boundaries of the village, the eligibility criteria for voters and candidates, the time needed to prepare for the elections and to campaign, the electoral procedures to be utilized, the mandate of the village council or leader, and the term during which the elected village council or leader should stay in office.

After the election of a new village council or leader, the Minister of Regional Development installs the new leader or village council on a recommendation by the District Commissioner. However, in those instances where the outcome of the elections is disputed, the Minister of Regional Development is reluctant to install the new leaders. The Government is concerned about the consequences of installing leaders who do not enjoy the support of the majority of their constituency.

The indigenous population has also complained about the negative impact of the resulting administrative uncertainties on the development of their villages. It has also been very difficult for businesses from the coastal area and abroad to conclude agreements with the villagers, because there is no clear leadership.

4[4] The Captain of Kwamalasumutu claims *Gaaman* status as he represents a consortium of surrounding Captains as a senior Captain.

The objective was to design and develop guidelines for electing or designating members of village councils or village leaders at specified intervals or after the death or resignation of a village leader. These guidelines offer a solution for the problems inherent in centralized majoritarian rule, which many Indigenous people have with elections.

3.5 Opportunities for Strengthening Democracy

Suriname has validated its democratic system with three free and fair OAS observed elections in succession: 1991, 1996, and 2000. The military dominated period is over and the country looks forward to the continuing renewal and further strengthening of the democratic process.

Pluralism is critical in a representative participatory democracy and is the energy behind the idea of a broadened civil society. Inclusion of diverse voices in the public forum strengthens democracy. Finally, education and awareness-building coupled with good communication and civic education forges a stronger public role and the institutions through which the public can make its voices heard.

The decade of the 1980's in Suriname taught us certain cautionary and valuable lessons. A democratically elected but weak and internally fragmented government crumbled under the stress of a military take-over. The military leadership then began its search for and recruitment of support from various sectors of society. Yet, the military during its seven years of direct rule, never succeeded in incorporating the participation of *all* groups in the processof governance. The transition and return to democracy for Suriname is almost a case study in expanding support through institutions that had been neglected or discredited by the military leadership. In the four periods of military rule which Jules Sedney outlines, there was rule with the support of the masses; rule with the support of the left; rule with support of the labor unions and private sector; and, finally, rule with the support of the masses, the labor unions, the private sector and the traditional political parties. It was this final broad-based stage that led to the return to democracy in 1987 and again in 1991.

Political party choice is not a problem for Suriname. Seventeen parties and/or coalitions contested the 2000 elections. Six coalitions and /or political parties won seats the National Assembly. The elections of 1996 were contested by far fewer political parties but still displayed a menu of choice for Suriname voters with five coalitions and/or political parties receiving representation in the National Assembly. Perhaps Suriname's leaders, in all fields and not just political, might wish to examine what other forums of participation and civic society, public policy making could be introduced to further root and make more effective democracy in Suriname.

The reality of the two Suriname's appears again in this chapter. The conditions in the hinterland for Maroons and Amerindians are far from ideal and large scale measures are required to restore and upgrade basic infrastructure.

The interior populations, what are called here kin-ordered societies, participate in national politics through political parties and have seats in the National Assembly. There are also, following the reforms in the 1987 Constitution, far more decentralized arms of the State in the interior through district-level and sub-district level elected councils. This presence, however, exists parallel to and sometimes in conflict with the traditional authorities of both Maroons and Amerindians. The over 900 traditional authorities in the interior are not recognized in the Constitution and this omission thus limits their capacity to more fully participate in national governance and to more effectively represent their peoples. Solving the questions over land rights, ownership, stewardship and rights to exploitation, particularly gold, will be critical in Suriname's near future. Peaceful settlement of these issues will require the inclusion of all parties concerned.

The Maroon Chiefs' visits to Ghana and Brazil, and the election of Amerindian leaders and village councils, are two projects worth noting. The Ghana visit allowed the Chiefs to see one version of how indigenous traditional leadership is incorporated into the State, while the Brazil consultation exposed to them new economic development ideas. The election of Amerindian village leaders and their councils is an important break through in promoting democratization in the interior.

The ideal structures and behavior of democracy outlined in the beginning of this chapter will remain an unfulfilled challenge for probably all but a very few democracies. Yet these principles serve to guide the way to a better and stronger democracy. Suriname is on this path now.

Questions and Issues:

The chapter opens with several agreed upon principles of democracy. Where do you see flaws and problems in the Suriname experience?

