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Sugar and Uneven Development:

A Comparative Historical Analysis of  
Class and State-Formation in

Mauritius and Jamaica

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By Kieran Andrieu

Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD, to the Department of Politics, Birkbeck  
College, University of London

## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own, except where explicit reference is made to the work of others.

I declare that this thesis consists of 69,921 words.

Signature: Kieran Andrieu

Date: July 30, 2021

*Dedicated to the memory of my grandmother,  
Yvette Barrow née Bernard.*

May 31<sup>st</sup> 1934 – May 13<sup>th</sup> 2017.

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## **Abstract**

Adorned with similar, generous preferential trading arrangements with powerful actors in the Global North, both post-colonial, resource-dependent island states built on sugar production in the shadow of the British empire – Mauritius and Jamaica’s economies performed very differently in the post-independence period, with profound implications for both societies. Unlike assessments of contemporary Mauritian and Jamaican development that privilege post-independence and synchronic variables, this thesis argues that deep comparative reappraisals of each country’s colonial history offer the best explanation for their later divergence.

Faced with unique challenges, situated historical actors in Mauritius and Jamaica sought and secured supports from the British colonial state that set each country on a distinct path to development. Circumstances in Mauritius conspired to generate broad-based institution-building over a century and a half, while parallel circumstances in Jamaica forestalled comparable institution-building and legitimacy. These processes were heavily path-dependent, creating advantage and handicap as both states matured and were finally integrated into an uneven capitalist system following sovereign independence in the 1960s. Mauritius’ ‘anomalously strong’ institutions and the social and political capital and equity they fostered were direct legacies of the colonial era, and enabled the newly-independent Mauritius to better manage, leverage, and offset pressures borne by decolonisation, capitalist integration, and globalisation, in a turn of events dubbed ‘the Mauritian Miracle’ by observers.

Meanwhile, in Jamaica, chronic ‘growth without development’ unfolded for significant periods of British colonial rule, detrimentally impacting the Caribbean island’s state and institutional capabilities, its elite legitimacy and coherence, and its ability to externalise or distribute the costs of competitive capitalist integration while capturing its potential benefits after independence. Both states were built originally on sugar; both were monocrop, monoculture, and plantation economies for much of their early histories. But while Mauritius was able to successfully diversify its economy into textiles, tourism, and finance in the post-independence period while simultaneously protecting stakeholders in its dwindling sugar

industry, Jamaica's comparatively weak state- and societal institutions struggled to underwrite and guide similar sectorial diversification and development.

This project offers three main contributions to its field. First, it illustrates abstract uneven capitalist development with case study-specific, deep-historical, and empirical research. Second, it addresses a 'chronofetishist' tendency in the literature around Mauritius, Jamaica, and some mainstream development discourse. Third, it generates conceptual insights in the form of 'heterodox primitive accumulation' and 'bicephalous elitism', which build on existing theory to describe causally impactful processes in Mauritian and Jamaican history.



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# Chapter 1: Introduction

Image 1.1:



Gustav Klimt's 'Portrait of Adele-Bloch Bauer I' (1907), commissioned by her husband - a sugar magnate. Source: gustav-klimt.com

Image 1.2:



Sugarcane cutters in Jamaica, circa 1880  
Source: Royal Museums Greenwich.

*'To ask the hard question is simple' – W.H. Auden, 'The Question'.*

## 1.1: Objective

The objective of this study is to understand why one resource-dependent, postcolonial state in the Global South was able to power a domestic industrial revolution using sugar as its fuel, while another was incapable of sustaining or developing its sugar industry on its own terms, let alone of using its revenues to fertilise broader development. The first state is Mauritius, namesake of the so-called 'Mauritian Miracle'. The second is Jamaica, launching at independence with a more developed and diverse economic base than Mauritius, and adorned with similar, generous preferential trading arrangements with powerful actors in the Global North. The common matrix of this comparative history is sugar – a commodity that has had more impact on the economic configuration of the modern world than any other, with the possible exception of oil. Mauritius and Jamaica's histories are fatally entangled with the

meteoric rise of the ‘white gold’ that helped finance the European and North American industrial revolutions, propelled the transatlantic slave trade, made human populations wealthy, poor, fat, and fast. Yet this thesis makes no claim as a biographical history of the sugar commodity, or anything akin. Sugar has already been well-served in this regard by Elizabeth Abbott’s ‘Sugar: A Bittersweet History’ (2010), and by Matthew Parker’s ‘The Sugar Barons’ (2011), among others. Sven Beckert’s ‘Empire of Cotton’ (2014) and Daniel Yergin’s ‘The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power’ (1990) stand as two exemplary ‘biographies’ of other primary commodities that irreversibly altered the world economy.

This thesis, rather, aims to examine where and how overarching trends in the global sugar economy interacted with local, domestic, and historic forces in Mauritius and Jamaica to generate the long-term divergence at the heart of our counterintuitive development ‘puzzle’. The interaction in question had both centripetal and centrifugal output; domestic forces were heavily shaped by global sugar. In turn, however, those same forces fine-tuned sugar’s particularities as they played-out in their immediate environments, and (for a period of time at least) exerted some influence on external, overarching trends in the global sugar economy itself. Unlike assessments of contemporary Mauritian and Jamaican development that privilege post-independence and synchronic variables, this thesis argues that deep comparative reappraisals of each country’s colonial history offer the best explanation for their later divergence.

## 1.2: Overview of Thesis

As regards these objectives, the core argument is as follows: Faced with unique challenges, situated actors in Mauritius and Jamaica sought and secured supports from the British colonial state that set each country on a distinct path to development. Circumstances in Mauritius conspired to generate broad-based institution-building over a century and a half, while parallel circumstances in Jamaica forestalled comparable institution-building and legitimacy. These processes were heavily path-dependent, creating advantage and handicap as both states matured and were finally integrated into an uneven capitalist system following

sovereign independence in the 1960s. Mauritius' 'anomalously strong' institutions (Rodrik, 1999; Subramanian and Roy, 2001) and the social and political capital and equity they fostered were direct legacies of the colonial era, and enabled the newly-independent Mauritius to better manage, leverage, and offset pressures borne by decolonisation, capitalist integration, and globalisation, in a turn of events dubbed 'the Mauritian Miracle' by observers (Ibid.; Darga, 1996; Bunwaree, 2001). In Jamaica, meanwhile, chronic 'growth without development' unfolded for significant periods under British colonial rule, detrimentally impacting the Caribbean island's state and institutional capabilities, its elite legitimacy and coherence, and its ability to externalise or distribute the costs of competitive capitalist integration while capturing its potential benefits after independence.

Both Mauritius and Jamaica were built originally on sugar; both were monocrop, monoculture, and plantation economies for much of their early histories. But while Mauritius was able to successfully diversify its economy into textiles, tourism, and finance in the post-independence period while simultaneously protecting stakeholders in its dwindling sugar industry, Jamaica's comparatively weak state- and societal institutions struggled to underwrite and guide similar sectorial diversification and development, as we will see in greater detail throughout this thesis.

The roots of Mauritius' so-called 'miracle' were, in fact, material. The absence of an indigenous population<sup>1</sup> in Mauritius meant the absence of existing social structures prior to colonisation (Neveling, 2013, p122). Once colonists properly settled the tropical island, this lack of endogenous power contestation allowed, in part, for the emergence and consolidation of a uniquely cohesive and homogenous class of sugar planters, most of whom were Franco-Mauritian in origin. Another crucial factor came as a consequence of imperial realpolitik, whose distant permutations conspired to forestall the embedding of one or multiple productive sectors in Mauritius – or Isle de France – during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Mauritius, unlike Jamaica, was colonised in three waves; first by the Dutch in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, then by the French in 1715, and finally by the British in 1810. In each case, Mauritius was mobilised principally as a strategic base from which to buttress larger geostrategic interests in

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<sup>1</sup> According to the definition adopted by the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (un.org, 2017).



the Indian and Pacific Oceans, cautioning against largescale agricultural investment and production.

This all changed in 1825 with a major commodity boom in sugar. Up until that point, proto-capitalists and slaves engaged in a heterodox mode of primitive accumulation in a social *tabula rasa*. That sugar should have become the commodity to seize both parties, reify their relations, and colour their destinies was by no means pre-determined. It resulted from the 1825 boom that was, itself, driven by a repeal on the preferential tariff enjoyed by West Indian sugar, and continued long into the middle of the century with a rise in global demand and the lifting of a maritime ban on foreign ships in British ports. But while the sugar boom made the Franco-Mauritian sugar planters fabulously wealthy and powerful, it also revealed three economic problems or ‘bottlenecks’ (Saylor, 2012; 2014). First, a labour shortage was exacerbated by the British Empire’s abolition of slavery in 1833 (effective 1835). Second, Mauritius’ transportation infrastructure was highly inferior in the face of dramatically expanding production. Third, the island suffered from a malaise of undiversified cane stock, making it vulnerable to pests and pathogens.

Unlike elites in colonial environments with a more heterogeneous social inheritance, the Mauritian sugar planters were able to overcome dilemmas of collective action owing to their unique cohesion and homogeneity, and in turn appeal to the Mauritian state for assistance in solving their bottlenecks. The resulting process of widespread labour regulation and public goods investment was, in the case of the former at least, brutal. But it was also highly symbiotic, in that it fixed the planters’ problems *and* spawned and enhanced Mauritian state capacity manifold. Because Mauritius was both a marginal part of the British Empire and at the same time an important supplier of its sugar, its domestic administrators were granted both discretion and support by the metropole. To deal with the labour supply problem sparked in the aftermath of the Abolition Act, the British and Mauritian governments helped the sugar planters import 300,000 indentured servants from India by 1920, as well as a further 1,000 from China. To ‘regulate’ the expanding workforce the state passed a raft of highly oppressive laws that necessitated the growth of the Bureau de Police and the creation of the Mauritian Immigration Department, while the island’s court system sprawled out of Port Louis and deep into the countryside. To address the problem of antiquated transportation

infrastructure, the Mauritian and metropolitan administrators performed reconnaissance on the island for possible railway routes before heavily assisting with the financing of a vast network of railways, which they operated at a financial loss for long periods of time. Railway and road density in Mauritius increased greatly, and a professionalised Railway Department was placed at the helm of railway management. Finally, to conquer the problem of undiversified cane stock, the British and Mauritian states turned the Royal Botanical Gardens (of the Pamplemousses district) into a storage and development site for varieties of sugarcane from around the world, rapidly transforming it into an international leader in sugarcane research (Ibid., p.124). The primary institutions the Franco-Mauritian sugar planters used to organise their interests were the Mauritian Free Labour Association (MFLA) and the Chamber of Agriculture (later the Department of Agriculture).

But by building Weberian institutions in the Mauritian colony, and by importing an enormous indentured Indian workforce whose continued servitude could be brutally and arbitrarily extended but not so totally as it could under chattel slavery, the Franco-Mauritian sugar elite unwittingly sowed the seeds of long-term change and class decline. Initially yoked to individual sugar estates, the Indo-Mauritian population gradually started to demand, and enjoy, rights – among them the right to acquire land. As a result, populations began draining away from the large, predominantly Franco-Mauritian-owned sugar plantations and establishing small, rural sugar farms. With this population transfer, an estimated 150 villages and settlements sprang-up across the island in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, each with its own vibrant community lifeworld, peculiar familial structure, and voluntary association. Such associations were oftentimes based on models imported from the ‘old country’. The *baitka*, for example, was a form of Hindu village organisation that held community meetings, educational classes, religious ceremonies, and entertainment, with up to ten located in every village (Lange, 2003, pp.406-408). Gradually, local associations became supplemented with local councils, which, as we move into the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, become the state’s helpmeet in several, key administrative areas. This ‘synergistic’ relationship between the relatively high-capacity, centralised bureaucratic state established initially by and for the Franco-Mauritian sugar planters, and the many diffuse, organic societal groups formed by an expansive Indo-Mauritian population, gradually ensured the latter were heavily represented in the channels of the former, culminating around the epoch of independence in a ‘dual power’ situation: Franco-Mauritians enjoying the lion’s share of economic power; Indo-Mauritians

the dominant force in politics and governance (Bräutigam, 2008, p.141; Schnepel, 2009, p.137). It is neither coincidence nor anomaly that ‘founding father’ and first independent Prime Minister of Mauritius, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, was the child of Indo-Mauritian indentured labourers – his mother having emigrated to Mauritius in 1896 to work on the Queen Victoria Sugar Estate.

In Jamaica, meanwhile, chronic ‘growth without development’ unfolded for significant periods under British colonial rule. Unlike uninhabited Mauritius, Jamaica had been home to an indigenous population – the Arawak, who had lived on the Caribbean island for around 3,000 years before the Spanish arrived in 1494. Yet genocide against the island’s aboriginals was so abject that virtually the same *tabula rasa* social effect was achieved as occurred naturally in Mauritius, in turn producing similar ‘heterodox primitive accumulation’, or accumulation in a vacuum. Despite this, Jamaican proto-capitalists and elites discovered alternative ways to scupper and strain their collective action, as a ‘two-headed’, or bicephalous, elite emerged following English colonisation in 1655: A class of sugar planters, on the one hand, and a class of buccaneers, on the other. The ensuing internecine strife, a persistent strain of rebellion in the colony (particularly later Maroon rebellion), and the fact that it was initially absorbed into Cromwell’s Empire as a ‘consolation prize’, all combined to temper an ambivalent metropolitan attitude to early resource-transfer and state building. The Glorious Revolution of 1688 finally settled the class question in favour of the sugar planters and their landed interest, and an extended period of elite stability continued throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with the sugar planters crowned the undisputed hegemony of Jamaica. But this period, the ambivalent metro-periphery relations, insufficient resource-transfers, and prevalent day-to-day hardship it fostered, seeded three, key path-dependent processes: The collapse of the small peasantry, causing an oligopolistic structure of plantation ownership; the chronic need for endogenous capital, resulting much later in unsustainable planter indebtedness; and, most instrumentally of all, an absentee landlord class with powerful proximity to, and connections and overlap with, the British political elites in charge of imperial statecraft.

As global demand for sugar skyrocketed, the lobbying power of the Jamaican absentee landlords became near-unimpeachable. The Jamaica House of Assembly was the only

legislature in the colony, and almost all of its 43 seats were near-permanently occupied by large sugar planters. Even in the tenacious milieu of British West Indian parliaments, the Jamaica Assembly was “renowned for its exhibitions of ‘determined constitutional assertiveness’” (Petley, 2018, pp.7-9). In addition, the Jamaican planters helped establish, and were key components of, the London West Indian lobby, influential crucible and bully pulpit of the absentee landlords in the metropole, where much of the protective policy that would enrich the planters but ultimately impair broader socioeconomic development was deliberated and devised. This phenomenal bargaining power created longstanding growth without development in colonial Jamaica, as the island’s economic monoculture was effectively enclosed in a chrysalis of distorting tariff preferences and protections that spectacularly enriched the narrow sugar elite but masked or cushioned the kinds of productive bottlenecks that had, in colonial Mauritius, generated state capacity, as well as later socioeconomic problems and solutions. Unlike in Mauritius, technological backwardness was allowed to persist in production, while professionalised, bureaucratic, and administrative faculties lay mostly in abeyance where a centrifugal, colonial state might have otherwise developed. Such features were surplus to the collective imperatives of the absentee and local planter class so long as an iron curtain protected their markets and prices. Growth, often prodigious growth, had been occurring in Jamaican sugar since before the Glorious Revolution and the vanquishing of the buccaneers. Development, on the other hand, was more elusive.

The Jamaican state was consequently comparatively weak in the face of the upheavals of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries up to, and beyond, independence. Relative broad-based development, too, was consequently lacking. First, the banning of the international slave trade in 1807 constricted the seemingly endless supply of slave labour on which they thrived. Second, the West Indian sugar monopoly was diluted when Mauritius was admitted to the market on the same terms in 1825, followed by the East Indies in 1835. Third, the abolition of slavery throughout the British Empire in 1833 terminated, once and for all, the brutal labour practice on which two centuries of Jamaican plantation-based accumulation had been built. Fourth, the Sugar Duties Act of 1846 finally removed the protective carapace of tariffs and duties that had incubated the Jamaican planters’ dazzling wealth and power, exposing West Indian sugar to world market prices in a landmark year for advocates of free trade that also saw the passing of the Corn Laws. Fifth and finally, European sugar beet production emerged in the 1860s and, by the end of the century, had become the new kid on the block, expanding

manyfold the supply of sugar to the global economy. At each of these critical junctures, the hegemonic Jamaican planter class was, on the whole, unable to surmount or use to its advantage the fundamental shift in socioeconomic and political conditions, in part because of the weak but matured (that is to say, path-dependent) state it had constructed, seduced and guided by the illusion of metropolitan protection *ad infinitum*.

Some state- and public goods-building, and state-corporate coherence, did exist in British colonial Jamaica. The Jamaican state's sprawl and presence was certainly visible, for example, in its brutal 'regulation' of the labour market in the post-Emancipation period, analogous with processes in Mauritius. But generally, such enterprises were of a different order than those which developed in Mauritius (Interviewee 3 [GC], Feb 24 2021). Likewise, just as the creation of state capacity, bureaucratisation, and institutionalisation in Mauritius was at the behest of the Franco-Mauritian planter class, making them rich but simultaneously setting the scene for their longer-term decline, the mercantilist privileges enjoyed by the Jamaican sugar barons made them fatally vulnerable to the 'winds of change' outlined above.

With the rug of artificial markets and prices pulled from beneath them, the Jamaican planters found the cycles of credit and debt that had come to define their relations with the local merchants completely unsustainable. Sugar production in Jamaica continued as a vital part of the colony's economic base, and new preferential trade deals were sought in the 19<sup>th</sup> and pre-War 20<sup>th</sup> century with Canada and the United States (Gordon, 1957), although nothing came remotely close to recapturing the privileges and riches of the pre-Sugar Act regime.

Gradually, with the raw sugar interest eviscerated, the structure of Jamaican investment and production diversified. But the deficiencies of the monoculture period imparted two grave, interrelated, and lasting path-dependent processes to Jamaican development. First, the comparatively weak colonial state, with a poorly skilled and poorly paid civil service, an inadequate local and regional government presence, and a lack of central authority and legitimacy, all of which lasted long into the post-independence period, all the way to the present in some cases (Interviewee 3 [GC], Feb 24 2021; Lodge et al., 2015; Hughes and Whyte-Givans, 2008). Second, the highly oligopolistic structure of plantation ownership in protectionist Jamaica was reproduced down the ages, so too was the absentee/foreign-owned nexus, as European and American capital flooded-in to buy-up the behemoth sugar

plantations of bygone glory and horror (Burrell, 2016; Henry Fe, 1984). Where once slaves toiled in the Jamaican cane fields, now armies of hired labourers worked long hours for low pay with few rights. Where once the sugar barons perused their grand estates on horseback, now the functionaries of Tate & Lyle and United Fruit surveyed their factories and fields by motorcar.

This great influx of foreign capital, often through the vector of multinational corporations (MNCs), served to reorganise, modernise, and grow the plantation production sector in 20<sup>th</sup> century and late-colonial Jamaica, and reproduced itself across other key and emerging industries like bauxite mining and banana production. But it also enhanced foreign exploitation of domestic workforces, and – perhaps most familiar of all – it engendered “superficial growth” only, because it masked grave internal contradictions: Technological, productive, and efficiency contradictions; domestic social and class antagonisms; and conflicts between foreign and national-interest (Ibid., p.1). Profits in sugar and other key industries grew from the 1940s up to and beyond independence in the 1960s, but this was scarcely repaid with largescale domestic re-investment. In short, this was a continuation of growth without development, a process whereby profits are generated peripherally before being extracted to the metropole and/or other locations, either to generate development or accrue value remotely. The relatively weak Jamaican state was, comparative with Mauritius, less equipped to manage this process successfully, as it was the entire transition to sovereign independence and the development conundrums contained in postcolonial, capitalist integration.