1. Jules Sedney opines that the revolution went through four distinct socio-political phases based on its recruitment of support. What were these phases and how did they differ vis-à-vis the support of democratic forces?

2. What are the issues surrounding the role of and incorporation of kin-ordered (tribal) societies into the modern state? Think in terms of: a) land rights, b) the role of traditional leadership and tribal authorities, and c) questions about cultural autonomy of indigenous people.

3. What measures to strengthen democracy do you see in the "two Surinames?" What can be done at the political party level and National Assembly level in coastal Suriname? What measures are required in indigenous Suriname? How are the two worlds articulated without conflict?

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CHAPTER IV

POLICIES: SURINAME, NETHERLANDS AND USA

It should be no surprise to the reader that after over 400 years of a colonial relationship, the Republic of Suriname and the Kingdom of the Netherlands have a tangled, emotional and sometimes contradictory character. This continues to the present and the foreign policy of Suriname, despite the rhetoric of decolonization and diversification, remains Dutch-centric. Let us concentrate on the period immediately prior to independence and follow that with several dangerous epochs which involved not only the Netherlands but also Brazil and China.

Periods:

- 1973-1975: Forced march to independence
- 1975-1979: The Golden Handshake
- 1980-1982: The Coup and Dutch/US reaction
- 1983-1992: Returning to Democracy
- 1992-present: Diversifying policy of sorts; New players

1973-1975

Suriname was a co-equal member of the Kingdom of the Netherlands with its international representation and defense undertaken by the Netherlands. A governor of Surinamese descent represented the Queen/Crown, while the United States, France and the USA maintained consulates.

The US government presence, although small, represented the immense financial investment of Alcoa.

Minister of Development Jan Pronk of the Netherlands began serious talks with Suriname on independence; in fact, the Dutch worked closely with pro-sovereignty Creole groups much to the dissatisfaction of East Indians. The billions of dollars in foreign aid to be called the "golden handshake" were agreed upon. The USA displayed no particular position on independence and began during this time to forge its embryonic "Suriname is a Dutch problem" policy; only now beginning to change in the early 2000's. France was a bit more animated and was concerned that Dutch with drawl would lead to instability.

<u>1973-1979</u>

Billions of Dutch foreign aid dollars flowed into Suriname. Graft and corruption grew as monies were siphoned off from development projects, particularly the so-called "west Suriname" hydro-electric" project at Kabelabo and Apoera. Dutch concern mounted as the government weakened and fragmented under the strain of corruption and rumors follow that a rogue colonel in the Military Attache office was working with young soldiers to "influence" the government.

There was the first appearance of Chinese representation during this period. The Soviets sent a mission but would not build an embassy until after the 1980 coup. The United States and France continued to work as good neighbors but showed no particular interest one way or another, reasoning that "Suriname is a Dutch issue (and, later, a problem).

<u>1980-1982</u>

The military coup of November 1980 resulted in the USA issuing the usual concerns about the interruptions of democracy. This of course was prompted by cold war circumstances and the coincident regional events in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Jamaica, Grenada, Guyana and, of course, Cuba. Suriname was not to disappoint the USA as the government began a headlong pitch into "revolution." Suriname ambassadors and foreign ministers were called to Washington to make clear their government's positions to the Reagan government.

With the presence of a high ranking official as Cuban ambassador to Suriname, and rumors of a substantial build up of Cuban representation country, Brazil and France began a more watchful and activist policy. They two would soon be involved in concerted action to de-stabilize the military government of Suriname in late 1982.

The infamous “assassinations” of December 1982 pressed the USA into action. Several high American embassy officials were accused of being “CIA agents,” and substantial evidence exists that a covert action was in the advanced planning stages in early 1983 before it was exposed and, to a certain extent ridiculed, by then Senator Barry Goldwater. The US government position was hostile and a small military aid program was terminated.

In late 1983, several days before the US-led intervention into Grenada, a high ranking Brazilian general entered Suriname and made clear in no uncertain terms that the Cuban presence in Suriname must be drastically reduced. Brazil and, certainly, French concern over the radical drift and Cuban and Libyan presence in Suriname concerned neighbors and friends alike.

The Dutch terminated their foreign aid development package except for small humanitarian grants. The reestablishment of this aid pack remains a contentious issue at the time of this writing.

<u>1983-1992</u>

This period witnessed not only a slow process of democratic consolidation but also a dangerous civil war with a number of covert players involved and a second coup. The period eventuated in free elections held in 1991 which saw for the second time the installation of a civilian government.