### 1.3: Contributions

This project offers three, primary contributions to its discipline. First, as the title suggests, it is concerned with uneven capitalist development. Unevenness is caused by the complexity and dynamism of the capitalist system, whose outcomes are weighted with particular histories of struggle, rebellion, oppression, and liberation. These qualities are inflected in common and specific ways by the spectre of empire, which continues to overhang both Mauritius and Jamaica, as well as much of the wider Global South. The notion of linear, stadial, or functional ‘late development’, once popular across the scholarly and intellectual landscape,

has been interrogated by the experience of a half-century or more of mass decolonisation. While the deductive heart of liberal or Marxist axioms on the question might have been retained, a commitment to examining the complexity of late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century capitalism – across locales with disparate and distinct, yet interlocking and interdependent, histories and geographies – has been increasingly honoured. This study aims to follow in the footsteps of such works, contributing to the field by delving headfirst into two instances of ‘difference and uniformity’ in postcolonial development, filling-out contemporary or synchronic ‘puzzles of divergence’ with deep, or ‘thick’, readings of history. In the latter case, the method of history here verges closer to the social scientific than it does the humanities, investing temporal or diachronic variables with explanatory power by loaning insights from Historical Institutionalism (HI). ‘Big structures, large processes, and huge comparisons’ (Tilly, 1984) might be the humus of research that searches for causality in vast expanses of space and time, but our thesis equally demonstrates the centrality of agents and collective agency in the unfolding of seemingly mechanical processes and events.

Much of the arcane terminology laid out above will be unpacked in due course. For now, having established the ‘what?’ of this particular contribution, one might reasonably ask ‘why?’ Why, at this point in time, attempt an empirical contribution to development, uneven or otherwise? On one level, the answer is that development continues to raise highly important strategic and normative questions for postcolonial states. Whatever the shifts of the intellectual and scholarly dial, the logic of the prevailing economic model exhorts and compels developing states to adhere to uniform development policies, discernible in the litany of standardised Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) emanating from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, and in the rules-based frameworks devised at the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The European Union (EU) is the single largest global trading partner, making it pivotal for international development. As we will see in the context of sugar, the EU’s trading and production regimes with partners in the Global South were and remain relatively standardised and uniform (Interviewee 1 [FD], Jan 16 2020; Interviewee 2 [WD], Jan 16 2020), for better or for worse. Before neoliberal hegemony, developmental uniformity existed too, albeit in a more state- and less market-guided form, stemming from the nexus of colonial, modernisation, and Cold War politics that ruled the day. Our cases demonstrate, however, that not only do such formulaic approaches produce radically conflicting and sometimes counterproductive results, but that – to recover the

human face of development – these results can have serious implications for livelihoods, communities, and social relations in the Global South and elsewhere. Interest in these issues has been further rekindled following the rise of several states in the Global South over the past three decades, from the ‘Asian Tigers’ in the 1980s and 90s (Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong and South Korea), to the BRICS in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), heralding a shift in North-South relations and driving a tension in the international system between multipolar and multilateral governance (Güven, 2017).

On another level, these questions are asked at specific times of specific entities, important in their own right. Mauritius has long been elevated as a paragon of the possible; a gleaming emblem of what postcolonial capitalist development can achieve if executed properly. It therefore behoves those who do the emblemising, and those who do not, to understand what went right and why. In parallel, contemporary Jamaica is written about as almost something of a developmental ‘problem child’, a characterisation that no doubt misses more than a good dose of nuance and generates more than a little frustration and offence. The purpose of this thesis is not to litigate on the rectitude of past discourses, but to use its flashpoints and tensions as a launchpad for a scholarly investigation into the historical causes of contemporary developmental divergence in Mauritius and Jamaica, insofar as it exists. It bears emphasising at this point that there are multiple ways to measure the success and wealth of a society, and that the lived experiences of Mauritians and Jamaicans transcend any elaborate epistemology designed to capture and transcribe macro processes. It should not be beyond the remit of a work of scholarship to acknowledge relevant contextual details such as, for example, that this thesis is being completed in London, England – once the centre of the world’s largest empire, and, not by coincidence, the imperial metropole that formerly ruled and subordinated both Mauritius and Jamaica until their independence in 1968 and 1962 respectively. Listening to voices from these locales, or ‘decolonising knowledge’, is of paramount importance.

By the same token, however, much of modern Britain’s wealth was amassed under the twin behemoths of global empire and transatlantic slavery. Too often the debates surrounding these issues are framed as matters of collective conscience, questions on the heritability (or



not) of ancestral guilt. What is often obscured in the penumbra of this no-doubt important questions is that material wealth often begets further material wealth, a fact which is eminently palpable in a basic inventory and genealogy of Britain's urban, infrastructural, architectural, and cultural abundance; an inventory that would, by rights, have to include many of the hallowed institutions where research projects like this one are typically financed and undertaken. We inherit the sins because we inherit the wealth, and so long as we inherit the wealth, there is no statute of limitations on the heritability of the sin. But we can, for the most part, leave the question of sin to the clergy – what we are concerned with is the material legacies of empire on modern-day development in Mauritius and Jamaica. The sum reckoning of this question ought to be of as much interest to a British-based researcher as it ought to a Mauritian or Jamaican-based researcher, because the implications – though dramatically polarised – are comparably profound for both. To grasp the nettle completely – 'postcolonial guilt' is not an unhealthy phenomenon, but left to languish at guilt alone, neither is it very productive. If, on the other hand, 'guilt' is used to galvanise pursuits and acquisitions in relevant knowledge, then guilt is sublimated, if unatoned.

A second key contribution of this thesis comes in lending weight to an already ongoing project, namely that of addressing a gap in the literature around Mauritian and Jamaican development. As will be elaborated in chapters 3 and 5, many evaluations, while insightful, suffer from chronofetishism – an analytic limitation whereby the present is effectively sealed-off from the past, obscuring historical contexts and making synchronic phenomena appear static, self-constituting, and autonomous (Hobson, 2002, pp.6-7). In this body of literature, references to 'strong' or 'good' institutions and governance as prerequisite to later Mauritian development are, in the main, conceived immaculately; little effort is made to adequately explain the provenance of those same institutions, state or otherwise. Similarly, Jamaica's comparatively inefficacious post-independence institutions appear as if from nowhere, unable to cope with the pressures borne by capitalist integration, neoliberalisation, and globalisation (Weis, 2004; Munroe and Blake, 2016; Figueroa and Sives, 2002). As detailed in section 1.2, our thesis addresses these elisions with reference to deep, colonial, and path-dependent history – building-on and departing from a parallel scholarly tradition comprised of Saylor (2012; 2014), Lange (2003), and others, who see explanations of Mauritian development as inextricable from the *longue durée*. Likewise, a major paradigm that places history at the centre of its explanations for Jamaican (and wider Caribbean) underdevelopment is

Caribbean Dependency Theory (CDT), or the Plantation school. Like the more universalist Dependency Theory of Andre Gunder Frank and his acolytes, CDT starts from the premise that debilitating power asymmetry exists in relations between regions and modern states, before advancing a series of claims that pertain specifically to the political economies of the Caribbean. Beckford argues, for example, that the plantation economy exemplified in Jamaica and much of the Caribbean must be understood as a unique socio-economic category, one which does not accord to the regular functioning or principles of the capitalist world economy; even as part of what Dependency terms ‘the periphery’ (Beckford, 2000; 1978; Girvan, 2006, p.337). The economic legacy of plantation production is, in the main, a rigid structural logic that locks resource allocation into the plantation sector(s), preventing diversification into the truly transformative non-plantation areas of the economy (Best and Levitt, 1969; Beckford, 1972).

Our thesis first commends (in section 5.3) the CDT and Plantation framework for undermining chronofetishist, nomothetic, and excessively-positivist accounts of development by instead fixing its gaze toward historical, institutional, intersubjective, psychological, and geographical methodologies. In so doing, it provides this research with a sound precedent for an historical explanation of Jamaican underdevelopment. Second, it also acknowledges that CDT does not constitute a monolithic corpus, with key analytic and empirical variation co-existing within the framework. Some of its central tenets do, however, generate friction with aspects of both the *prima facie* and confirmed findings of this thesis. Firstly, Mauritius’ economy was defined almost entirely by plantation logic up until its independence, and also suffered under the yoke of extreme racial hierarchisation and stratification from the moment its (predominantly) African slaves and Indian indentured servants were cast ashore. Mauritius was also a small, remote island – a geographical feature that some CDT scholars suggest is determinant of dependence and underdevelopment. Yet Mauritius experienced postcolonial capitalist growth and development.

A plausible riposte to this point might be that Mauritius is not, in fact, a Caribbean state or economy, but such a counterargument would require the identification of further, Caribbean-specific and Caribbean-wide variables that explain why Mauritius – short of absolutist, Newtonian notions of space – is fundamentally different (that is to say, less subservient) in its

relation to the world economy than Jamaica and its neighbours. A second point of friction comes in the observation that variation across plantation-based economies and societies *within* the Caribbean has occurred over the past few decades. The sectorial configuration of the once-plantation economies of Jamaica, Antigua, Trinidad and Tobago, and Barbados (to name but a few) has shown some divergence and nonlinearity, indicating the limitations of a thesis that suggests their structural and collective productive boundedness. This generates something of an irony in that CDT risks homogenising and overdetermining Caribbean developmental experiences by failing to pay attention to inter- and intra-societal distinctions.

So, while the CDT and the Plantation framework lays the groundwork for some of the critical-historical assumptions underlying this project, it also leaves core questions unanswered regarding the substantial, empirical variation at the heart of our puzzle. On the one hand, it resoundingly cures the historiophobia of dominant chronofetishist accounts. On the other, it falls foul of overly-structuralist and overly-deterministic tendencies. This thesis therefore works to apply a more dialectical approach to the plantation system and its dark history; one in which class, state, empire, and plantation production interact to forge particular, path-dependent conditions across given settings. In so doing, it resonates more closely with Kiely on Trinidad (1996), whereby the historical linkages of labour to (uneven) Caribbean development are examined and emphasised (Kiely, 1996, p.28). Our dovetailed theoretical framework (detailed in chapter 2) – incorporating both class-centred historical materialism and Historical Institutionalism – provides a cogent means of attacking variables like ‘class’ and ‘state’. The specific involution and pattern of plantation production elevated in CDT is, of course, analytically important, but alongside it we must ensure that other, vital aspects of productive, social and power relations are considered.

A third, final, and subsidiary contribution made by this project comes in conceptual form, with original formulations such as ‘heterodox primitive accumulation’ and ‘bicephalous elites’ providing theoretical conduits into complex historical and empirical events and processes. Heterodox primitive accumulation derives, of course, from Marx’s primitive accumulation – the violent pre-requisite to capitalism, encompassing the dispersal of inhabitant populations, the valorisation of subsistence land, and the gradual proletarianisation of surplus peoples (Marx, 1990, pp.874-875). This process might have been first

conceptualised in relation to the formal enclosure of public land in England, but Marx nonetheless observes that “the beginnings of the conquest and plunder of India, and the conversion of Africa into a preserve for the commercial hunting of blackskins... characterize the dawn of the era of capitalist production” (Ibid., p.915). What ‘heterodox’ primitive accumulation seeks to understand, then, is what happens when capitalist relations and markets are forged in a *terra incognita*, or a land without inhabitant population(s). While there is cursory acknowledgement that the lack of aboriginal population in Mauritius had consequences for the island’s emergent social structures and political institutions, there is little attempt to properly situate this phenomenon within a broader conceptual framework. Heterodox primitive accumulation does just this, demonstrating how elite action, class cohesion, and institution building faced fewer initial obstacles in Mauritius than in colonial environments with inhabitant populations and pre-existing social structures. As such, the challenges posed by a heterogeneous social inheritance to the acquisition of resources and the accumulation of capital were negated. Given that Mauritius was not the only uninhabited terrain colonised and assimilated into the pan-global project of empire, the heterodox primitive accumulation framework might be applied to other social *tabula rasas*-cum-sites-of-capitalist-accumulation, offering the prospect of fruitful research beyond our locus of study. And, of course, despite the homogenising ‘lines on a map’ borders and frontiers concocted in the minds of European colonists in collaboration with local vanguards – within a single colonial polity there might have existed both historically populated regions, replete with advanced hierarchies and social systems, and unpopulated regions, with no indigenous claimants or stakeholders whatsoever. The era of the state system, sovereign independence, and capitalist globalisation has done a good deal to reify the illusion of the ‘black box’ (or unitary) nation-state, but a less chronofetishist review of modern states’ origins demonstrates a highly uneven geographical process, such that heterodox primitive accumulation might be applied *intra*-nationally<sup>2</sup>.

‘Bicephalous elite’, meanwhile, is an innovation that combines the more generic and intuitive observation of elite societal groups with a literary flourish; ‘bicephalous’ meaning ‘two-

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<sup>2</sup> The need to pay attention to, and manage, intra-boundary social distinctions in late- and postcolonial states was reflected in the failed ‘Belgian Thesis’, whose *raison d’être* was the protection of indigenous rights. This contrasted with the so-called ‘Blue Water’, or ‘Salt Water’, thesis, which charged that for colonisation to take place, ‘blue water’ must exist between metropole and periphery.

headed’, derivative of the Greek *kephalé* (head). Not every setting in which a power duopoly exists comes under the definition of ‘bicephalous elitism’, as presented here. A situation whereby two dominant social groups or actors routinely act in the spirit of mutual co-existence, finding that their interests are non-competitive, reconcilable, or even virtuously cyclical, does not warrant the definition ‘bicephalous elite’. It is reserved, rather, for fractious duopolies – those that act as the demiurge for considerable disruption and internecine strife in their locales. The imagery of two or multiple heads – sometimes attacking each other – has rich cultural precedent in mythology, heraldry, vexillology, and so on, often associated with peril or dread. The Chimera, according to Greek mythology, was a fire-breathing hybrid of a lion and goat native to Asia Minor. The aficionado of European flags knows that the two-headed eagle is a staple hailing from the days of empire, typically depicted as fearsome and guardianlike. Bicephaly has, in other words, deep symbolic redoubt in the annals of statecraft, empire, and civilisation. As alluded to in section 1.2, the bicephalous nature of formative class and elite politics in very early Jamaica is found to have had large and longstanding consequences for Jamaican state and institution-building, as well as later colonial and postcolonial development. Namely – the sugar planting and buccaneer class created widespread internecine strife on the island as they vied for dominance in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, in turn tempering an ambivalent metropolitan attitude to early resource-transfer and state-building. These paucities consequently drove the collapse of the small peasantry, causing an oligopolistic structure of plantation ownership in Jamaica; the chronic need for endogenous capital, resulting much later in unsustainable planter indebtedness; and (most instrumentally of all) an absentee landlord class with powerful proximity to, and connections and overlap with, the British political elites in charge of imperial statecraft.

#### 1.4: Overview of Contemporary Cases & ‘Puzzle’

Adorned with closely aligned preferences under the EC/EU-ACP Sugar Protocol (1975-2009), and buoyed equally by high world market prices in the period immediately preceding the Protocol (1972-1975), the Mauritian and Jamaican sugar industries performed very differently in the post-independence period (1968 onwards for Mauritius, 1962 for Jamaica). Such was the continued critical (though uneven) centrality of sugar to the two countries, its fortunes induced or else mirrored dynamics in the rest of the economy. In Mauritius, the

wisdom of two Nobel Laureates was belied by the performance of its postcolonial economy. The economist J.E. Meade published a report commissioned by the Governor of Mauritius (1961) in which he found that the island state had little prospect of ‘peaceful development’, owing to a miasma of absent economic resources and opportunities (a “mono-crop economy”), rapid population growth, and rampant inter-ethnic stratifications and grievances (Meade, 1961; Subramanian, 2009, p.1). A decade later, these sentiments were echoed and amplified by the British-Indian writer V.S. Naipaul in his essay *‘The Overcrowded Barracoon’* (1972).

Meade was certainly correct in his assertion that Mauritius was a mono-crop economy; in 1968 sugar accounted for a staggering 96 per cent of its exports, 45.3 per cent of its employment, and contributed 27.6 per cent to its GDP (Laaksonen et al., 2006, p.18). Such primary resource dependency typically portends badly for development for a number of reasons. For one, the prices and terms of trade for primary commodities on the world market tend to be disfavourable or volatile (Harvey et al., 2010; Cavalcanti et al., 2015). Moreover, export commodity reliance has historically proven a fertile site for rent seeking, resource capture, and corruption (Subramanian and Roy, 2001, p.10). Additional aspects of Mauritius’ economic inheritance – or material endowments at the time of independence – were ostensibly disfavourable, too. Sachs and Warner (1997) and Subramanian and Roy (2001) indicate that closeness to the world economy’s ‘centre(s) of gravity’, the proportion of the country in a tropical climate, and ethnolinguistic fractionalisation are all important variables in determining a country’s developmental prospects. As an island in the Indian Ocean, entirely subsumed within a tropical climate, and predominantly comprised of Indo-Mauritian, Creole, Sino-Mauritian and Franco-Mauritian populations cumulatively speaking upward of ten languages (Mehta, 2015, p.52), Mauritius scored low on each of these fronts.

Against all expectations, however, Mauritius straddled and surmounted its peaceful development ‘mountain’, successfully diversifying the structure of its economy to encompass textile manufactures, tourism, and financial services. By the year 2000, the share of exports accounted for by sugar had dropped precipitously to just 14.9 per cent, the proportion of the workforce engaged in its production had declined to 9.5 per cent, and its contribution to GDP stood at 4.4 per cent (Laaksonen et al., 2006, p.18). Concurrently, between 1977 and 2006,

real GDP in Mauritius rose on average by 5.2 per cent annually while the corresponding figure in the rest of sub-Saharan Africa was 3.3 per cent. Reframed in per capita terms, the average income of a Mauritian trebled over this period while the average income of a sub-Saharan African grew by only 32 per cent (Subramanian, 2009, p.2). According to the CIA's 2017 World Factbook, Mauritius boasts the best GDP adjusted for Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) in Africa – ranked eighty-sixth globally (CIA World Factbook, 2017). Perhaps most impressively of all, however, Mauritius achieved “a degree of equity, a remarkable welfare state, and a consolidated democracy” (Sandbrook, 2005, p.550) inside of a single generation. Inequality as a measurement on the Gini coefficient declined, from 0.5 in 1962, to 0.42 in 1975, 0.37 in 1986-87, and 0.36 in 2017<sup>3</sup> (Subramanian and Roy, 2001). Accordingly, the UN places Mauritius ahead of any of its African counterparts on its Human Development Index (HDI) – sixty-fourth globally in its 2015 report.

From the jaws of a familiar narrative signposted with common tropes – resource-dependencies, stagnant growth, poverty traps, failed states – revenues from Mauritian sugar were harnessed so effectively that the commodity almost singlehandedly acted as a flywheel for other, more advanced and higher value industry, for rapidly improving living standards, and, ultimately, for one of the greatest democratic development success stories of the postcolonial era. Indeed, some four decades on from Mauritius' mono-crop moment, a different coinage predominates to describe its developmental experience: The 'Mauritian Miracle' (Ibid.; Darga, 1996; Bunwaree, 2001).