An appointed civilian government in 1983 of moderates and technocrats mollified the fears of the Dutch, USA, France and the Brazilians but did not in itself lead immediately to general and free elections. In 1985 an insurgency erupted in the interior of Suriname and suddenly ex-patriot groups in the Netherlands, and operatives of the Dutch, French and US governments advanced the efforts of the “Jungle Commando” as a stalking horse with which to put pressure on the military government to hold elections.

The pressure eventuated in elections but the first civilian government of 1987 was weak and fragmented and soon capitulated to military pressure in the so-called “telephone coup” of 1990. The US, in particular, supported by the Netherlands, France, Brazil and the Organization of American States began immediate pressure for new elections in 1991. A protocol was added to the OAS resolutions in Santiago, Chile that the organization would tolerate no more “illegal interventions or disruptions of freely elected governments.” The military was on notice in Suriname.

On notice to the extent that in late 1991 the US Ambassador to Suriname, in collaboration with his Dutch and French colleagues in particular, had to insinuate (once again) the possible use of external force should Commander Bouterse not relinquish his control of the military as recently elected President Venetiaan wanted. The coalition, led by the Dutch and with significant US support (and French as well), won out and Bouterse left.

(Although out of chronological order it is important to mention that Bouterse's fortunes did not necessarily decline. Once out of the military he bcame party chairman of the NDP and saw his party form the government after the 1996 elections. He was the power behind the scenes until he split with President Wijdenbosch in the late 1990s. In the 2000 elections he ran for parliament and won a seat representing his NND in coalition with KTPI in the Millenium Combinatie. Bouterse is wanted on international narcotics trafficking charges and has been implicated in murders, arms smuggling, drug running, and syndicated crime in the so-called "Suri-kartels.")

It was during this period that US policy towards Suriname began taking on a much higher level of visibility and action-orientation. Not only was democracy and stability an issue but, by the mid-1980's it was evident that narco-commerce and trafficking were reaching alarming proportions; particularly after the arrest of a high ranking military officer in Miami.

1992-present

There have been free and open elections in 1991, 1996 and 2000. Governments are serving out their terms. The military is under control and, perhaps, gutted and under capitalized perhaps far too much to undertake its constitutional duties.

The Dutch continue to negotiate the restoration of their interrupted foreign aid package, still valued at over 300 million dollars. The Dutch argue for "sectoral" investment schemes (e.g., "rice sector," "infrastructure") while the Suriname government prefers "lump sum" disbursement to be decided later.

The French maintain a keen interest in their border with Suriname and monitor the flow of legal and illegal migrants and visitors to French Guiana. Recent efforts to assist in the rebuilding of the army barracks in Albina, Suriname are a French effort to assist the Surinamers in controlling their own borders. Many Maroon and Amerindian women deliver their babies in French Guiana and pay no expenses.

Brazil is concerned about its nearly 40,000 (mostly illegal) gold miners in Suriname and their safety.

China provides Suriname with bicycles, military uniforms and has recently paved (asphalted) several hundred kilometers of road in Suriname.

Finally, let us quickly examine the outlines of Suriname policy and US policy.

Suriname boasts of diversifying its diplomatic portfolio to include Brazil, China, Ghana, and the countries of MERCOSUR in South America. Suriname has become a member of CARICOM. Suriname, by virtue of its colonial history, has an ambassador to the European Union.

However, when all is said and done the two significant relationships Suriname has are with the Netherlands and the United States. The Netherlands occupies the attention of Suriname because of the outstanding foreign aid balance and the fact that nearly 300,000 Surinamers reside in the Netherlands; more than half the population of the country.

The United States is represented by Alcoa Aluminum of Pittsburgh, the single most immense and important financial contributor to the wealth of Suriname. New projects call for even more investment and employment. As pointed out, the US government still tends to maintain a "Suriname is a Dutch problem" perspective although this has been changing since the early 1990's. During the mid and late 1990's and accelerating into the 200's we can see a clear agenda of US policy issues emerging which are complementary to and, quite often, independent of Dutch policy.

US Policy Issues

- Maintain and Strengthen Democracy through both formal institutions and NGO's

- Promote Human Rights Protection including gender equity

- Promote Environmental usage and conservation through sustainable development, park and preservation development, and land use projections

- Strengthen capacity of security forces through joint programs and training activities

- Joint narcotics interdiction efforts supported by the Drug Enforcement Agency and the Maritime Law Enforcement Agreement

Questions:

1. Reflect on Chapter one, the Dutch colonial experience in the Caribbean and Suriname, and think about the overwhelming Dutch presence and control in the colony. This is, interestingly enough, coupled with the increasing American economic presence in the colony from colonial times though to today.