Compared with Mauritius, Jamaica's economic inheritance at independence was broadly favourable. For one thing, the world's largest economy, the United States, sat just several hundred miles to its north, rendering Jamaica far closer to the economic 'centre of gravity' than Indian Ocean-based Mauritius. Jamaica also enjoyed a far less circuitous route to that other, re-emerging pole of economic activity – Europe. In the 1950s and 60s, Jamaica's economy – though still heavily commodity-reliant – was already considerably more diversified than Mauritius'. Even in the milieu of Jamaican export commodities, sugar was merely one in a chorus that included lucrative bauxite and alumina mining, coffee, and

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<sup>3</sup> Source: data.worldbank.org <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI?locations=MU>

bananas. Thus, the macro-economic structure of postcolonial Jamaica's economy was not only far more diversified than Mauritius', but also far more diversified than many other postcolonial economies. Largescale foreign investment flooded into the country in the 1950s and 60s, causing GDP to grow at an annual average rate of 7 percent (Beckford and Witter, 1982, pp.72-73; Kirton and Ferguson, 1992, p.14). Finally, Jamaica, like Mauritius, was adorned with preferential trade deals before, during, and after its inception as an independent, self-governing country in 1962. Although sugar had declined as a share of national GDP by independence, it remained arguably the most structurally significant industry in the country, for reasons that will be unpacked in chapters 5 and 6. The Commonwealth Sugar Agreement (CSA) was signed in 1951 by the ailing British Empire and a number of its dominions past and present, including Jamaica. Far more impactfully, following Britain's accession to the European Communities (EC) in 1973, signatories to the CSA were incorporated into the EC-ACP Lomé Sugar Protocol in 1975, built on a quota and guaranteed price twin mechanism. Jamaica received the fourth largest sugar quota under Lomé. So, while the usual tensions and anxieties attended Jamaica's decolonisation from the regular quarters, it is difficult to find the kind of erudite gloom that enveloped Mauritius as it crossed the threshold into sovereign independence.

Despite these relatively favourable aspects of economic inheritance, Jamaica's socio-economic development since independence has been chequered. Where Mauritius was able to straddle and surmount its unlikely peaceful development mountain, Jamaica succumbed to economic stagnation, gang violence, and widespread corruption – struggles that persist to the present day<sup>4</sup> (Weis, 2004; Munroe and Blake, 2017; Figueroa and Sives, 2002). Between 1975 and 2003, per capita growth in Jamaica averaged a sluggish 0.4 per cent per annum (Laaksonen et al., 2006, p.23), hindered in part by severe contractions in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. From 1997-2017, annual GDP growth (total output) averaged 0.47 per cent (tradingeconomics.com, 2017), making Jamaica “one of the slowest growing developing countries in the world”<sup>5</sup>. Trade deficits and high levels of public debt bedevilled the Jamaican economy over the same period. Between 1980 and 1990, Jamaica's trade deficit nearly

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4 Source: data.worldbank.org <https://data.worldbank.org/country/jamaica>

5 Source: data.worldbank.org <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/jamaica/overview>



quadrupled, growing from \$216m to \$785m. Between 1990 and 2003, it nearly tripled again, with exports now equal to roughly two-fifths of imports (Weis, 2004, p.474). Not only did these imbalances reduce public revenues in Jamaica, they also fed a cycle of borrowing that made the country one of the most indebted in the world by the 2010s; peaking in 2013 with a debt-to-GDP ratio of 147% (IMF, 2019). The United Nations' Human Development Index (HDI) has consistently found Jamaica's human development poor in comparison to its Caribbean neighbours.

In regards specifically to sugar, and in spite of the Sugar Protocol, Jamaican production has flagged and declined: From 523,000 tonnes in 1965, to 217,000 tonnes in 2000, to 83,000 tonnes in 2016, with projections of a sharp reduction to 60,000 tonnes in 2020 (Laaksonen et al., 2006, p.25; USDA Report, 2017; 2019). Likewise, long-term export figures chart a downward spiral: from an annual average of 400,000 tonnes in the early 1960s, to 150,000 tonnes in 1980, to little more than 50,000 tonnes in 2017 (Laaksonen et al., 2006, p.26; USDA Report, 2017). "Without urgent and significant diversification", commentators have argued, Jamaican sugar faces "very little hope of survival", with small farmers most deleteriously and directly impacted (Burrell, 2016, p.103). Neither state- nor market-led reforms have been enough to save Jamaica's etiolated sugar industry, with the country having "privatised, de-privatised and re-privatised its failing sugar estates" over the course of its post-independence history (The Economist, 2017).

What went 'right' in Mauritius and 'wrong' in Jamaica? – two tropical island states integrated at the margins of the world economy in the same epoch, with colonial histories moored to the same metropole, dominated economically by the same blood-soaked, lucrative, and physically addictive agricultural commodity. As outlined in section 1.2, our hypothesis going forward is that such divergent developmental outcomes in the post-independence period were prefigured by processes of development that took place much earlier, deep in Mauritius and Jamaica's respective colonial histories. Such histories are entwined but distinct. While (again referenced in section 1.2) Mauritius was colonised in three waves – first by the Dutch, then the French, and finally the British – and Jamaica was a British colony without interruption from 1655 until 1962, it was Mauritius that diluted the unparalleled perks and protections enjoyed by the Jamaican and West Indian sugar planters for more than

a century, following the British Empire's repeal of a preferential tariff in 1825. Class formation, primitive accumulation, institution and state-building, and metro-periphery dynamics are all key, path-dependent pieces of the modern-day 'puzzle' we seek to explain – concepts that will be properly expounded in chapter 2, before being applied to empirical chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6.

## 1.5: A Brief Note on Method

“That whereof we cannot speak, thereof we must remain silent”, writes Wittgenstein in the closing passage of *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921). What constitutes the unspeakable in Wittgenstein's reckoning is a matter of debate for philosophy students. Social scientists carrying out doctoral research, however, surely lend credibility and undergirding to their findings and claims if they compile them 'out-in-the-field', so to speak. In our case that would mean Mauritius and Jamaica. With great disappointment, and after much planning, the coronavirus pandemic irreconcilably disrupted plans to visit these beautiful and fascinating countries – about which I have now spent so many hours pondering and lucubrating, but upon which I have still yet to set foot.

What the modern world takes with one hand, it gives back with the other: Technology proved the saviour of this thesis. Much of my first-hand methodology is predicated on interviews with the director of the Mauritius Sugarcane Industry Research Institute, and with the Permanent Secretary of the Jamaican Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, conducted via Zoom or a video technology equivalent. I consciously selected interviewees from different parts of the value chain for sugar, and with different and potentially conflicting interests, so as to triangulate findings and perspectives on the questions at hand. Bureaucrats and businesspeople, policymakers and practitioners – they all have a critical stake in sugar, and they all have experiences that lend this thesis its contours. In addition, I was able to conduct face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with stakeholders in the European Union's sugar industry, held in Brussels in January 2020 – before the coronavirus pandemic had properly gripped Europe. These interviews offered primary sources and perspectives on the EC and

EU's deep, historical relationship with sugar producers and traders in the Global South, formalised via the Lomé Sugar Protocol, the Cotonou Agreement, and the various Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) that govern present arrangements, including in Mauritius and Jamaica. Again, these interviews involved actors from all sides of European sugar – from an independent sugar trader who had previously worked for Südzucker, to employees in the European Commission's Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, to a lobbyist on behalf of corporate sugar beet interests, based a mere ten-minute walk from the Berlaymont. In a counterfactual version of this project, I met with the aforesaid Mauritian and Jamaican authorities face-to-face, in administrative offices in downtown Port Louis or central Kingston. But like so much of interaction and human exchange in 2020, a computer screen, a capricious internet connection, and a gauzy camera were forced to suffice. Happily, the interviews were highly informative, illuminative, and substantive. As a matter of fact, a case could be made for the superiority of Zoom interviews over those conducted in-person. Scheduling of the interviews was more flexible, the participants were relaxed, and having audio-visual footage of the interviews aided in *ex post facto* comprehension and transcription. *L'esprit de l'escalier* – Diderot's phrase denoting the retrieval of the correct response only after the moment has passed – was mitigated by the wealth of information at both participant and researcher's fingertips, and the comparatively relaxed environment in which to access it.

In addition, this research (as articulated throughout this chapter) is a work of comparative political economy, and as such makes no special anthropological or ethnographic claims on Mauritian or Jamaican populations, where the physical embedding of the researcher 'in-the-field' is of greater importance. Anthropological and ethnographic studies carried out by researchers in the Global North are rightly under additional scrutiny to incorporate participant voices from their settings, to resist 'piratic' methods (Tilley, 2017), and to pluralise epistemologies for three, principal reasons: First, the substantive nature of their claims (i.e., about cultures, often marginal and/or dispossessed cultures). Second, the typical exteriority of the observer-researcher from the group under observation. And third, the historical mobilisation of anthropological knowledge in colonial and imperial rationale and subordination, or otherwise in discourses that pit Eurocentric modernity against

‘backwardness’ and ‘primitiveness’, whether implicitly or explicitly<sup>6</sup>. The history of disciplinary political economy frequently cascades into all of these areas, critical political economy included – as indeed constitutes an overarching conclusion of this thesis. Nevertheless, political economy operates in a different genus of inquiry, with a different generative grammar – one where, by virtue of multiscalar, institutional, and historical focus, what is at stake is not fundamentally contingent on the centrality of participants or observers, or on the proximity of the two. As outlined in section 1.2, our thesis turns on collective agency, but it is more often than not the collective agency of locally-situated elite groups and classes that drive *initial* long-term developmental outcomes, even where those outcomes conclude with the class in question being dethroned.

Having said all of that, it is important to note that influential critical traditions exist within anthropology that explicitly reject (as their *raison d’être*, in some cases) the more problematic methods and conclusions formulated throughout the relatively short history of their discipline. Indeed, the ‘additional scrutiny’ to incorporate indigenous participant voices, resist piratic methods, and pluralise epistemologies comes, in the main, from anthropologists and ethnographers rooted in these critical traditions. Marxist anthropology, for example, emerges from ethnographies that are critical of the political economy of neoliberal globalization and earlier global modes of capitalist exploitation, with a focus on the disruptive convulsions of neoliberal capitalism and the anthropologist’s active role in political and economic struggles (Neveling and Steur, 2018). The latter criterion demands that researchers continue to reflect critically on their own relevance as intellectuals embedded in movements for a better future (Narotzky, 2015), facilitating processual – which is to say, future-oriented yet historically aware – inquiries into the forces that drive the current global condition, and how they might be overcome. Neveling and Steur conclude: “At the core of this analytical and empirical paradigm is a refusal to romanticize, and thereby fictionalize, political economies at any scale” (Neveling and Steur, 2018).

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<sup>6</sup> Although this is often antithetical to the intentions and actual findings of many influential anthropologists and ethnographers, from Franz Boas to Margaret Mead.

Elsewhere, decolonial anthropology turns the discipline into “a permanent exercise in the decolonisation of thought” by attempting to learn from those others that Western thought has considered irrational or incomprehensible, and by doing so in such a way that “these others are configured as theoretical agents, as a source of the most interesting concepts, problems, and entities, rather than as mere cultural objects of Western thought and knowledge” (Viveiros de Castro, 2014, 47-48; Viveiros de Castro, 2004. p.4). Such a decolonial project seeks, then, to put “modern, Western, thought to the test of non-modern, non-Western realities, and to experience the transformation of our Western imagination by the radical, decolonising differences other realities, other concepts, and other truths, make” (Savransky, 2017, p.12). While, as argued above, these methodologies are not explicitly adopted in this thesis, they nonetheless exist recursively adjacent to, and in overlap with, many of our epistemological, ontological, and theoretical premises. Marxist anthropology, being properly historical materialist, does not consider itself an autonomous locus of study, but one concerned instead with the “necessary unification of anthropology with history and the other social sciences” (O’Laughlin, 1975, p.368). Decolonial anthropology, meanwhile, shares many of the concerns of this thesis as regards the (often-corrosive) isomorphic, postcolonial reification of the Global South, its peoples, and its institutions.

The bulk of remaining primary methods in this thesis are based on archival research, making use of online resources available at [nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://nationalarchives.gov.uk), as well as official British Parliamentary records held at [hansard.parliament.uk](http://hansard.parliament.uk) and [british-history.ac.uk](http://british-history.ac.uk). The World Bank’s quantitative data repositories also assisted with indicators of post-independence socio-economic performance in Mauritius, Jamaica, and beyond. The National Archives is the most capacious and comprehensive repository of Britain’s colonial-era materials, a cornucopia of information that all-too-seldom inspires the kind of national reflection entreated in section 1.3. Equivalent archives are held in Mauritius and Jamaica, but, again, travel disruption precluded my visiting them. Several of their resources exist online, enabling me to triangulate evidence gathered from British archives with sources held in the former Empire. The highly diachronic and historical nature of this thesis demanded extensive retreat into archival spaces to supplement the semi-structured interviews described above. The final deck of methodological scaffolding supporting this thesis is comprised of copious second-hand, scholarly sources. Theoretical aspects of method are outlined and assembled in chapter 2.

## 1.6: Structure of Thesis

This thesis is organised as follows: *Chapter 2* assembles the theoretical framework onto which this research is built. Essentially a synthesis of Political Marxism and Historical Institutionalism, it is selected as a robust and rigorous method for capturing, addressing, and explaining the development puzzle at the heart of our thesis. As we shall see throughout coming chapters, the core elements of divergence in Mauritius and Jamaica – class formation and coalition, metro-periphery dynamics, and state and institution-building – are all centre-stage in Political Marxism, while Historical Institutionalism sheds light on the heavy layering and conditioning effects that history and time exert on the aforesaid. As paradigms that accent agent- and group-led action *in conjunction* with structural transformation at higher levels of abstraction, they are deeply committed to social and historicist research. Chapter 2 also takes a *tour d’horizon* of the literature that locates Mauritian development in the *longue durée*, asserting that these works provide our thesis with critical-analytic coordinates throughout. In *chapter 3*, the facticity of Mauritius’ prodigious post-independence development is established, and the key synchronic theories surrounding it are canvassed and assessed. This is undertaken primarily to demonstrate that, despite important and illuminative contributions, none of these explanations adequately capture the root-cause of the so-called Mauritian Miracle. The dominant frameworks are bunched into three, main camps: *economic openness, preferential trade deals, and associational ties and social embeddedness*. The ‘economic openness’ thesis is further sub-divided into three variants – *total economic openness, a ‘heterodox opening’ to trade, and foreign direct investment (FDI) and the importation of ideas*. Each of these interpretations is shown to be inadequate on its own terms, while the issue that hamstringing them all is a failure to account for the nature and origins of Mauritius’ putatively ‘strong’ institutions and state.

*Chapter 4* addresses this elision, arguing that the absence of an indigenous population in Mauritius, as well as the absence of social or power structures prior to colonisation, enabled the eventual emergence and consolidation of a uniquely cohesive and homogenous class of sugar planters on the island. Building on arguments made by Saylor (2012, 2014), a sugar

commodity boom occurring from 1825 onwards compelled merchants and investors to back, or otherwise become, large sugar planters, and revealed three major problems or economic ‘bottlenecks’. Unlike elites in colonial environments with a more heterogeneous social inheritance, the uniquely homogenous Mauritian sugar planters were able to overcome dilemmas of collective action and successfully appeal to the Mauritian state for assistance in solving their bottleneck problems. The upshot of these transferrals and interventions is a path-dependent process of high capacity state-building throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Having covered Mauritius, *chapter 5* takes us halfway across the world to Jamaica, establishing the Caribbean island’s fraught post-independence development, before outlining and assessing key scholarly explanations for it. As with Mauritius, despite important and illuminative contributions, none of these explanations adequately capture the root-cause of Jamaica’s struggles in capitalist late-development. This is primarily because they suffer either from ahistoricism or structural over-determinism. The dominant frameworks are bunched into four, main camps: *Neoliberal restructuring, the decline of state capacity, the removal of preferences, and the CDT and Plantation framework*. *Chapter 6* closes our comparative inquiry, advancing the view that – as with Mauritius – mixed postcolonial development in Jamaica can only be meaningfully understood with reference to processes of colonial-era capitalist development throughout the *longue durée*. From the very beginning, the colony of Jamaica was regarded by the English metropole as something of an encumbrance; drunken, disorderly, and quasi-ungovernable. This metropolitan ambivalence had path-dependent ramifications for early statecraft and development on the island, which are shown. Following the ascendance of the Jamaican sugar planters, supports and transfers from the British metropole were secured in the form of monopolistic tariff preferences. While these supports helped enrich the sugar barons, they also ensured long-term *growth without development* on the island, because the monopoly they were given was in raw sugar. Moreover, combined with the monocultural nature of the Jamaican economy, the monopoly had the effect of masking or cushioning the kinds of productive bottlenecks that had, in colonial Mauritius, generated state capacity and socioeconomic development throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Finally, *chapter 7* brings the research and its coverage to a close – restating, synthesising, and contextualising the ‘problem’, the arguments as they exist, and the overarching and contributing thesis contained in these pages. Part of this contextualisation involves situating the study in a wider milieu of existing or potential research, as well as outlining areas that are incomplete and/or generative of potential issues.



## **Chapter 2: Class, State, and Time: A Theory of Development**

*“When you come to a fork in the road, take it” – Yogi Berra.*

### **2.1: Introduction**

This chapter lays out the theoretical framework onto which this research is built. Essentially a synthesis of class-centred, or ‘Political’, Marxism and Historical Institutionalism, it is selected as a robust and rigorous method for capturing, addressing, and explaining the development puzzle at the heart of our thesis. As we shall see throughout coming chapters, the core elements of divergence in Mauritius and Jamaica – class formation and coalition, metro-periphery dynamics, and state and institution-building – are all centre-stage in Political Marxism, while Historical Institutionalism sheds light on the heavy layering and conditioning effects that history and time exert on the aforesaid. As paradigms that accent agent- and group-led action *in conjunction* with structural transformation at higher levels of abstraction, they are deeply committed to social and historicist research. As such, they supply a powerful corrective to overly-economistic interpretations of development and underdevelopment in the Global South and elsewhere. A richly political theory of development is therefore advanced in the coming chapter, not because economic models or variables are irrelevant, but because they are never really just ‘economic’. In an adjacent register, the Hungarian-born political economist, Karl Polanyi, famously spoke of the economy being ‘embedded’ in, and indissoluble from, social relations, social institutions, and so on (Polanyi, 1944; 2001). The synthetic framework established here incorporates and distils what it considers the most important ‘social’ or ‘non-economic’ variables in the overall equation – class, the state and proximate institutions, and time. Insofar as strictly ‘economic’ variables need be confected and isolated for analytic purposes in research of this ilk, they need equally be triangulated with causal factors that lie outside the economist’s immediate toolbox. Finally, this chapter surveys a prominent and pre-existing body of scholarly literature that approaches the so-called Mauritian Miracle as a diachronic and institutional process realised in the *longue*

*durée*. Our own empirical coverage of Mauritian development contributes to this rich and expansive analysis.

Chapter 2 is organised as follows: Section 2.2 offers a compendium of our ‘Janus-faced’ and class-centred approach to historical materialism, outlining its definitions, core tenets, and methods. As a theoretical foregrounding to later empirical chapters set in Mauritius and Jamaica, the centrality and importance of class structures, the balance of class power, and the bearing that these have on processes of institutionalisation and state-building are all emphasised. Section 2.3 demonstrates how temporal, or *diachronic*, considerations are obliquely present in Brenner et al.’s Political Marxist conceptions of capitalist development, and borrows insights from Historical Institutionalism to make them explicit. In particular, and in anticipation of the overall historical tenor of our thesis, HI’s systematic exposition of path dependence is relayed and slotted into the broader framework to prime us for the empirical research that unfolds in chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6. Section 2.3 closes with an examination of institutional, critical, and ‘big’ historical explanations of Mauritian development, with their implicit linkages to Political Marxism and HI highlighted along the way. Finally, section 2.4 brings the chapter to a finish with some concluding and summarising remarks.

## 2.2: Class and the State

### *Janus-Faced Historical Materialism*

This research draws on the Marxist, or historical materialist, tradition to help ground and marshal its empirical observations and conclusions. A key (and live) debate within Marxist analysis is whether the structure of world-economic trade determines uneven patterns of capitalist development (Wallerstein, 1979; Gunder-Frank, 2014), or whether, in fact, the domestic configuration of productive (class) relationships takes primacy (Brenner, 1977; 1982; Wood, 2002). Tomich proposes a highly fertile reconstruction and reconciliation of these two positions, which is adopted here for our purposes. In it, “production may be

theoretically constructed as a general historical relation that presupposes and includes within its concept distribution, exchange, and consumption... Taken together, these relations form an interrelated and mutually dependent theoretical whole, ‘*distinctions within a unity*’” (Tomich, 2004, p.47) (Italics added). Tomich continues:

“Production is an attribute and constitutive element of the world economy as a social historical whole. But, of course, there is no general and undifferentiated production, only *particular branches of production and individual producers whose activities and relations are organized through distinct social forms*. Thus, in the modern world economy the production and exchange of commodities unite multiple forms of labor and diverse groups of producers, and, at the same time, they establish specific conditions of material and social interdependence among them” (Ibid., p.48) (Italics added).

By acknowledging that market exchange and productive relations are enmeshed in complex, multiscalar, and open-ended ways, we sidestep some of the more meta-theoretical debates that, while often worthwhile for their own purposes, risk drawing Marxists away from hard theory-testing in empirical settings. Our empirical settings are, chiefly, Mauritius and Jamaica – environments with their own peculiar, historical-instrumental processes of class-formation and consequent productive development. None of these attributes, however, exist in self-contained, autotelic, or spontaneously-generating vacuums; they were configured in the vortex of wider imperatives arising from domestic, regional, and global ‘distribution, exchange, and consumption’, as Tomich puts it.

#### *Class-(Re-)Centredness and Primitive Accumulation*

The risk of a synthetic and holistic definition such as the above is, however, that it becomes so elastic as to permit any and all activity, describing little concrete. One corrective in this scenario is to identify the aspect of the inclusive theoretical whole most relevant and applicable to our empirics, while retaining scope for secondary (but still influential) factors.

Here, our research embraces a heavily class-centred approach to development in early, colonial Mauritius and Jamaica. In his major inaugural work on what would later become schematised as Political Marxism<sup>7</sup>, Brenner (1977) argued that the transition from feudalism to capitalism played-out in distinct ways across late-medieval Europe primarily owing to *historically evolved structures of class relations and, especially, differing balances of class power* in a given setting. In this, Brenner broke with and challenged prominent analyses that attributed the systemic shift to overarching demographic and/or economic phenomena (Brenner, 1977; Brenner, 1982). He also contrasted his approach with more structuralist traditions in the Marxist thought-world<sup>8</sup>, which operate at higher levels of abstraction, and expound “a more generic conception of class struggle as the passive manifestation of a deeper structural logic” (Knafo and Teschke, 2020, p.5). For all its class-centred fanfare, Brenner argued, Marxist histories of the transition to capitalism largely took class for granted, neglecting the internal dynamics, complex genealogies and anatomies, and local-national causal explanatory power immanent in class and class configuration.

Thus, Brenner’s Marxism pivots the focus onto *class struggle as the key determinant of social history*, since the divergent outcomes and experiences of capitalist transition in late-medieval Europe and beyond can only be properly explained by looking at how specific social struggles mediate structural forces like demography and market logic (Ibid., p.5). “The element of ‘indeterminacy’”, Brenner explains, “emerges in relation to the different character and results of these conflicts in different regions. This is not to say that such outcomes were somehow arbitrary, but rather that they tended to be bound up with certain historically specific patterns of the development of the contending agrarian classes and their relative strength in the different... societies”. All the same, common markers of success or failure viz. a given class are identifiable: Their “relative levels of internal solidarity, their self-consciousness and organization, and their general political resources – especially their relationships to the non-agricultural classes (in particular, potential urban class allies) and to the state” (Brenner, 1977, p.52). Ultimately, then, the sundry class unit and the collective

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7 Originally intended as a somewhat derisive label for Brenner’s work by one of his interlocutors, before being quickly reclaimed by his fellow-exponents and acolytes.

8 For e.g., in Althusser, L. (1970); Poulantzas, N. (1978), and Arrighi, G. (1994), to name but a few.

agency that comprises it forms the methodological point of departure for our analysis; it is class relations that drive developmental processes; class relations which are, themselves, the product of prior processes of conflict and contestation.

If internal solidarity and organisation are key determinants of success or failure in the development of class and class hegemony, it follows intuitively that a class or set of classes riven by, or unable to overcome, dilemmas of collective action are less likely to succeed relative to classes that have managed, through whatever combination of circumstances, to establish a functioning and mutually beneficial *modus vivendi*. Indeed, in Brenner's original case study, the effectiveness of the European lords' surplus-extracting administration in the late-medieval period depended on the degree to which intra-lordly organisation could be extended, and intra-lordly competition correspondingly reduced<sup>9</sup> (Brenner, 1982, p.39). A situation defined by fierce intra- and inter-class competition tends to fragment authority, causing *de facto* 'parcelization' of sovereignty. The potentially debilitating and 'anarchic' effects of parcelized sovereignty can, on the other hand, be neutralised and overcome if coherence and commonality within and among classes is achieved (Ibid., p.38).

Marx postulates that the earliest instance of capitalist development occurs in 'primitive accumulation<sup>10</sup>', or the "historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production... whereby the social means of subsistence and production are turned into capital, and the immediate producers are turned into wage labourers" (Marx, 1990, pp.874-875). Via this process – whose typical methods are forcible usurpation, individual acts of violence, and the 'parliamentary form of robbery' (Glassman, 2006, p.610) – the groundwork for capital accumulation, or capitalism, is laid. Primitive accumulation, then, is the violent pre-requisite to capitalism, encompassing the dispersal of inhabitant populations, the valorisation of

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<sup>9</sup> While this example is pre-capitalist in nature, class solidarity is a constant variable according to Brenner, regardless of the prevailing mode of production.

<sup>10</sup> Conceived by Marx as a riposte to what he regarded as Adam Smith's juvenile and jejune concept of 'previous accumulation' (1776), which located the principal causes of the division of production not in violence and expropriation, but in individual entrepreneurialism and innovation (Smith, 1977).

subsistence land, and the gradual proletarianisation of surplus peoples. Marx acknowledges that this “history of expropriation assumes different aspects in different countries, and runs through its various phases in different orders of succession, and different historical epochs” (Marx, 1990, p.876). If, as indeed our thesis demands, we wish to assess the variability and causes of relative class coherence and its impact on historical development, then *probing and examining the forms that primitive accumulation took* in Mauritius and Jamaica is a logical starting point.

In sum, our class-centred approach emphasises the centrality of power and social conflict to the analysis of history and historical development (Knafo and Teschke, 2020, p.1). Particular attention is paid to specific, sometimes counterintuitive, historical trajectories, as well as the concrete role of social agents in shaping capitalist history. Specific actors are understood in analytic rather than merely descriptive terms, which is to say as a means for “understanding the greater significance of a phenomenon, for example why some capitalists followed a distinct strategy” in a given setting (Ibid., p.19). Counterintuitive innovations present “a comparative standpoint” that breaks down “the impression of an organic symbiosis between innovation and context. This can be done along two axes, either *temporally through a diachronic historical comparison that seeks to determine how an innovation marks a departure from a previous norm, or spatially through a synchronic historical comparison to show how different courses were taken to address similar types of problems*. By outlining different pathways, the objective is to capture something that is counterintuitive about the path taken” (Ibid., p.20). These points touching on diachronic analysis will be expanded in section 2.3. For now, let us take stock of the claim that a truly historicist Political Marxism will elevate innovations which, at a higher level of abstraction, are unremarkable or imperceptible. Finally and relatedly, the conceits and designs of a hegemonic class or set of classes will, in time, produce significant unintended outcomes. “People never fully control the terms under which they make history,” Knafo and Teschke write, “they never fully control what emerges from their innovations.” Therefore, “historicisation requires that we trace social innovations in terms of complex and decentred lineages where multiple agencies are involved, so that no one can be said to control the whole process.” Crucially: “This changes nothing concerning the observation that powerful capitalists (or powerful states) tend to secure much better outcomes than workers (or weaker states)”, but is nonetheless a

methodological commitment aimed at capturing specific agents, their innovations, and the difference they make to development and history (Ibid., pp.20-21).

As chapter 1 establishes, both the Mauritian and Jamaican sugar barons once reigned over their colonies without peer. The (asymmetric) diachronic transmogrification and relative diminution of their power suggests a combination of unintended outcome and external, historic shift, the like of which is retrievable within Tomich's 'Janus-faced' historical materialism, and scrutable within Brenner et al.'s class-centred approach.

### *Institutionalisation, and the Capitalist, Colonial and Postcolonial State*

Historically and geographically-situated expressions and modalities of social conflict, and the power relations that make or break them, form a large component of the 'political' in *Political Marxism*. The framework's 'politicisation' of social history does not end there, however. For *once social classes and the agents that constitute them come to subdue and dominate their environments, a process of power-reproduction typically unfolds via a diverse and complex repertoire of institutionalisation*. In feudal Europe, Brenner identifies these methods as 'political accumulation' or 'extra-economic'; the collection of resources and revenue (or the development of a stronger surplus-extracting machinery), effective military organisation, and the protection of property through the establishment and enforcement of rights and laws (Brenner, 1982, pp.38-39). In Brenner's empirical comparative history, for example, we notice quite clearly the European lords' "ultimate dependence upon the institutions by which they could extract a surplus by extra-economic compulsion", forcing them to "attempt, in different ways, to rebuild and/or reshape these institutions" (Ibid., p.31). Their success and failure in this endeavour depended, again, on the balance of class relations, both internally and externally. Where successful, political accumulation in late-medieval Europe "tended to become self-perpetuating and escalating – the amassing of more land and

men to more effectively exert force in order to collect the resources for the further application of power<sup>11</sup>” (Ibid., pp.38-39).

In systemic capitalism, however, methods of coercive discipline are traditionally meted out via the market, underwritten by the fundamental class relationship that defines wage labourer (torn asunder from his or her means of subsistence by primitive accumulation) and capitalist appropriator (Wood, 2002). But even if we accept that the capitalist marketplace – into which a historically unprecedented productive relationship, or ‘social property relation’, is built – possesses its own effective, internal logic of discipline and reproduction, it is a complacent fallacy to view ‘the market’ or capitalist system itself as a sort of Hanging Garden of Babylon, suspended without the undergirding of the modern nation-state or some other socio-political, juridical power centre or agency. “Markets are profoundly political institutions. As in any other social realm, agents use and manipulate regulations and institutions as means of empowerment to exert power over others” (Knafo and Teschke, 2020, p.8). In Karl Polanyi’s ‘*The Great Transformation*’ (1944), capitalist markets are, to one degree or another, ‘embedded’ in social relations. Embeddedness, succinctly defined, is the idea that the economy is not autonomous, as it must be in economic theory, but subordinated to politics, religion, and social relations (Block, 2001, pp.xxiii-xxvi). Polanyi made the case for a ‘substantivist’ theory of economics, emphasising that economic activity had – until the rise of the classical school and the ‘market revolution’ it heralded – functioned as little more than an outgrowth of underlying social relations. By contrast, in the mainstream ‘formalist’ school of economics (developed seminally in Smith’s ‘*The Wealth of Nations*’ [1776]) history is, in Polanyi’s view, written back-to-front – with *homo economicus*<sup>12</sup> cast simultaneously as the hero of progress and the natural state of man, from primordialism to the present (Polanyi, 2001, pp.59-70). In effect, Polanyi writes, the formalist lens sees that “instead of economy being embedded in social relations, social relations are embedded in the economic system” (Ibid., p.60).

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11 This point suggests an important methodological theme that is under-elaborated in the quotation, and in the work at large, but which is addressed and systematised in section 2.3 as ‘path dependence’.

12 ‘Economic man’, predisposed to utility maximisation by means of entrepreneurial truck and barter.



So while the fundamental break with the past represented by the emergence of capitalist modes of production, exchange, and consumption might have consigned ‘extra-economic’ (or essentially ‘political’) means of exploitation, appropriation, and systemic reproduction to the ashcan of feudalism, the capitalist system itself requires the constant maintenance and order imposed by social and political institutions. More than this – the capitalist system and the modern state developed *pari passu*, albeit in a variety of non-linear and complex ways, each defined by diachronic contingencies and synchronic particularities. Writing on the subject of order in colonial African society, and the mechanisms by which order later percolates into the postcolonial African state, Mamdani observes that: “There was and is no particular and fixed balance between force and market. Its degree remains variable: the customary<sup>13</sup> was never a Chinese wall keeping the tide of market relations at bay; nor was it of nominal significance. The customary was porous. Within its parameters, *market relations were enmeshed with extra-economic coercion* (Mamdani, 1996, p.287).

Brenner’s European lords might have prayed in aid to juridico-political authorities *outside* the immediate economic system to bolster and ensure their extractive powers, but *successful capitalist class-formation throughout the modern period reveals an underlying, layered, and highly syncretic process of state-building and institutionalisation that deepens, broadens, and perpetuates capitalist development for both ruling and labouring classes, however asymmetric and lopsided its course*<sup>14</sup>. Thus, our framework going forward demonstrates “a qualitatively-based concern with specific and *institutionalised* social... relations” (Knafo and Teschke, 2020, p.8). Idiographic institutions, regulations, customs, and discourses are all of central concern in the emergence and reproduction of capitalist order, as are the particular forms of agent mobilisation that underpin and guide them; forms of mobilisation which cannot, themselves, be readily reduced to, or derived from, a unilinear structural logic of the

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13 Mamdani defines ‘the customary’ as “the authoritarian possibilities in indigenous culture”, whereby the alien (colonising) power achieves domination via “harnessing the moral, historical, and community impetus behind local custom to a larger colonial project” (Mamdani, 1996, p.286).

14 For a fuller, more systemic look at institutional dynamics and how they can generate path-dependent and/or sub-optimal outcomes over time, see section 2.3.

market (Ibid., p.15). Owing to these propositions and assumptions, Brenner argues, Political Marxism is particularly useful in “searching for underlying differences which might account for contrasting lines of development in different places under similar constellations of economic forces” (Brenner, 1977, p.47) – a turn of phrase that captures the problematic at the heart of our case studies and our thesis.

As the model of state identified by Weber as ‘legal-rational’ gradually rose to prominence across Modern Europe, eclipsing or innovating absolutist and other foregoing traditionalist forms of governance, empire-building projected these emerging forms of institutional organisation and dominance around the world. Colonial administration became, throughout the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, a major concern of European statecraft, and of the social classes, interests, and agents that directed it (Burbank and Cooper, 2010; Blackburn, 1997). Weber’s near-ubiquitous conceptualisation of the state as “the form of human community that (successfully) lays claim to the monopoly of legitimate physical violence within a particular territory” (Weber, 2004, p.33) is accepted here, but begs two further, essential questions: By whom? And on whose behalf? As the late international political economist and journalist Susan Strange would routinely ask – ‘*cui bono?*’; who benefits? Furthermore, while models can and do contain universal features and characteristics, they seldom if ever conform to identical replication or reproduction when applied to diverse, human settings. Herein lies, to reiterate, one of the major assumptions of our thesis at large. While a *sine qua non* of the relevant ideal types – state, capitalism, market, and so on – is legitimate and important for analytic and comparative purposes, the expectation going forward is that an overly-static and procrustean projection of them onto disparate environments leads to deleterious slippage, both in theory and in practice. First, by not paying sufficient attention to what social actors and classes are *actually* doing in given settings, at given times, under given circumstances. Second, and following, by generating universalist strategies to answer heterogenous problematics, particularly in the late- and postcolonial period as a response to the conundrum of ‘late development’.

To address these (admittedly widely-identified) issues, a commitment to *a posteriori* investigation of class and state-development over *a priori* confirmation bias allows us to comprehend and retrieve the “extreme dynamism and diversity of capitalist orders”.

Ultimately, “what creates order on the market is precisely that... competition is always channelled in socially specific ways, which profoundly transform what types of strategies become privileged” by social classes, actors, and state-builders in given settings (Knafo and Teschke, 2020, pp.15-18). The development ‘puzzle’ at the heart of our thesis is most likely only a puzzle if viewed at a telescopic distance. For, at a telescopic distance, both Mauritius and Jamaica were assimilated into the British Empire, into capitalist global markets and modes of production, and, finally, into a world of sovereign-independent postcolonial states. Zoom into the granular detail of these permutations, however, and a great deal of instrumental explanatory material will likely become apparent; details previously deemed negligible by their illegibility, suddenly become unignorable and decisive. A Political Marxism that is neither strictly metro- nor pericentric, neither exclusive to agent nor structure-centred exegesis, but is considerate instead of the dynamic, interactive nature of these forces and scales, provides us with the theoretical tools to delve into and make sense of complex, diachronic comparisons; comparisons which are drawn initially from the dark and transformative annals of empire, but which are profoundly illuminative of contemporary circumstances.

Since the 1980s and 90s, a voluminous literature has emerged on the intricate morphologies of the (mostly African-continental) postcolonial state. Mamdani, for example, argues that the postcolonial African state is typically marked by a ‘bifurcated’ logic, which is itself a direct residue of colonial administration and rule. Belying the common designations of ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ dominance following the so-called ‘Scramble for Africa’ in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Mamdani finds that French, British, and other European powers used varying shades of ‘decentralised despotism’ to control and subordinate local populations (Mamdani, 1996). This system produced a tiny minority of Europeans and Westernised Africans who enjoyed the full prerogatives of citizenship, while the majority of Africans only obtained rights as subjects of tribally defined ‘native authorities’ (Fanthorpe, 2001, p.368). Meanwhile, Boone asserts that the African state exists across multiple, uneven, and historically inflected ‘political topographies’, which, as a result, incorporate rural localities and provinces into the modern state in highly variable ways and to varying extents (Boone, 2003, p.220). “Regional variations that matter”, she argues, “have to do with settlement patterns, property-rights regimes, the scope and salience of non-state political institutions, modes of market access,

and cultural homogeneity (shared language and belief in a shared future, shared social institutions). These factors make a difference for how, how thoroughly, how durably, and how democratically regional and subnational populations are (or are likely to be) incorporated into the “national” state” (Ibid., p.324).

While these theses and the scholarly register that underpins them are preoccupied with the piebald construction of the sub-Saharan African state, Boone maintains: “Insofar as the model here was deduced from general principles about collective action, state building, and political choice, it can travel beyond West African cases to agrarian society and core-periphery linkage in other... countries” (Ibid., pp.321-322). In any case, neither Mamdani nor Boone look at the peculiar, concrete conditions of state and institutional morphology in colonial and postcolonial Mauritius or Jamaica. What they do, however, is supply a broad invitation and ontology to examine the thick, historical, and differentiated development of specific states in equally specific postcolonial environments; states as deduced from ‘general principles’ and often functionally and substantively equalised in the isomorphic and nomothetic capitalist and Western gaze, but which interact with historically-embedded and deeply-layered social realities, contingencies, and forces to create a wide and complex spectrum of the modern Eurocentric or Weberian state, encompassing capitalist development, integration of national centre and periphery, strategies of population assimilation and differentiation, democratisation, patrimonialism, and so on. As referenced in chapter 1, the postcolonial Mauritian and Jamaican states are generally regarded in polarised terms, which is to say as defined by stronger and weaker institutional capacity. This premise is accepted here, and indeed informs much of the argumentation around the core developmental ‘puzzle’. But to move away from banal, chronofetishist treatments of institutional strength and weakness, we must connect the Mauritian and Jamaican states to their origins.