2. Think about the isolation of Suriname, even from its "natural" allies in the pre- and post-independence Anglophone Caribbean. It is really no wonder that Suriname "turned in on itself" and became isolated and out of control.

3. The collapse of the revolution led to Suriname re-thinking its role in the global economy, Radical politics failed and the only way forward was though incorporation into the financial and democratic markets. How and why did this happen? The US and Dutch presence was critical to promote international investment, recognition and approval.

4. The post-1992 interest in the rain forest and also the US government concern about narco-trafficking has concerned the US for nearly two d3ecades now. The policy interest in Suriname is growing, now that Suriname is a formal member of the OAS and the Western Hemisphere. Shall we begin to raise US visibility in the country?

5. At what level and in what sectors should US visibility be increased?

Reading:

For this section, the following reading materials come from one single volume.

It is entitled The Dutch Caribbean: Prospects for Democracy and is edited by Betty Sedoc-Dahlberg, a Surinamer. The publisher is Gordon Breach from New York and the date of production is 1990. The articles most germane to this discussion are:

Betty Sedoc-Dahlberg, "Suriname: 1975-1989. Domestic and foreign policies under military and civilian rule" (pp. 17-33) and "Struggle for democracy in Suriname" (pp. 173-190).

Gary Brana-Shute, "Love among the ruins: the United States and Suriname" (pp. 191-2020.

Tony Thorndike, "Suriname and the military" (pp. 35-62).

Michael Allen, "The Dutch Caribbean and transitions in United States-Caribbean Relations" and "Struggle and synthesis: toward theory for the Dutch Caribbean experience" (pp. 151-172).

Alma Young, "Decolonization in the Dutch Caribbean: lessons from the Commonwealth Caribbean" (pp. 253-268).

CHAPTER V

THE DIMENSIONS OF PEACE AND DEMOCRACY

4.1 Lessons and Opportunities

Suriname is a much different country today than the one of the 1980's regarding the promotion of peace and democracy. Recent political developments have shown that that the country has reached the democratic maturity to face its problems within a constitutional framework and internationally agreed upon democratic principles. What was before solved by force it is now debated democratically; and it can be said that there is no room for the political adventurism as that described in this guide. Obviously, it does

not mean that Suriname has solved all its problems. On the contrary, there are still many obstacles and much to be done by supportive governments and the NGO community. However, many lessons may be drawn from that involvement and from the efforts to reach the two objectives of peace and democracy:

- Conflict resolution situations presuppose that all the actors involved in a discussion speak the same language and, more importantly, that they use a vocabulary understood by all. Failures in attempts of peace negotiations occur when it is assumed that all participants have the same conceptual framework. Even when all sides have legal representation, the lack of understanding by members of one of the groups may have a negative impact on the results of the negotiations. Representatives with lower educational levels or different perceptions may tend not to agree with proposals because such proposals may be framed in terms totally alien and inappropriate to them and their cultural concepts.

- Vertical efforts by international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and government to continue the work of promoting and consolidating peace and democracy will depend in the long run on the "ownership" of the process by the Suriname people. It is fundamental to reinforce initiatives already taken and to strengthen public institutions in order to project to the citizen of the city and of the interior the feeling of being invested in a democracy, that his/her vote and voice have power. The element of national stewardship is critical and all participants must perceive gain for the common good.

- Surinamers are proud of their country and, although they always welcome visitors, they certainly prefer a direct exchange among themselves rather than to be told what to do by foreigners. In this context, it is important that training and development skills be shared with local institutions, which, in turn, could pass on such information to other associations such trade unions, women's groups, teacher's associations, government officials, senior citizens, and youth organizations. The best form to convey democratic and peace values to the interior population is to reach out to their members through those associations directly linked with the educational and cooperative activities of the communities.

- Women have a clear, direct, and influential participation in Suriname's public and private sectors, mainly in political and educational life. Programs in the areas of promotion of peace and democracy should involve a representative number of men and women at all levels, from the national to the community, to the villages in the interior.