To summarise section 2.2, the first half of our theoretical framework draws on the Marxist tradition to help ground and marshal its empirical observations and conclusions. At an abstract level, an overarching and inclusive ‘Janus-faced’ approach to historical materialism is borrowed from Tomich, in which both production and trade drive historical development. At a more granular level, a class-centred approach is adopted, utilising insights from Brenner

et al.'s Political Marxism. Political Marxism privileges a strong historicist perspective and a conception of social relations that emphasises the centrality of power and social conflict to the analysis of history. It draws on specific, sometimes counterintuitive, historical trajectories of development, as well as the concrete role of social agents in shaping capitalist history. In the case of the latter, evolving class relations and differing balances of class power are the key determinants. Historically successful social classes and the agents that comprise them typically reproduce their power via a diverse and complex repertoire of institutionalisation, often through state-building that deepens, broadens, and perpetuates capitalist development for both ruling and labouring classes, however asymmetric. As the 'legal-rational' model of state gradually rose to prominence across Modern Europe, empire-building projected its logic around the world. Yet despite this attempt at universalisation, the modulating effect of local, historically-embedded, deeply-layered social realities, contingencies, and forces persisted, and warrants close analytic consideration in the context of our case studies.

## 2.3: Time and the State

### *Path Dependence, Timing and Sequence, and Critical Junctures*

Time is implicit in Political Marxism. Consider, for example, Brenner's claim that: "Class structures, specifically 'property relations' or 'surplus extraction relations', once established, tend to impose rather strict limits and possibilities, indeed rather specific long-term patterns, on a society's economic development" (Brenner, 1977, p.31). Borrowing concepts and insights from Historical Institutionalism, the implicit temporal, or *diachronic*, dimensions of our framework and empirical research are brought explicitly and systematically to life. In turn, the 'rather strict limits' and 'specific long-term patterns of development' Brenner alludes to above are recharged with a temporal explanatory power. Diachronic analysis – referenced by Knafo and Teschke as a method for unveiling 'counterintuitive innovations' (see: Section 2.2) – is the analysis of phenomena over time, contrastive with *synchronic* analysis, which observes phenomena in a single moment, or a snapshot of time. But diachronic analysis *per se* permits wide methodological application, including as the mere

‘foraging of instances’ located in the past, typical of mainstream social science (Pierson and Skocpol, 2002, p.5). Instead, *diachronic analysis in Historical Institutionalism (hereafter HI)* ‘takes time seriously’ (Pierson, 2004, p.18) by upgrading temporality from a passive canvas onto which historical events are painted, to a powerful explanatory variable in its own regard. Historical Sociology, or the Annales School, bestowed the social sciences with an aperture broad enough to capture ‘big structures, large processes, and huge comparisons’ (Tilly, 1984). From Fernand Braudel, among others, HI inherited a methodological lexicon that elevated the role and possibilities of time in social development, via expressions like the *longue durée* (literally, the ‘long duration’). But Historical Sociology *per se* takes a dimmer view of actor-centred agency and micro-level processes, in a way that jars with Political Marxism and the more idiographic aspects of our problematic. *HI, on the other hand, marries temporal scope with causality across multiple scales.*

Before we dive into these areas in more depth, it is worth briefly noting two things: First, institutions are drawn and defined broadly in HI. They are used interchangeably to denote the rules, norms, and practices that organise and constitute social relations (Falleti et al., 2016, pp.3-5) and the more tangible, bureaucratic institutional environments out of which norms and practices partially emerge. While all these aspects constitute a rounded definition of institutions (and a definition compatible with Political Marxism’s), the concepts advanced in this section are, for the most part, creatures of the latter, more systematic schematisation. Second, a founding assumption of the register is that *institutions are sites of genuine power and influence in their own right*. This means that their power is not merely loaned by a principal actor, such as a class, state, or private firm, to be retracted once the utility of the relationship is exhausted, but is generated endogenously as well, in a manner that is causally-meaningful in its interactions with external power structures. To imbricate this point with several made in section 2.2, unintended outcomes and counterintuitive innovations might arise, in part, once a hegemonic class has institutionalised its power. Formal *institutionalisation is, in this regard, a double-edged sword, because while it has the potential to optimise the articulation and realisation of a group’s interests, it also has the potential to create alternative and even contradictory power centres and operational logics.*

Both of our case studies, Mauritius and Jamaica, are assumed to have been helped or hindered in their later development by events that took place much earlier, located deep in their respective colonial pasts. Piecing-together and unravelling those events is the focus of chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6, but this overarching assumption alone suggests a great deal of continuity, or *path dependence*. Path dependence is a dynamic process involving positive feedback, which generates multiple possible outcomes, or branches of historical development, depending on the timing and sequence of events (Pierson, 2004, pp.20-21). HI has been called the ‘punctuated equilibrium’ of the social sciences (Falleti et al., 2016, pp.14-18; Peters et al., 2005, p.1278) – a model in which transformation is marked by short periods of change followed by long periods of relative continuity<sup>15</sup>. In that case, path dependence represents the ‘equilibrium’ part of the equation.

‘Positive feedback’ – or self-reinforcement – is key to understanding this process. In HI models, *action is viewed as a function of preferences informed by point-to-point comparisons*. In other words, individuals balance evaluations of the costs and benefits of adapting to new circumstances with the costs and benefits of maintaining or losing their investments in past arrangements (Fioretos, 2011, p.373). This contrasts with rational choice institutionalist models, where actors engage in end-point comparisons, weighing-up prospective alternatives without much consideration of losses to existing investments. If a prospective alternative appears more efficient *at its end-point*, actor preferences will be revised, action transformed and, if necessary, institutions redesigned. As such, sunk costs and other legacy effects of the status quo and its forerunning process(es) are immaterial in evaluating the benefits of adopting prospective alternatives (Ibid., p.373). The leading point here is that, if actors are engaging in point-to-point considerations, as HI ordinarily expects, their *preferences will be heavily influenced by forerunning preferences and actions*. In this sense, and contrary to expectations arising from end-point considerations, the rational value of a preference, i.e. its utility-maximising value, is bounded by its temporality.

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15 ‘Punctuated equilibrium’ was originally the terminological formulation of palaeontologist and public intellectual Stephen J. Gould. As a theory of evolutionary biology, it argued that species adapt in short, sharp bursts as opposed to long, gradual and uniform motions, as was the prevailing view.

To return more explicitly to positive feedback – after preference-formation among actors in a given setting has occurred, *the probability of further steps along the resulting path increases with each step*. This is, Pierson argues, because “the *relative* benefits of the current activity compared with once-possible options increases over time. To put it a different way, the costs of switching to some previously plausible alternative rise” (Pierson, 2004, p.21). Consequent of these point-to-point assessments, features of the current path become ‘locked-in’ and self-reinforcing over time. This is also why the relative *timing and sequence of events* is important, because “the evolution of constraints and opportunities in the multiple institutions that shape human interaction often create a different type of political game over time... the calculations of political actors... and the nature of the constraints under which they operate... may change significantly over time” (Fioretos, 2011, p.371). Thus, opportunities that existed to actors in abundance at a certain point in time might no longer be viable owing to the limiting effects of past decisions and the respective processes they set in train. Consequently, *a relatively small event occurring early in a sequence may have a more significant impact than a much larger event occurring later in the same sequence* (Sorensen, 2015, p.24).

A clear semblance of conceptual positive feedback appears in Brenner when, as quoted in section 2.2, he writes that political accumulation (or political institutionalisation) tends “to become self-perpetuating and escalating – the amassing of more land and men to more effectively exert force in order to collect the resources for the further application of power” (Brenner, 1982, p.38). At its simplest, this is the idea that – in the absence of an Archimedean or God’s-eye view of events – starting from scratch often produces lower payoffs than building on pre-existing work, even where the work in question has slumped into suboptimality. *Transition costs accrue as actors move further down a path, counselling against the feasibility or promise of once-attractive untrodden pathways*. While actors in charge of Mauritian and Jamaican policy might, at various stages of their colonial and postcolonial development, have demurred at programmatic inadequacy, point-to-point analyses, sunk legacy and transition costs nonetheless conspired to limit their capacity. Inflexibility, path-inefficiency, unpredictability, and nonergodicity<sup>16</sup> (Pierson, 2004, p.18) are

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<sup>16</sup> *Nonergodic* is a term borrowed from mathematical and statistical analysis to denote phenomena in which accidental developments are not overwritten by ‘normal’ processes in time, but are instead fed into future choices and decision-making, and are, as a result, one determinant of eventual outcomes, of which potentially limitless versions once existed (Arthur, 1994, p.45).



attendant, though by no means necessary, qualities of path dependence in HI, and ones which share features in common with Political Marxist methodology in ways discussed. The taproot of all these qualities is the transition costs that build-up with each move down a selected path, putting further and further out of reach alternatives that might prove more efficient. In this regard, path dependence is a lightning rod for HI's starting premise, namely that *synchronic (spatial) variables are not all that count; they are profoundly impacted by diachronic variables as well*. Mauritius and Jamaica's histories are inflected with common synchronic variables and exogenous shocks in ways we will see, but past inheritances ultimately drove a divergence of preference and action.

At this stage the question might reasonably be asked: How, then, do big, structural shifts occur? If all transformation is guided by the gradual development of paths, by design, by accident, or by a combination of the two, what accounts for the more dramatic 'break-points' or ruptures in the social world? Clearly, while there might have been a great deal of continuity in Mauritian and Jamaican political economy, not every feature in 2020 can simply be dismissed as the incremental epiphenomenon of past increments and epiphenomena. HI answers this observation by countering that *preceding and subsequent to the relative equilibrium of path-dependent development, a period of critical juncture takes place* (Collier and Collier, 1991). Critical junctures are fundamental 'turning points'; moments when opportunities shift, multiple futures open-up and policy entrepreneurs are able to recalibrate institutional arrangements and internal distributions of power in a manner that reflects their preferences (Sorensen, 2015, pp.25-26). Contingency becomes king as the conditions and constraints that hemmed actors in during the path-dependent period are considerably relaxed, often impelled by an exogenous force; a new technology, a changed economic or security environment, or the breaching of some threshold of pollution or other health risk. While critical junctures, the 'punctuation marks' of the punctuated equilibrium model, are of huge significance insofar as they incept new rules of the game that become rooted and regnant over vast periods of time, the conjuncture of events that generates them are rare, necessarily so otherwise institutions would be in a near-permanent state of flux (Ibid., pp.25-26; Cappocia and Keleman, 2007, p.368). The longevity of this duet, from earliest signs of critical juncture to latter stages of path development, bespeaks *a recognition and validation of slow-moving causality* (Pierson, 2004, pp.79-83).

Since both Political Marxism and HI are frameworks that draw extensively on the role of structures *and* agents in large-scale social transformations, an additional question is begged: what role, more exactly, falls to agents in the structural shifts that define critical junctures? In addressing this question, a powerful distinction can be made between *permissive* and *productive conditions* (Soifer, 2012) – two, necessary but insufficient causal logics underpinning critical junctures, interactive but analytically distinct from one another. Permissive conditions are those conditions, such as exogenous shocks, that alter the underlying context and increase the causal currency of agency and contingency, thus increasing the prospects for path-divergence as well (Soifer, 2012, p.1574). These conditions, in other words, prise open the structural constraints placed upon agents as a legacy of prior critical junctures. Productive conditions, meanwhile, operate within the window of opportunity opened by permissive conditions to shape the ultimate outcomes of the critical juncture, reproduced until new permissive conditions emerge and generate opportunities for the next critical juncture (Ibid., p.1575). It is chiefly (though not exclusively) in the realm of ‘productive’ critical junctural conditions, then, that agents maximise or minimise their agency.

To recap on part one of section 2.3, Historical Institutionalism ‘takes time seriously’ by upgrading temporality from a passive canvas onto which historical events are painted, to a powerful explanatory variable in its own regard. Unlike one of its key progenitors, Historical Sociology, it also takes causality seriously across multiple scales, viewing institutions as sites of genuine, endogenous power and influence. For our purposes, path dependence, the relative timing and sequence of events, slow-moving causality, and critical junctures are key diachronic concepts that augment the possibilities of Political Marxist analysis and research outlined in section 2.2. Each of these concepts bears an operational logic that was detailed in section 2.3, and is applied to our case studies in forthcoming chapters.

*The Precedence of Critical, Diachronic, and Historical-Institutional Analyses of the ‘Mauritian Miracle’*

As we shall see, particularly in chapter 4, there already exists a vibrant body of literature that considers the Mauritian Miracle from a critical perspective, as well as through the lens of the *longue durée*, employing historical and institutional analysis to explain outcomes in modern and postcolonial Mauritius. While these historical and institutional analyses might not be formally ‘Historical Institutional’, shorn of the harder scientific formulations of ‘path dependence’ and ‘critical juncture’, they nonetheless examine Mauritian history and development using many similar conceptual and empirical themes and claims. Likewise, while this body of thought might have initially been drowned-out by the many synchronic and largely Western assessments of Mauritius’ so-called miraculous development (so keen were IOs and advocates of late-development to distil its formula and administer it far and wide), it has in recent years experienced a realignment, and now constitutes a significant and substantive corpus of alternative explanation.

The register at hand is tied together by overarching emphases on the complex causality of history, on the power of social structure and development to impact and shape economic institutions, on the open-ended and defining role domestic populations and elites play in national and international capitalist development, and on the global patterns of market exchange to which Mauritius and its sugar were naturally subject. These are only overarching or general commitments, however, and focus varies according to the degree of primacy these variables are afforded. Houbert (1981), for example, locates Mauritius’ peculiar developmental morphology in its nature as an uninhabited island prior to Portuguese, Dutch, French, and finally British colonisation. He writes: “Mauritius is very different from the newly independent countries of Africa and Asia in some important respects, having been entirely created by European colonisation”. The consequences are profound: “capitalism in Mauritius took root right from the start for the simple reason that there was nothing else previously, so the problem of articulation with pre-capitalist modes of production... did not arise in Mauritius. Here capitalism, in its colonial variant, found virtually a clean slate” (Houbert, 1981, pp.75-77). Other scholars have similarly highlighted Mauritius’ uninhabitedness as a facilitator of its early and later development (Greig et al., 2011, p.160; Neveling, 2013, p122), and – as mentioned in section 2.2 – our own thesis leans partially on probing the forms that primitive accumulation took in Mauritius (explored in chapter 4), which necessarily encompasses these stages and details of its history.

At the same time, however, Houbert acknowledges that early Mauritian elites, despite being comparatively unencumbered by domestic social forces, “did not, and could not, replicate capitalist development in Europe” because “the economy grew as part of the overall colonial empire, the centre of which was Europe” (Houbert, 1981, p.77). As such, Houbert draws our attention to Mauritius’ development in the wider context of the global and colonial division of labour, and a global division rendered in the *longue durée* at that. Meisenhelder (1997) and Lincoln (2006) similarly focus on Mauritius’ integration into the global division of labour, the centrality of sugar in this process, and the flows of goods and services, as well as population networks, that this generated. In particular, and in common with Lange (2003), they emphasise the rise of the Indo-Mauritian population as a key driver in the emergence of the Mauritian ‘developmental’ state, whose autonomy away from the landed Franco-Mauritian elite enabled socially ‘embedded’ postcolonial development (Meisenhelder, 1997, pp.295-296; Lincoln, 2006, p.70; Lange, 2003). The Indo-Mauritians were once subordinate to a colonial division of labour that simultaneously prohibited the importation of slaves and increased the exportation of sugar manifold, sent skyward in the last analysis by the repeal of the West Indian sugar preference in 1825, and by ever-growing consumption of the ‘white gold’ from the tropics. In the first act, Indo-Mauritians were, therefore, indentured servants, imported to plug chronic labour shortages under typically brutal conditions. In the second and third acts, however, the Indo-Mauritian population become smallholding farmers with networked and cultural ties that were instrumental to the development of the modern Mauritian state, whose ‘Weberian’ institutions they would come to dominate throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Meisenhelder, 1997, pp.295-296; Lincoln, 2006, p.70).

The global division of labour and Mauritius’ integration into it by the French and, more impactfully, British empires gave rise to its local historical development, according to these accounts. To refer back to earlier tenets of theory examined in this chapter, these accounts emerge more from a structuralist historical materialism, in which world-economic trade primarily determines uneven patterns of capitalist development (Wallerstein, 1979; Gunder-Frank, 2014). As argued in section 2.2, however, a Janus-Faced historical materialism as described by Tomich (2004) is advanced here to capture fundamentally enmeshed, multiscalar, and open-ended processes of production and exchange. The shifting structure of

the global sugar market and its closely-bound relation to other markets might have provided the high décor, the structural *mise-en-scène*, of Meisenhelder, Lincoln et al.'s accounts, but it is class relations and constitutive social and institutional conditions on the island of Mauritius that carry the 'Miracle' into the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

The instrumental agency of historical domestic actors, both elite and demotic, is similarly present in another strand of critical and historical literature on Mauritian development. Rooted in a critical-anthropological tradition, Neveling (2018) argues that the 'boom years' of the Export Processing Zone (EPZ) in Mauritius (1970s onwards) were foreshadowed by genealogies that stretch back to the early 1800s, with particular inflection points in the 1930s (Neveling, 2018, pp.110-122). Furthermore, "Mauritian workers and their families, first and foremost, kept the EPZ going, as they not only provided the labour for the assembly lines, but also remained vigilant and resistant against escalating exploitation in the hundreds, if not thousands, of factories that have opened and closed shop in Mauritius in the decades since 1970" (Ibid., pp.107-112). Pivotal in all of this were the so-called Uba riots of 1937 – an island-wide uprising that began in the Lalmatie region. Neveling writes:

“Perhaps the most important outcome of the Uba riots and the recommendations of the Hooper Commission was that the colonial administration for the first time in Mauritian history took the concerns of small business owners and workers seriously and thus shifted from facilitator of preferential market access for the sugar plantocracy and its umbrella organisation, the 1921-founded Mauritius Sugar Syndicate, to a however reluctant arbitrator for social justice and a however limited redistribution of wealth (Ibid., pp.107-115).

Thus, in the resistance of ordinary but organised sugar workers and smallholders, an already semi-developed state apparatus begins a gradual process of welfarist, developmentalist, and democratic reform. Using archival research, Neveling uncovers advertisements placed in Mauritian newspapers by James Meade and his collaborators in 1959, inviting Mauritians from all backgrounds to share their views on the main obstacles to economic prosperity facing their island, and to suggest solutions. “The answers received are witness to a people with diverse, engaged, and highly developed views on the island's economy and its

problematic embedding in the global system.” (Ibid., pp.108-118). Elsewhere, Neveling highlights the contribution of individual actors to the success of the EPZ, including export-oriented entrepreneurs like Jose Poncini, whose island-based firm processed parts for Swiss watches (Ibid., pp.107-122). By emphasising the role of individual and collective agency in the shaping of Mauritian historical development, Neveling is consistent with an agent and class-centred approach, as laid out in this chapter. By arguing for an interpretation of contemporary conditions as influenced, at least in part, by the fissures and realignments of the colonial past, his thesis is borne by path-dependent dynamics.

Both of these values are present in Ryan Saylor’s work (2012, 2014) which, more than any other in this section, provides vital coordinates to the research carried out over the coming chapters. Saylor’s core argument is rooted in the 1825 commodity sugar boom, and the three major economic problems, or ‘bottlenecks’ – in labour, transportation infrastructure, and scientific and research capabilities – that it generated. For reasons expanded in this thesis, the Mauritian sugar planters were able to overcome dilemmas of collective action and successfully appeal to the Mauritian state (which, in turn, successfully appealed to the British metropole) for assistance in solving the bottleneck problems (Saylor, 2012; 2014). The resulting resource transfers were the animus of early, proto-Weberian state-building in the far-flung colony, such that it was better able to guide development in ‘miraculous’ directions following independence.

In sum of section two of 2.3, there already exists a rich body of literature that seeks to explain the so-called Mauritian Miracle through a critical and historical long lens. Among the variables examined and stressed by scholars are the uninhabitedness of the island prior to European colonisation, the integration of the plantation economy into the world market, and the individual and collective agency of elite and popular classes, groups, and networks in driving institutional and economic development. It is to this body of work and its related questions and topics that this thesis contributes.

## 2.4: Conclusion

Using core propositions borrowed from Political Marxism and Historical Institutionalism, chapter 2 has proffered a theoretical framework for operationalising empirical findings in the later chapters of this thesis. The essence of this framework pertains to the complex and variegated nature of capitalist development, as befits our ‘puzzle’ of divergent developmental outcomes in postcolonial settings. If, very crudely put, the question of this thesis is: Why did Mauritius develop and Jamaica struggle? then this chapter laid out the array of conceptual tools we require to make headway. These tools are both synchronic and diachronic in nature.

Political Marxism, first off, privileges a strong historicist perspective and a conception of social relations that emphasises the centrality of power and social conflict to the analysis of history (section 2.2). Borrowing and incorporating its insights enables us to draw on specific, sometimes counterintuitive, historical trajectories of development, as well as the concrete role of social agents in shaping capitalist history. In the case of the latter, evolving class relations and differing balances of class power are the key determinants. Historically successful social classes and the agents that comprise them typically reproduce their power via a diverse and complex repertoire of institutionalisation, often through state-building that deepens, broadens, and perpetuates capitalist development for both ruling and labouring classes, however asymmetric. As the ‘legal-rational’ model of state gradually rose to prominence across Modern Europe, empire-building projected its logic around the world. Yet despite this attempt at universalisation, the modulating effect of local, historically-embedded, deeply-layered social realities, contingencies, and forces persisted, and warrants close analytic consideration in the context of our case studies.

Finally, integrating conceptual insights from HI (as we did in section 2.3) furnishes our framework with a systematic understanding of how diachronic and synchronic units of analysis interact to generate developmental outcomes. Path dependence, in particular, is implicit in the class-centred and historicist methodology of Political Marxism in Brenner and

beyond. For, the balances of class power and the processes of institutionalisation that these configurations produce are partially determined by the timing and sequence of prior events, as well as reinforced and reproduced through positive feedback dynamics. In Ancient Greece, Heraclitus maintained that everything is in a state of perpetual flux, while his contemporary Parmenides insisted that nothing really changes at all. Historical Institutionalism is neither Heraclitean nor Parmenidean in its outlook, nor are Mauritius or Jamaica – or anywhere else in the social world for that matter – embodiments of Heraclitean ephemera or Parmenidean stasis. But somewhere between these extremes characteristic of the pre-Socratics, time and history profoundly condition development in complex ways that HI helps us to denude. Finally, section 2.3 demonstrated that the forerunning concepts and their core claims are represented in a vibrant body of pre-existing literature that seeks to explain the so-called Mauritian Miracle from a critical and diachronic perspective, around which our own Mauritian findings orbit.

Now that our dovetailed framework is in place, let us move forward to our empirical investigations across four chapters, starting in chapter 3 with an examination of Mauritius in the postcolonial era.



# **Chapter 3: From the ‘Overcrowded Barracoon’ to the ‘Mauritian Miracle’: Sugar in Mauritius, 1968-2020**

## **3.1: Introduction**

In this chapter, the facticity of Mauritius’ prodigious post-independence development is established, and the key theories surrounding it are canvassed and assessed. This is undertaken primarily to demonstrate that, despite important and illuminative contributions, none of the existing scholarly explanations for the so-called ‘Mauritian Miracle’ adequately capture its root-cause. Accordingly, this chapter acts as an essential primer for chapter 4, which concludes the coverage of Mauritius by seeking to plug the gap in the literature with an historical materialist analysis of Mauritian state-building and socio-economic development, stemming from the colonial state’s cultivation, production and sale of sugar, and the class relations emergent from that process. In a wider sense, this chapter functions to slot the first piece of a political economy ‘puzzle’, namely that Mauritius’ relatively successful incorporation into a competitive capitalist world economy was against the grain of broad expectation (Subramanian and Roy, 2001; Rodrik, 1999; Darga, 1996), for a myriad of reasons with which we will become familiar in due course. What, then, enabled the remote island state of Mauritius to defy intellectual consensus (for e.g.: Meade, 1961; Naipaul, 1972) and standard indicators, and become the exemplar *par excellence* of broad-based development in postcolonial Africa (Kasenally, 2011; Lange, 2003), toasted by its one-time naysayers and the formerly indifferent alike? The complementary pieces to this puzzle come in chapters 5 and 6, when we observe and trace an inverted process in Jamaica.

This chapter is organised as follows: In section 3.2, we launch by summarising diachronic, outside pronouncements on Mauritius, her splendour and her sure eternal mendicancy. We show that, despite these expectations, independent Mauritius presided over continued, stable, and relatively equitable socio-economic growth in a democratic setting over the past fifty

years. This is demonstrated via a broad range of mostly quantitative data. In section 3.3, we move onto a far-reaching review of existing literature on Mauritius' 'miracle', all of which seeks-out a causal explanation. The dominant frameworks are bunched into three, main camps: 1) economic openness, 2) preferential trade deals, and 3) associational ties and social embeddedness. The 'economic openness' thesis is further sub-divided into three variants – total economic openness, a 'heterodox opening' to trade, and foreign direct investment (FDI) and the importation of ideas. Penultimately, in section 3.4, these frameworks are assessed and shown to be insufficient on their own terms as answers to the 'puzzle' of Mauritian development. Moreover, they are shown to be insufficient as a collective, because they either lack due concern for the instrumental importance of Mauritius' robust institutions in its development, or they lack an historical appreciation of the origin of those institutions. Finally, section 3.5 concludes the coverage, pivoting our attention towards chapter 4 where both historicism and institutionalism are elevated on the backs of class dynamics, colonial state-building, and sugar.

### 3.2: 'Some Pretty French Eve': Prelapsarian Allusions and the Unlikely Miracle

On April 29<sup>th</sup> 1836, as he approached the end of an around-the-world tour aboard the HMS Beagle, a young naturalist named Charles Darwin made the following entry into his diary: "In the morning we passed round the northern end of Mauritius, or the Isle of France. From this point of view the aspect of the island equalled the expectations raised by the many well-known descriptions of its beautiful scenery. The sloping plain of the Pamplemousses<sup>17</sup>, interspersed with houses, and coloured by the large fields of sugarcane of a bright green, composed the foreground. The brilliancy of the green was the more remarkable because it is a colour which generally is conspicuous only from a very short distance... The whole island, with its sloping border and central mountains, was adorned with an air of perfect elegance:

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<sup>17</sup> Pamplemousses is a district of Mauritius, located in the northwest of the island, and rich in sugarcane. The capital, Port Louis, neighbours immediately to the south.

the scenery, if I may use such an expression, appeared to the sight harmonious” (Darwin, 2001, p.532).

A decade later, in 1847, Thomas Henry Huxley – biologist and member of the Huxley intellectual dynasty, who would later garner the nickname ‘Darwin’s bulldog’ for his implacable defence of the latter’s theories – followed in his ‘master’s’ footsteps and wrote, in a letter to his mother:

“...I have spoken to you of the beauty of the places we have visited, of the picturesque ruggedness of Madeira, the fine luxuriance of Rio, and the rude and simple grandeur of South Africa... All this is to lead you to believe that I have really some grounds for the raptures I am going into presently about Mauritius. In truth it is a complete paradise, and if I had nothing better to do, I should pick up some pretty French Eve (and there are plenty) and turn Adam” (Huxely, 2004).

Half a century later, Mauritius’ list of illustrious admirers was expanded further still when Mark Twain earnestly quoted an islander he encountered as having said ‘Mauritius was made first and then heaven; and heaven was copied after Mauritius’ (Time, 1970 [quoted from 1896]). Set in 790 square miles of land (approximately the size of Rhode Island) in the Indian Ocean, some 1,200 miles off the southeast coast of Africa, renowned by botanists for its array of endogenous flora and by ornithologists as the home of the doomed dodo bird – nature had made lesser muses for the fevered European imagination of the 19<sup>th</sup> century than the island of Mauritius. But the common ransom for romantic reveries of exotic lands was, as Said and others tell us, an objective attitude to inhabitant populations; at turns valorising, infantilising, dehumanising, and trepidatious (Said, 1978). Trepidation is glimmeringly evident, for example, in Nobel Prize-winning economist James Meade’s report on Mauritius’ post-independence development prospects, commissioned by the Governor of Mauritius (on behalf of the British Empire) and published in 1961, seven years before Mauritian independence became a reality. In it, Meade concludes:

“Heavy population pressure must inevitably reduce real income per head below what it might otherwise be. That surely is bad enough in a community that is full of political conflict. But if in addition, in the absence of other remedies, it must lead either to unemployment (exacerbating the scramble for jobs between Indians and Creoles) or to even greater inequalities (stocking up still more the envy felt by the Indian and Creole underdog for the Franco-Mauritian top dog), the outlook for peaceful development is poor” (Meade, 1961).

Four years following independence, another Nobel Prize winner – this time British-Trinidadian and Tobagonian novelist V.S. Naipaul – amplified Meade’s sentiments, laying-out Mauritius’ bad omens with a mixture of relish and contempt. Mauritius, he opined, was all but “an agricultural colony, created by empire in an empty island and always meant to be part of something larger, now given a thing called independence and set adrift, an abandoned imperial barracoon, incapable of economic or cultural autonomy” (Naipaul, 1972).

There were things about which Meade and Naipaul were right. Meade was right when, elsewhere in the report, he described Mauritius as a ‘mono-crop economy’; that crop being sugar. In 1968 sugar accounted for a staggering 96 per cent of the island’s exports, 45.3 per cent of its total employment, and contributed 27.6 per cent to its GDP (Laaksonen et al., 2006, p.18; Woldekidan, 1992, p.1). Naipaul was correct in his assertion that Mauritius was an ‘empty island’ prior to Dutch settlement in 1598 – a fact that will be discussed at length in chapter 4. In this regard, Mauritius was indeed a construct of empire. Both their analyses erred, however, in the single respect that would have surely mattered to them most: Their powers of prediction.

Their errors in mapping Mauritius’ future can likely be understood with reference to their respective professions. Based on an assessment of all the *standard indicators*, Meade the economist could scarcely have arrived at a radically different conclusion. The overwhelming agricultural resource-dependency sketched above is problematic for sustained and equitable economic growth for several reasons. First, the typical terms of trade given on primary commodity exports are comparatively disfavoured or frenetic over the secular term (Harvey

et al., 2010; Cavalcanti et al., 2014). Second, and similarly, prices on the world market for agricultural commodities tend to be marked by extreme volatility. Third, and related, when commodity price booms do occur, the currencies of beneficiary countries often appreciate rapidly, leading to so-called Dutch Disease<sup>18</sup>: a phenomenon in which non-commodity export sectors, such as manufacturing, become less competitive while imports become cheaper. This can hamstring economic diversification and, in the most extreme scenarios, lead to de-industrialization (UNCTAD, 2017, pp.7-8; Frankel, 2010). Fourth and finally, export commodity reliance has historically proven a fertile site for rent seeking, resource capture, and corruption (Subramanian and Roy, 2001, p.10).

Aside from these obstacles to development arising specifically from mono-cropism, other aspects of Mauritius' economic inheritance – or material endowments at the time of independence – were ostensibly disfavoured. Sachs and Warner (1997) and Subramanian and Roy (2001) indicate that closeness to the world economy's 'centre(s) of gravity', the proportion of the country in a tropical climate, and ethnolinguistic fractionalisation are all important variables in determining a country's developmental prospects. As an island in the Indian Ocean, entirely subsumed within a tropical climate, and predominantly comprised of Indo-Mauritian, Creole, Sino-Mauritian and Franco-Mauritian populations cumulatively speaking upward of ten languages<sup>19</sup> (Mehta, 2015, p.52), Mauritius scored low on each of these fronts<sup>20</sup>. Furthermore, one of the key assumptions of 'catch-up' or 'convergence' – the theory that less developed states can use comparative advantage and knowledge transfer to attain development levels akin to those in the Global North, an idea very much in vogue in mainstream circles around the time of decolonisation and beyond – is that higher initial levels

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<sup>18</sup> 'Dutch Disease' was a term coined by The Economist in 1977. It described the decline of the manufacturing sector in the Netherlands, following the discovery of the country's natural gas reserves in 1959 (The Economist, 2014).

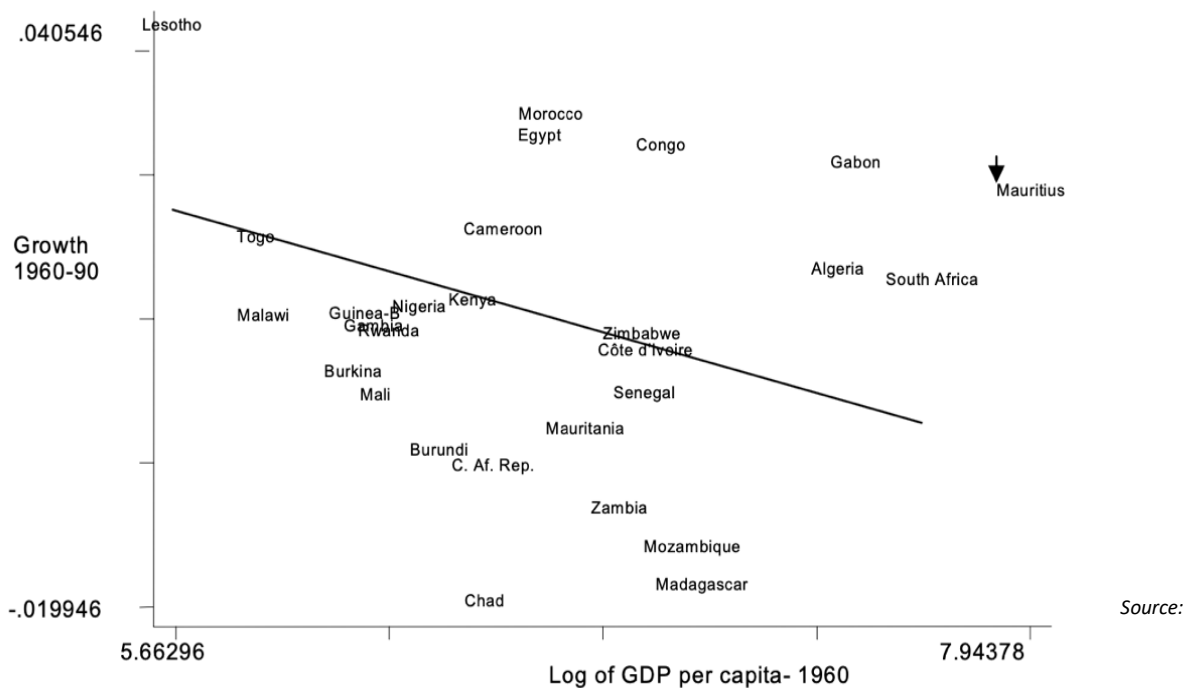
<sup>19</sup> As per the 2000 population census, the language usually or most often spoken at home was Creole (70.1), Bhojpuri (12.1), French (3.4), Chinese languages (0.7), Hindi (0.6), English (0.3), Tamil (0.3), Marathi and Telugu (0.3 each), and Urdu (0.1). The remaining 12% of the population spoke other languages, including combinations (Mehta, 2015, p.52).

<sup>20</sup> Lower than the sub-Saharan African average or lower than all other developing economies combined in the period during and after independence.

of per capita income typically produce slower rates of subsequent growth (Subramanian and Roy, 2001, p.10). Figure 3.1 below is a scatterplot that shows Mauritius with the highest initial per capita GDP among the selected African cases, as recorded in 1960. Based on the assumptions of convergence, then, Mauritius' subsequent growth rate was likely to be relatively slow.

For his part, Naipaul was first and foremost a novelist, and a novelist is not much without some feel for rhetoric and some flair for hyperbole. To complicate matters, the British-Trinidadian and Tobagonian author – whose grandparents emigrated from India to the Caribbean as indentured servants – was furnished with lavish contradictions on the questions of colonialism, culture, and race (Wood, 2018; James, 2015, pp.99-102), and in his writings and public persona typified a disdain for anti- and postcolonial aspirations so strident and supercilious it becomes difficult not to read them as personal exorcisms.

**Figure 3.1: Scatterplot of initial GDP vs. growth, Mauritius and Africa**



Subramanian and Roy, 2001, p.12

In any event, the causes of Meade and Naipaul's errors might be debated but the fact of them cannot. Against all expectations, Mauritius straddled and surmounted the 'peaceful development' mountain, successfully diversifying the structure of its economy to encompass textile manufactures, tourism, and financial services (Interviewee 4 [SS], Mar 24 2021). By the year 2000, the share of exports accounted for by sugar had dropped precipitously to just 14.9 per cent, the proportion of the workforce engaged in its production had declined to 9.5 per cent, and its contribution to GDP stood at 4.4 per cent (Laaksonen et al., 2006, p.18). Concurrently, between 1977 and 2006, real GDP in Mauritius rose on average by 5.2 per cent annually while the corresponding figure in the rest of sub-Saharan Africa was 3.3 per cent. Reframed in per capita terms, the average income of a Mauritian trebled over this period while the average income of a sub-Saharan African grew by only 32 per cent (Subramanian, 2009, p.2). According to the CIA's 2017 World Factbook, Mauritius boasts the best GDP adjusted for Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) in Africa – ranked eighty-sixth globally (CIA World Factbook, 2017). Perhaps most impressively of all, however, Mauritius achieved “a degree of equity, a remarkable welfare state, and a consolidated democracy” (Sandbrook, 2005, p.550) inside of a single generation. Inequality as a measurement on the Gini coefficient declined, from 0.5 in 1962, to 0.42 in 1975, 0.37 in 1986-87, and 0.36 in 2017<sup>21</sup> (Subramanian and Roy, 2001). Accordingly, the UN places Mauritius ahead of any of its African counterparts on its Human Development Index (HDI) – sixty-fourth globally in its 2015 report.

From the jaws of a familiar narrative signposted with common tropes – resource-dependencies, stagnant growth, poverty traps, failed states – revenues from Mauritian sugar were harnessed so effectively that the commodity almost singlehandedly acted as a flywheel for other, more advanced and higher value industry, for rapidly improving living standards, and, ultimately, for one of the greatest democratic development success stories of the postcolonial era. Indeed, some four decades on from Mauritius' mono-crop moment, a different coinage predominates to describe its developmental experience: The 'Mauritian Miracle' (Ibid.; Darga, 1996; Bunwaree, 2001).

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<sup>21</sup> Source: data.worldbank.org <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI?locations=MU>

A scholarly investigation has as much in common with a Panglossian paradigm as it does the kind of counsel of despair given by Naipaul, and in recent years warning shots have been fired about emergent threats to the so-called Mauritian Miracle: From growing inequality (Bunwaree, 2014), to the rise of ethnosectarianism (Kasenally, 2011, p.167), to gentrification borne by FDI into the island's tourism industry (Donaldson et al., 2016). Similarly, Mauritius' path to success has not always followed straight lines. Global sugar prices took a nosedive in the mid-1970s, and what the Hidden Hand left behind, the Hand of God ravaged in the form of cyclones Gervais and Claudette in 1975 and 1979. The former reduced the sugar crop by a third, particularly cruel given that it came on the eve of significant downward price adjustments (YeungLamKo, 1998, pp.15-16). By the early 1980s, inflation was high and unemployment was skirting around the middle teens<sup>22</sup> (Ibid., pp15-16). Nevertheless, all stories of capitalist development feature these conjunctures. 'Boom and bust' was not a term invented in a vacuum. The persistent economic crises that afflicted industrial and imperial states from 1873-1896, as well as in the 1930s, 1970s, 1980s and after the crisis of 2008, do not fundamentally compromise their claim to overall economic success. Though on a scale less grandiose than these examples, the statistics, scholarly consensus, and first-hand research noted above leave little room for doubt that Mauritius' curve in the longer *durée* was both upward and resilient, indicating empirical phenomena behind the so-called 'Miracle'<sup>23</sup>. What caused it? What turned little Mauritius – an artificial construct of empire established on a remote island – into “the envy of the developing world” (Kasenally, 2011, p.160). There are several leading and illuminative, but ultimately unsatisfactory, theories. We turn now, in section 3.3, to outlining and assessing them.