- Information technology can be developed in order to use the Internet as a civic learning tool. The Internet can multiply scarce human and financial resources expended to gather and disseminate information. It can also encourage, as the Mission project with the National Assembly demonstrates, other governmental entities to share computer hardware and software and Internet resources, and effectively bring together and promote communication among parties with little or

no contact at all. With the establishment of a resources center and training at the National Assembly, albeit a small one, the Mission has helped enable a component of government to pursue its mission more effectively and efficiently. The strengthening of democratic institutions in the country through information exchange demands obviously more efforts, especially when dealing with the interior and its widely dispersed populations.

- In a multi-ethnic, highly complex society such as Suriname, great care and energy must be devoted to the creation of a forum with conditions for open and peaceful communication and dialogue. And, experience has shown us, such a forum can most successfully be constructed through the good offices of friendly governments and the NGO community. These actors can help to expedite dialogue by identifying common goals, assuring the equal participation of all stakeholders, thus assuring "shared ownership" of the process, and acting as a neutral and honest broker.

- The role of the NGO community is critical as they serve as another arm of society and platform for dialogue. Although the NGO community in Suriname was not designed with peace negotiation in mind their concern for community and national development, and citizen participation in social, political and economic development made them "natural" partners in the constituency for peace and democracy. Two groups stand out in particular in this effort: Moi Wana, a human rights group; and the Suriname Council of Churches, a bundle of religious organizations.

- Peace and democracy flourish under the rule of law, and the efforts of friendly governments and the NGO community were able to be applied successfully after a partial rule of law was re-established in Suriname following the elections of 1991. Without the Venitiaan government's commitment to at least the basic principles of law no real further efforts could have been successfully made towards the resolution of conflict and the consolidation of democracy and the further strengthening of the rule of law. The legal community must take responsibility for legal and human rights in a country, and thereby create both the opportunities and obligations for all parties to be involved in the peace and democracy process. This simply means that the efforts of friendly governments and the NGO community were supported and promoted, and functioned in the larger context of a society and government that were committed to a return to peace and democracy. Without such commitment international organizations are faced with what are perhaps insurmountable odds. This was not the case in Suriname.

- The electoral system of Suriname indirectly supported efforts to reestablish peace and democracy by assuring that citizens in the urban area, along the rural coast and in the interior had to means to directly participate in the elections of officials to represent them and to have their voices heard in governance. Suriname is divided into electoral district with each district voting for and electing its own representatives. For example, the vast and thinly populated district of Sipaliwini is

allotted four parliamentarians. This distribution, or decentralization, of power results in widespread participation of Surinamers particularly in the legislative branch of governance. Consequently, members of interior groups which were once in conflict have the constitutional means for self-representation in the National Assembly, the highest political forum of the land. Without this opportunity, continued debate and dialogue could not be effectively promoted.

- Professionalization of the security forces, for police and defense forces, is critical to restoring stability to Suriname.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, let us return to what is perhaps the most important message of chapter III ("Democracy: Challenges and Options"). When there is widespread participation in governance by civil society, coupled with a serious commitment to the principles of democratic behavior, then the democratic system functions with equity and fair play. However, when groups and organizations are deliberately excluded from participation in their governance then the democratic system is weakened and wounded, and perhaps crumbles altogether

Questions and Issues:

1. Based on your knowledge of Suriname and US policy towards the region and, specifically, Suriname what would you add to this list?

Sources:

The Unit for the Promotion of Democracy of the Organization of American States, the United Nations and International Agencies of every ilk have a voluminous literature on democracy building and strengthening. Doubtless the best place to start would be in the Department of State's Office of Democracy, and also the Western Hemisphere Division in which Suriname is housed.

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Websites

The best one stop shopping for Suriname information on the internet is through a website maintained by the University of Texas at Austin called Suriname Lanic. In fact, the University maintains a separate site for every country in the hemisphere, and these countries can simply be accessed by writing Lanic after the name of the country.

One can either search for Suriname Lanic or directly access the site as follows:
www.lanic.utexas.edu/la/sasuriname/

Click on the following topics to access information and additional links, including chat groups:

Academic Research Resources

Arts and Culture

Business and Economy

Education

Environment

General

Government

Journals and Magazines

Newspapers (Note the Suriname newspaper “De Ware Tijd,” which has an English language summary daily.)

Portals, Directories and Search Engines

Radio and Television

Travel and Tourism

Do not hesitate to contact the author for additional references or suggestions.

When in Paramaribo take the opportunity to visit the Suriname Museum housed at the 17th century fortress in the old city and also to pass by the Anton de Kom University of Suriname outside the city.