### 3.3: Young Lineages for an Old Miracle

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22 In response, a Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) was implemented by the Mauritian government that included currency devaluation by thirty percent, reduction of public spending, and a reduction of the national budget deficit (Darga, 1996, p.82).

Importantly, Mauritius' SAP was implemented endogenously and *not* as a pre-condition for IMF loans, bespeaking the country's already-extant capacity to weather economic storms where other developing states were driven to supplicancy.

23 The cod-study of miracles – and of all things miraculous – is called 'thaumaturgy', but thaumaturgy will quite naturally prove insufficient for social scientists and political economists.



The first of these theories revolves around economic openness, in three specific forms. The most straightforward of these forms is Sachs and Warner's contention that *economic openness*, i.e. openness to international markets, is a direct cause of long-term growth. Openness "encourages greater efficiency in the allocation of the economy's scarce resources, and also promotes market competition and thus helps reduce monopolies" (Sachs and Warner, 1997, p.346). Trade openness is often a vector of technical innovation and improvement, serving to raise total factor productivity in the entire economy. Consequently, the authors conclude, a switch from a closed regime to a completely open regime is estimated to raise the annual growth rate (of the countries in their sample) by 2.21 percentage points (Ibid., p.346). Their sample is constituted of 18 sub-Saharan countries. Only a handful of these embraced and adopted policies of economic openness in the decades following independence, among them Mauritius, Botswana and, a little later, Ghana, Uganda, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau (Ibid., p.359). Because these states – the 'pro-market consensus reformers', as they are designated – refrained from imposing trade-distorting protective policies while they were in nascent development, they reaped the benefits of higher and faster growth over the secular-term. In Mauritius' case, the quality of openness was attendant from the moment of independence in 1968 (Ibid., p.362). As a result, and despite a poor or mixed inheritance across other variables, the process that would climax with the so-called Mauritian Miracle was born.

The second of the 'openness' explanations for the Miracle is termed *heterodox opening* (Rodrik, 1999; Subramanian and Roy, 2001, p.15-19) or the EPZ (Economic Processing Zone) explanation, and is considerably less linear than Sachs and Warner's real-type assessment. While it is true that, as stated in section 3.2, Mauritius was overwhelmingly reliant on sugarcane to drive its initial industrialisation strategy, the remainder of its post-independence economy rested on three further pillars: textiles, tourism and financial services (Matadeen et al., 2011). All of these sectors were in their infancy and, as such, required conscientious cultivation by the newly-sovereign Mauritian state if they were to become competitive and successful. The Mauritian home market was insufficient to nurture and finance the industries in question, particularly given the low purchasing-power of the average consumer, and the island's relatively small population (828,000 as of 1970). At the same time, domestic producers constituted a powerful lobby, and were steely in their resolve that

the openness required for an export-oriented strategy not cut both ways, lest their protected markets be swamped by distant and virile forces (Rodrik, 1999).

Contrary to the blunt instrumentation of 'openness' inferred by Sachs and Warner, the island state's solution was, in fact, to adopt a Janus-faced and carefully-calibrated approach to trade and international markets (Ibid., 1999; Subramanian and Roy, 2001). Under the leadership of founding father and Prime Minister Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, whose Labour Party would remain in power until 1982, an Economic Processing Zone was created via the EPZ Act of 1970 (Matadeen et al., 2011, p.12). Effectively, the creation of the EPZ segmented the export and import competing sectors of the Mauritian economy in a way that detonated a lasting boom in domestic exports while simultaneously preserving and enhancing *most* of the protections enjoyed by domestic producers. Through this 'heterodox opening', a neutrality of incentives between the export and import competing sectors was accomplished, and set little Mauritius on its particular path to economic success. While sugar itself was not incorporated into the EPZ, it was integral to its creation, because a good deal of the initial and later financing for EPZ-enterprises came from revenues accrued in sugar and tributary industries, such as molasses (Findlay and Wellisz, 1993, p.10; Hein, 1988, p.6, p.23). Instead, the sectorial structure of the EPZ was dominated by textiles and garments, followed by electronics, jewellery, diamonds, other precious stones and, finally, toys and Christmas decorations (Ibid., p.7).

How, in concrete policy terms, did this complex system work? First, duty-free access was granted on all inputs imported for EPZ production. Machinery and raw materials were the common beneficiaries, but the measure extended to all inputs utilised in the designated Export Processing Zone. This mechanism ensured that the export sector's competitiveness on world markets was not compromised by domestic taxes, which might have raised the cost of inputs used in export production (Subramanian and Roy, 2001, p.18). Beyond these inputs, however, standard duties applied, thus ensuring protection for import competing producers in the rest of the economy. Second, a suite of tax incentives was offered to firms and actors operating within the EPZ. This included a ten-year tax holiday on retained earnings, plus a partial tax holiday for periods beyond that; free and unlimited repatriation of profits and dividends; preferential interest rates; subsidised factory space and power rates; and access to

concessional credit (Ibid., p.18; Matadeen et al., 2011, p.12). The objective and effect of these tax incentives was to attract FDI into Mauritius' EPZ via de facto subsidisation of exports.

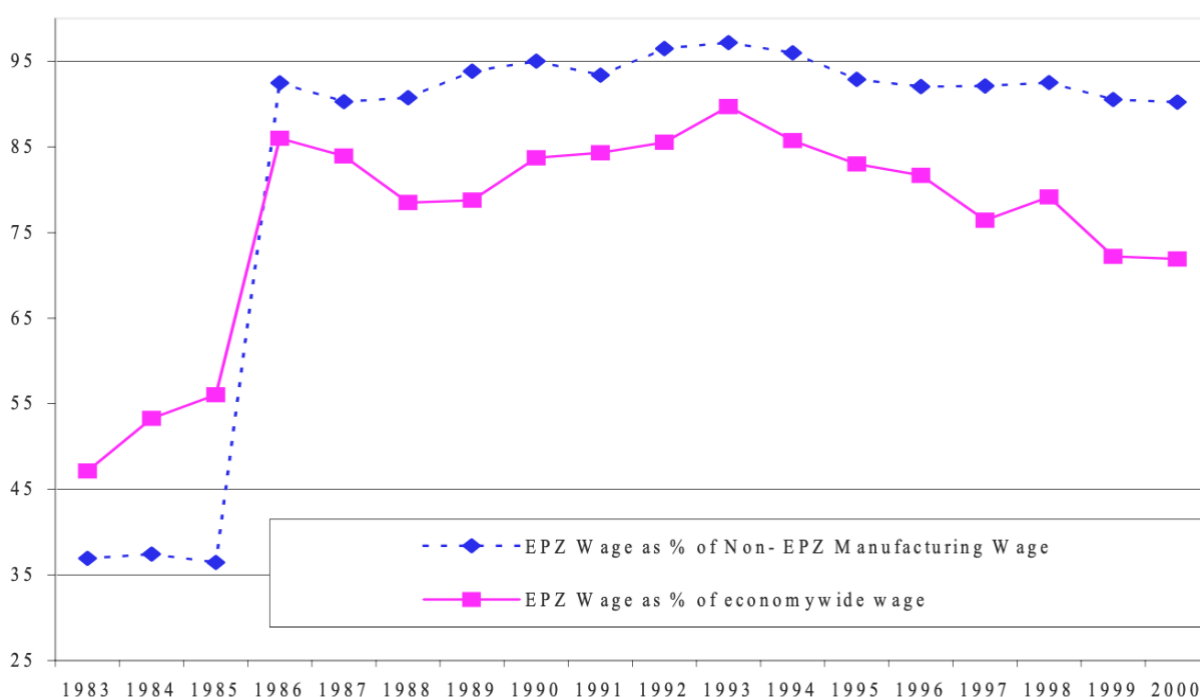
Third and finally, the Ramgoolam government instituted labour market segmentation. In other words, the rules and conditions governing workers and employers in the EPZ were distinct from those in the rest of the economy. In the EPZ, overtime was comparatively flexible, neither severance nor advance warning of discharge were required of employers, as they were in the rest of economy. Most instrumentally – and most uncomfortably, particularly as part of a Labour government's legacy – female members of the workforce were paid a lower statutory minimum wage than their male counterparts (Hein, 1988, p.44). The implications of this discrepancy were felt foremost in the EPZ for the simple reason that its workforce was comprised disproportionately of women. In 1971, a year after the EPZ's inception, it employed 214 men and 430 women. By 1975, the corresponding figures had risen to 1,670 and 8,591 respectively. By 1990, a total of 27,886 men and 60,372 women worked in EPZ-affiliated industries (Wellisz and Saw, 1993, p.242; Subramanian and Roy, 2001, p.18). These wage differentials, as well as the aforementioned employment flexibility, created clear incentives to invest and produce in the export sector before others. Figure 3.2 below shows the disparity between wages in the EPZ versus the rest of the economy. And yet, as Rodrik has pointed out, the segmentation of the workforce in the manner described prevented the expansion of the EPZ from driving up wages in the rest of the economy, thereby disadvantaging import-substituting industries. He writes: "New profit opportunities were created at the margin, while leaving old opportunities undisturbed", before concluding that "there were no identifiable losers" (Rodrik, 1999). This might be the reason that the EPZ enjoyed cross-party support, for after Ramgoolam's Labour Party was defeated at the 1982 general elections, the incoming Prime Minister, Anerood Jugnauth<sup>24</sup>, maintained the regime, albeit with gradual modifications.

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24 Jugnauth won a landslide election over the Mauritian Labour Party as part of an alliance between the *Mouvement Militant Mauricien* and the *Parti Socialiste Mauricien*. The following year, in 1983, the alliance fell apart and Jugnauth called new elections – which he won – as the leader of a new party, the *Militant Socialiste Mouvement*. They stood, counterintuitive to their name, on a centre-left platform (Srebrnik, 2002, pp.281-282).

To summarise, *pace* Sachs and Warner, Mauritius achieved its economic miracle not through straightforward market-consensus reform, but rather through a carefully crafted system of export openness, on the one hand, and relative closedness in the rest of the economy, on the other. This dual system, centred on its EPZ, motored the growth rates that ensorcelled the IMF and others in years to come, garnering Mauritius its ‘miraculous’ epithet.

**Figure 3.2: Average EPZ wage versus other Mauritian wages**



Source: Subramanian and Roy, 2001, p.19

The final of the three ‘openness’ interpretations focuses on *FDI and the importation of ideas* (Subramanian and Roy, 2001, p.24; Romer, 1993). In analysing the failure of some states to develop, a distinction is drawn between ‘object gaps’ and ‘ideas gaps’. Object gaps refer to a shortage of material resources, while ideas gaps refer to a shortage of expertise, technical nous and experientially-grounded innovation (Ibid., p.543). While both, in part, might explain developmental failures or stagnation, the latter is comparatively under-theorised and under-assessed in this connection. In the ‘heterodox opening’ reading, for example, FDI attracted via the conduit of Mauritius’ EPZ is appreciated chiefly in terms of its object gains, i.e.

finance, pre-existing machinery and so on. The importation of ideas, insofar as it features, is a secondary benefit. Inextricable from this reading is the view that ideas are public goods, non-excludable and non-rivalrous (Romer, 1992). A comprehensive reckoning of good governance, then, should factor-in consideration of government subsidisation of FDI *qua* the importation of ideas and consequent closing of the ideas gap.

Mauritius' EPZ was, according to this framework, a shining example of state-subsidisation of FDI and ideas. In turn, said knowledge-based gains provided the stimulus to draw Mauritius out of its resource-dependent nadir and send it soaring into the postcolonial development stratosphere. Romer writes: "The first salient fact... is that foreign investors were crucial to the success in the EPZ and in the economy as a whole, *not because of the financial resources that they brought to the island, but rather because of the knowledge they possessed*. Some of this knowledge was specific to production, but much of it pertained to issues like marketing" (Romer, 1993, p.565) (Italics added). Implicit in this genealogy of the Mauritian Miracle is a reduced role for domestic or endogenously-originating ideas and knowledge, and for domestic investors and entrepreneurs as their centrifugal vessels. In this regard, Romer runs with a baton passed him by Meade and Naipaul, inasmuch as a limited estimation of Mauritian potential forms the point of departure (Subramanian and Roy, 2001, p.24).

Beyond the three 'openness' evaluations advanced above, *preferential trade deals* form a second explanatory cornerstone in the Mauritian Miracle literature (Laaksonen et al., 2006; Subramanian and Roy, 2001, pp.19-23; Woldekidan, 1992 p.33; Darga, 1996, p.80-81; Joseph and Troester, 2013, pp.6-8). The trade deals in question were governed by two regimes: The Sugar Protocol (1975-2000), nested within the wider Lomé Accords, and the Multifibre Agreement (MFA) (1974-1994). The Sugar Protocol was ratified with the European Communities/Union, while the MFA was embedded in the GATT.

To explain the Sugar Protocol in order to, later, assess its impact on Mauritian development, we must go back to before Mauritian independence. The Commonwealth Sugar Agreement (CSA), signed in 1951 by the ailing British Empire and an array of its dominions past and present (including Mauritius), stands as a key precursor. The CSA operated via a two-tier

quota system: First, the Basic Overall Agreement Quota (OAQ) granted Commonwealth producers access to the U.K., New Zealand and Canadian markets to the tune of 2,535,000 tonnes of raw sugar annually. Second, the U.K. guaranteed that 1,717,000 tonnes of the annual OAQ would be purchased at negotiated prices that were “reasonably remunerative to efficient producers” (Girwar, 1973, p.26). This latter quota was termed the Negotiated Price Quota (NPQ). Sugar that fell within the OAQ but not the NPQ was sold at world market prices. Commonwealth suppliers initially incorporated into the CSA were Mauritius, Australia, South Africa, the British West Indies (which included Jamaica), Fiji, the East African territories and British Honduras (Moynagh, 1977, p.170). The motives underpinning the CSA were threefold: Britain’s desire to stave-off raw material-shortages (achieved via bulk purchase), the need to alleviate Britain’s dearth of dollar currency by expanding its sterling supplies, and *the promotion of development in the colonies* (Ibid., p.170) (Italics added). 1951 also saw the signing of the Treaty of Paris, which formally established the European Coal and Steel Community, itself a precursor to the formation of the European Economic Communities in 1957. The latter’s founding document, the Treaty of Rome (1957), contained a commitment to “the economic and social development of... the non-European countries and territories which have special relations with” the member-states of the EC (Treaty of Rome, p.46).

The development principles contained in these two parallel regimes – the CSA and the then-nascent EC – were finally enmeshed in 1975, following Britain’s accession to the EC in 1973, overwriting (though imperfectly) memories of failed membership applications in 1963 and 1967. Anxiety about the survival of the CSA quota-system in the new milieu of the EC is palpable from the literature that emerged between Britain’s accession and the formal codification of the Sugar Protocol at Lomé in 1975 (for e.g.: Girwar, 1973). The Lomé Sugar Protocol was not merely, however, the CSA writ onto a larger canvas. It had a second parent, of sorts – namely the Yaoundé Conventions (first 1964-1969, second 1971-1975), which governed trade relations between the EC Six and the Associated African States and Madagascar (AASM); later, the African States, Madagascar and Mauritius (ASMM). Yaoundé’s agenda was dominated by trade barrier-reduction and bilateral reciprocity. In addition to smoothing-out propitious terms of trade, it also re-lubricated the flow of financial and technical assistance to partners in the developing world first facilitated by the Treaty of Rome (The Yaoundé Convention, 1963).

An important observation from the foregoing analysis is that no *former* colony was the sole preserve of any single entity in the epochal mission to foster economic and social development. Mauritius, for example, was party to both the CSA *and* the second Yaoundé Convention, making patrons of Britain and the original EC Six alike. The Lomé Convention's big contribution to this history, and the reason it figures as *primus inter pares* in its midst, is that it brought together all of these various elements – the CSA, Part IV of the Treaty of Rome, the Yaoundé Conventions – and kneaded them into a single, regularised system that formed the first and last word on EC and EU relations with the Global South. To complete this process of regularisation, the newly-independent states assembled in Georgetown, Guyana, in June 1975 – three months after co-signing Lomé I – to establish the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP), supported by its own permanent Secretariat from 1976 onwards (Whiteman, 2017, p.40).

Here we arrive at the workings of the Sugar Protocol, and its relationship to Mauritius. While the first and second Yaoundé Conventions had eighteen and nineteen non-European members respectively, the first Lomé Convention had forty-six, of which nineteen were included in the Sugar Protocol. Re-ratified consecutively every five or ten years, Lomé accumulated new policies and ACP participants along the way: fifty-seven at Lomé II (1980-1985), sixty-six at Lomé III (1985-1990) and sixty-nine at Lomé IV (1990-2000). All the while, however, the number of Sugar Protocol signatories remained stationary. The backbones of the Sugar Protocol were its quota and guaranteed price mechanisms. Table 3.1 shows ACP Sugar Protocol countries and their allocated quotas, plus the share of GDP accounted for by sugar and the number of people engaged directly in its production. At 491, 030 tonnes per annum, Mauritius' was the single largest quota for sugar.

**Table 3.1: ACP Sugar Protocol countries – allocated quotas, sugar as share of GDP and direct employment figures**

Country	Quotas Tonnes	Sugar revenue as % of GDP	Number employed, directly
Barbados	50 312	1.7	3 500
Belize	40 348	10.5	9 000
Congo	10 186	N/A	2 000
Fiji	165 348	10.8	35 000
Guyana	159 410	26	23 000
Cote d'Ivoire	10 186	0.9	5 000
Jamaica	118 969	2.6	42 000
Kenya*	0	N/A	N/A
Madagascar	10 760	3.9	9 000
Malawi	20 824	3.5	14 400
Mauritius	491 030	7	37 000
St. Kitts & Nevis	15 590	49	3 100
Suriname	0	N/A	N/A
Swaziland	117 844	60	9 000
Tanzania	10 186	3.1	32 000
Trinidad & Tobago	43 751	2.7	19 000
Uganda	0	N/A	N/A
Zambia	0	2.3	8 000
Zimbabwe	30 244	2.7	25 000
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 294 700</b>		

Source: Laaksonen et al., 2006

\*Countries marked 0 frequently failed to utilise their quotas. While these countries remained members of the Sugar Protocol, their unused quotas were distributed among other members.

\*\*These figures date from the middle-late 1990s, contemporaneous with Lomé IV – the final iteration of the Convention before Cotonou replaced it in 2000.

The total quota figure of 1.3 million tonnes shown at the bottom of the table remained fixed for the duration of the Sugar Protocol (1975-2009). Sugar that fell within this bracket was exportable to the EC on a duty-free basis and at an annually-negotiated guaranteed price that was closely linked with the intervention price offered to internal (i.e. domestic EC/EU) sugar producers<sup>25</sup> (€631.9/t for white sugar and €523.7/t for raw sugar) (LaForce, 2013, p.53; Chaplin and Matthews, 2006, p.17). Because this intervention price stood far in excess of

25 The EC/EU's internal sugar regime was called the Common Market Organisation of Sugar (CMO Sugar), which ensured EC/EU sugar was a highly protected commodity from 1968-2006 (Interviewee 1 [FD], Jan 16 2020; Interviewee 2 [WD], Jan 16 2020). After 2006, the domestic regime saw successive retrenchments in line with WTO rulings and market-oriented principles.



average world market prices (Busse and Jerosch, 2006, p.104), Sugar Protocol recipients were in large part insulated from the highly mercurial nature of global agricultural commodity markets. The fixed quota system ensured steady and stable demand, regardless of global market conditions or the efficiency or competitiveness of producers. Mauritius, as the largest recipient of the fruits of this system, stood as the most entrenched, and – according to this theory – was able to catalyse its economic miracle as a consequence. Unlike Yaoundé, Lomé was a *non-reciprocal* trade partnership (Robertson, 2017, p.480), affording ACP states autonomy over their tariff arrangements regardless of the tariff preferences granted them by Brussels. This ‘best of both worlds’ feature was, of course, extended to sugar, ensuring ACP recipient countries had a reliable export market into the EC/EU *without* compromising the protectedness of domestic sugar markets. Said markets were effectively sealed-off from competition at the hands of the more developed European sugar beet producers, rendering the Sugar Protocol a kind of dual-system with a coincidental, and complementary, parallel in the Mauritian EPZ.

In addition to the main Protocol quota, EC/EU-ACP Special Preferential Sugar (SPS) quotas were offered on imports of raw sugar at 85% of the Protocol price. The main beneficiaries of the SPS quota were Swaziland (39,000 tonnes), followed by Guyana (27,000), Zimbabwe (26,000), Mauritius (26,000), Fiji (24,000) and Jamaica (23,000) (Laaksonen et al., 2006, p.4). But returning to the main Protocol quota for a moment – why should Mauritius have been the largest recipient? Chaplin and Matthews contend that the quota’s partition among ACP countries was carried out in a way that kept congruity with Britain’s historic sugar suppliers. “Thus, the main sugar traders with the UK during the colonial period have the biggest quotas” (Chaplin and Matthews, 2006, p.17). This can be partially verified if we compare Table 3.1 with NPQ allocation under the CSA for the years 1967-69. Mauritius, for example, had an NPQ of 380,000 tonnes under the CSA for these years, and was later awarded a quota worth 490,000 tonnes under the terms of the Sugar Protocol. Similarly, Belize and Fiji received some 20,000 and 140,000 tonnes of the CSA NPQ respectively, and upon the Protocol’s creation were compensated with quotas worth 40,000 and 165,000 apiece (Girwar, 1973, p.27).

Eventually, the Sugar Protocol system devised and consecrated in Lomé was dismantled. After the creation of the WTO as a successor regime to the GATT in 1995, the ‘most favoured nation’ clause put the principle of non-reciprocity on notice (Sepos, 2013, p.270; Kopp et al., 2016, p.1339; LaForce, 2013, pp.45-46). Other areas of Lomé – namely, the Banana Protocol – were ruled to be discriminatory by the WTO’s Appellate Body. Shortly after, In June 2000, the WTO- and MFN-compliant Cotonou Agreement was signed in Benin by the EU-15 and an ACP made-up of 77 members, superseding the Lomé Accords that preceded it. Mauritius and the other 18 Sugar Protocol states saw their quotas and favourable prices extended by means of a 2001 WTO waiver, which expired on December 31<sup>st</sup> 2007. Less than two years later, in October 2009, the EU took the decision to fully-rescind the Sugar Protocol in phases, starting with a 36% reduction in its guaranteed price, and culminating in its total replacement with duty-free quota-free (DFQF) access for all Everything but Arms<sup>26</sup> (EBA) sugar producers, as well as all non-EBA ACP producers to have successfully completed Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) negotiations with the EU, either independently or through regional groupings (LaForce, 2013, p.44; Casanova Domenech et al., 2009; European Commission, 2020).

But by this time – so this argument goes – the rents from the Sugar Protocol had already been captured by Mauritian producers and the Mauritian state and successfully poured into other, more advanced industry like so much fertiliser (Laaksonen et al., 2006; Subramanian, 2009). By 2009 – the Protocol’s *annus horribilis* – the share of the Mauritian economy based in sugar was so little (*vide supra*) that it could withstand the transition to an open, market-oriented regime like very few of its fellow Protocol countries. In any event, its economic miracle was by then an historical fact, and one in the debt of preferential trade deals; the Lomé Sugar Protocol, but also the GATT’s 1974 Multifibre Agreement (MFA). Textiles and garments were, as stated previously, the EPZ’s largest sector. Much of this export trade was, directly or indirectly, accounted for by the MFA, which granted developing countries quotas on textile imports into the United States and the EC/EU. Unlike the Sugar Protocol, the MFA merely provided a framework for bilateral agreements between its more than 30 developing

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26 The ‘Everything but Arms’ initiative (2001) grants all countries identified by the UN as the world’s least developed countries (LDCs) duty-free quota-free (DFQF) access to the EU market on all exports excluding armaments (European Commission, 2020).

exporters and the developed importers (Woldekidan, 1993, p.157). This was done, principally, to protect domestic US and EC/EU markets and producers from a flood of cheap imports, since developing producers typically held the comparative advantage in textile manufactures, an advantage arising from the labour-intensive nature of textile production and a general abundance of cheap(er) labour in LDCs (for e.g: Ernst et al., 2005, p.5).

Despite this, Mauritius was able to capture the benefits of the MFA on two fronts. First, quota restrictions only applied to ‘large’ suppliers (1 per cent or more of total EC imports). Mauritius met this quantitative threshold only in the US and the UK, and only on “a few categories of clothing”. Market entry restrictions on the bigger players – Hong Kong, Korea, and Taiwan – therefore gave smaller players like Mauritius a boost, because limitations on supply raised market prices (Woldekidan, 1993, pp.155-156). Second, to circumvent their own import restrictions into the lucrative US and EC/EU markets, the Asian Tigers funnelled FDI into Mauritius’ textile industry via the EPZ system (Sandbrook, 2005, p.565; Subramanian and Roy, 2001, p.20). On this basis, the MFA and EPZ operated as synergetic and dovetailing organs of growth, investment, and productivity in the Mauritian case, bringing the spoils of increased prices through limited market entry and increased investment to the island. With these rents complementing those accrued from the Sugar Protocol, further economic diversification and public expenditure were undertaken, consolidating a miracle in increments. At the end of the GATT’s Uruguay Round of negotiations, it was agreed that countries wishing to retain MFA quotas would commit to phasing them out gradually over a ten year period, with the last quotas being lifted on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2005, as stated in the MFA’s successor agreement – the Agreement on Textiles and Clothing (ATC) (Ernst et al., 2005, p.1). But, again, so the argument goes, the gains had already been captured; their effects, felt.

Table 3.2 shows the percentage of clothing exports to the EC as a share of the total ACP, all developing countries, and total EC imports throughout the golden years of the MFA. Note that Mauritius was by far the largest ACP exporter of clothing to the EC during this period, and that its share steadily grew. Nonetheless, it remained within the 1.0 per cent of total EC imports threshold, thus avoiding quantitative restrictions. Table 3.3 shows total rents accrued to Mauritius from clothing exports to US and EC/EU markets, their share as a proportion of

GDP, and category of garment. The period covered oversees the transition from the MFA to the ATC in 1995.

**Table 3.2: Mauritius' percentage of clothing exports to EC as share of:**

	<b>1975</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1989</b>
<b>Total ACP</b>	70.0	74.0	85.0
<b>Developing Countries</b>	1.0	1.4	2.5
<b>Total EC import</b>	0.2	0.4	1.0

*Source: Woldekidan, 1993, p.154*

**Table 3.3: Rents to Mauritius accruing from clothing exports**

	<b>1984</b>				<b>1996</b>				<b>1999</b>			
	<b>EU</b> ETE	<b>Rent</b>	<b>USA</b> ETE	<b>Rent</b>	<b>EU</b> ETE	<b>Rent</b>	<b>USA</b> ETE	<b>Rent</b>	<b>EU</b> ETE	<b>Rent</b>	<b>USA</b> ETE	<b>Rent</b>
Shirt Knitted	3	0.01	15	0.00	28.3	3.40	57.8	2.55	18.1	4.33	37.6	4.88
T-shirt Knitted	3	0.02	17	0.00	28.3	40.95	0.8	0.29	14.7	45.31	7.6	0.97
Shirts not Knitted	5	0.09	27	0.29	12.6	9.54	50.8	27.77	10.6	6.95	42.9	36.62
Trousers	20	0.79	20	1.41	9	9.85	31.6	19.81	11.6	9.81	25.7	23.56
Ladies' Blouses etc.	10	0.18	17	0.62	4.4	0.62	8.4	0.35	9.9	1.05	12.1	1.30
Jerseys, Cardigans etc.	3.1	0.20	25.6	1.39	1.8	3.07	1.6	0.10	8	12.20	12.7	1.62
<b>Total Rent</b>	<b>1.29</b>		<b>3.71</b>		<b>67.44</b>		<b>50.87</b>		<b>79.65</b>		<b>68.96</b>	
<b>Rent/GDP %</b>			<b>0.49%</b>				<b>2.91%</b>				<b>3.54%</b>	

Source: Subramanian and Roy, 2001, p.21  
\*Rents are in millions of US dollars at 2001 value

So far, with the quasi-exception of Romer's 'ideas gap', the reasons offered for the Mauritian Miracle have been highly instrumental, rooted in a top-down, rational-positivist causality that derives itself from economic trade theory. A partial corrective to this is found in a third explanation, arising from *associational ties and social embeddedness*. Here, the fine achievements of the postcolonial Mauritian state in directing fiscal and trade policy, and in providing public services and welfare, have their provenance in dense, horizontal societal networks formed and incubated during the colonial era (Lange, 2003). After slavery was abolished in the British Empire in 1834, some 1,000 Chinese and 300,000 Indian indentured servants were brought to Mauritius between 1840 and 1920 to plug the newfound labour gap. Initially yoked to individual sugar estates, the Indo-Mauritian population gradually started to demand, and enjoy, rights – among them the right to acquire land. As a result, populations began draining away from the large, predominantly Franco-Mauritian-owned sugar plantations and establishing small, rural sugar farms. With this population transfer, an estimated 150 villages and settlements sprang-up across the island in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, each with its own vibrant community lifeworld, peculiar familial structure, and voluntary association (Ibid., pp.406-408; Benoist, 1981, p.15; Carter, 2009). Such associations were oftentimes based on models imported from the 'old country'. The *baitka*, for example, was a form of Hindu village organisation that held community meetings, educational classes, religious ceremonies, and entertainment, with up to ten located in every village (Lange, 2003, p.408).

The associations and the relational networks they spawned were, for all intents and purposes, spontaneous, organic, and demotic. All that was demanded of the colonial state was on the order of negative force, i.e. that it not intervene to stymie these bottom-up developments and innovations. But, more than this, the dense associational ties described here became, at a certain historical juncture, concatenated with the theretofore streamlined colonial state, enhancing, transforming and reproducing both. Lange explains: "...The construction of corporately coherent state institutions with dense ties to broad segments of colonial society through local... associations enabled the state to effectively implement development policy,

making possible phenomenal development *during* late colonialism” (Ibid., p.414) (Italics added). Gradually, local associations became supplemented with local councils, which, as we move into the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, become the state’s helpmeet in four key administrative areas: Education, healthcare, welfare, and economic development (Ibid., pp.412-414). In regards to the fourth, local agricultural credit societies were particularly instrumental, mirroring a common theme across many developing agricultural and peasant societies. This ‘synergistic’ relationship between the state and diffuse, organic societal groups expanded channels of information and resource flows, facilitating action and the dissemination of shared norms, allowing actors to supervise, monitor and sanction one another and better achieve collective goals while obstructing rent-seeking behaviour (Ibid., p.400; p.416). The sum and cumulative effect was the kind of ‘broad-based development’ eventually identified with the Mauritian Miracle.

Neither the colonial state nor the dense nexus of associational ties established across the little, formerly uninhabited island of Mauritius in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries could, alone, have midwived the economic growth and stability that occurred in the post-colonial period. That bureaucratic institutions became embedded in the social fabric was a necessary development that enriched both beyond all divergent or counterfactual possibility. The event that brought them onto a conjunctural collision course was, Lange contends, a series of labour disturbances in 1937, 1938, and again in 1943. These disturbances were diverse in method, ranging from petition drives, sit-ins, mass marches, strikes, and attacks on property, to outright violence (Ibid., p.409). While the inadequacy of agricultural wages, a decrease in the price paid for low-grade sugarcane, and the inability of small planters to sell their cane directly to preferred mills all served as proximate causes of the uprisings, their common denominator was political exclusion of subordinate groups – agricultural Indo-Mauritians and Creoles, predominantly – at the hands of the Franco-Mauritian elite (Ibid., pp.408-409). Fortuitously for these subordinate groups, the dense island-wide associational networks layered-up over half a century provided them with the mobilisational and organisational capacity to coordinate their rebellion. The popular movement created by the uprisings first and foremost compelled the colonial state to incorporate its demands, interests and pre-existing structures into the ongoing state-building process. Second, it induced the new urban and agricultural labouring classes to cooperate with and, finally, colonise the Mauritian Labour Party. Following Ramgoolam’s ascension to the Party helm in 1958, ushering in a

position that was formally pro-independence, the full virtue of this strategy would show itself in back-to-back election victories for the MLP up to 1982.

By placing ‘social embeddedness’ at the heart of the story, this theory of the Mauritian Miracle leans heavily on a concept originating with Karl Polanyi. In Polanyi’s 1944 magnum opus, *The Great Transformation*, the economy is not autonomous, as it must be in economic theory, but subordinated to politics, religion, and social relations (Block, 2001, pp.xxiii-xxvi). This subordination is better understood as embeddedness; the indissolubility of one sphere from the others. In Lange’s Mauritian associational ties, however, it is the colonial state, and not the economy, that is embedded in social relations. The economy or economic ‘miracle’ is, instead, the dependent variable. In emphasising the demotic and social inputs into state-building and economic stability and success, the theory also borrows from Putnam’s ‘social capital’ paradigm (1993), whereby the vibrancy of civic life has a direct impact on the quality of democratic state institutions. This is because civic life generates social capital – “networks, norms of reciprocity and trust” (Boix and Posner, 1996, p.2). As examples of civic life in action, Putnam cites sports clubs, literary guilds, and choral societies, among many others, concluding that there is a “self-reinforcing and cumulative” causal relationship between good governance and an active civil society (Putnam, 1993, pp.163-176; p.177). Table 3.4 shows the number and membership of Mauritian associations in the years leading up to independence.

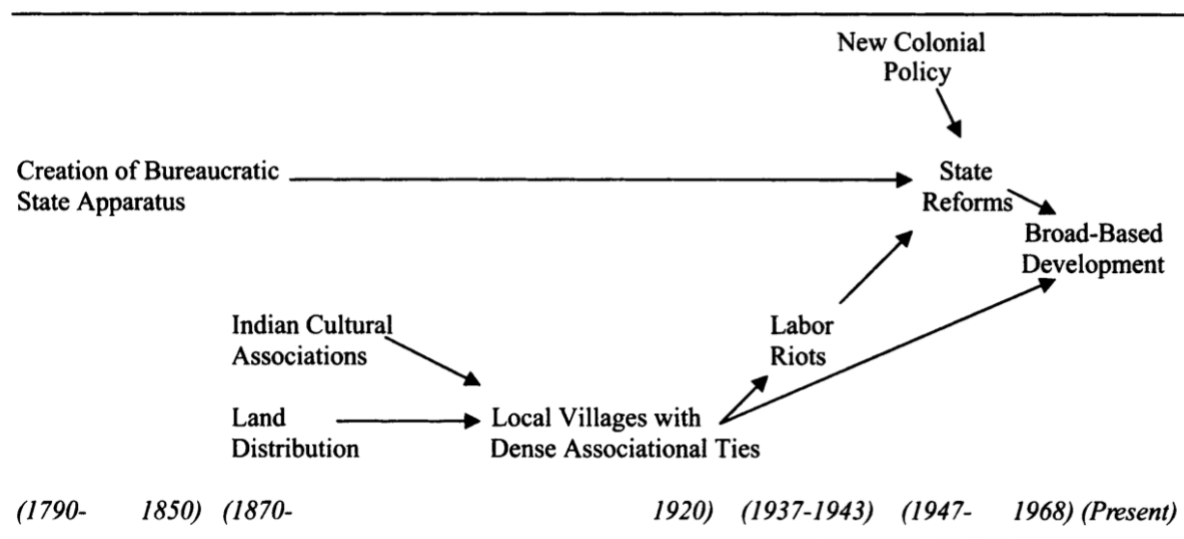
**Table 3.4: Number and membership of Mauritian associations, 1950-1964**

Year	Co-ops		Labour/employers’ unions		State-registered associations		Total	
	Orgs.	Members	Orgs.	Members	Orgs.	Members	Orgs.	Members
1950	220	15,387	25	18,207	39a	31,978	284	65,572
1954	290	26,421	32	16,342	262	45,461	584	88,224
1959	342	33,514	56	27,540	346	57,261	744	118,315
1964	322	33,070	80	47,304	569	78,535	971	158,909

Source: Lange, 2003, p.416

In summary, the improbable Mauritian Miracle issued from a programme of broad-based development made possible by an earlier conjunction of two processes: one, the organic emergence of dense associational ties forged in villages and communities across the island, and two, the development and expansion of the theretofore narrow bureaucratic colonial state. That diaspora, immigration, ethnic ties, and cultural tradition figured prominently in the former is something supported by Subramanian and Roy, who argue that the very diversity and ethnic fragmentation lamented by Meade as a curse appear, in Mauritius' case, to have been a boon (Subramanian and Roy, 2001, p.36). The conjunction that forced these two parallel processes onto a single, consolidated path was, in Lange's reckoning, a series of labour disturbances that occurred in the middle of the twentieth century. Figure 3.3 illustrates this complex causal chain.

**Figure 3.3: Causal chain of Mauritian socio-political and economic development**



Source: Lange, 2003, p.403

Economic openness, preferential trade deals, and associational ties and social embeddedness encompass three of the major scholarly explanations for the so-called Mauritian Miracle, detailed extensively in this section. We turn now to an assessment of these interpretations in section 3.4.



### 3.4: Existence Precedes Essence

Each of the replies offered in section 3.3 to the question ‘why Mauritius?’ is flawed and insufficient on its own terms. A deep and comprehensive analysis of Mauritius’ socio-economic development further reveals that even a compendium of these theories cannot satisfactorily unearth the taproot of the so-called Mauritian Miracle. This is not to be dismissive of, in most cases, interesting and important scholarly works. Indeed, each of the theories discussed sheds light on the overall picture we are seeking. Mauritius’ EPZ scheme, FDI and the intersubjective gains it attracted, the Sugar Protocol and the MFA, the social capital amassed by Mauritian societal networks – each stands as a probably-necessary, but ultimately insufficient, causal motivator. The same remains true if we add them up.

An exception to this is found in the total *economic openness* thesis, which is contradicted by virtually all available empirical data. The most exhaustive repository of said data is collated by the IMF, demonstrating that, across almost all indicators, Mauritius maintained a highly restrictive trade regime throughout the formative developmental decades of the 1970s, 80s and 90s. This is in comparison with many African counterparts, including some of those designated as ‘closed’ economies by Sachs and Warner. For example, Mozambique is classified as a ‘consensus non-reformer’ on the basis of Sachs and Warner’s regressions, rendering its growth prospects inauspicious against the salutary openness of the Mauritian regime (Sachs and Warner, 1997, p.362). The longitudinal IMF data, however, indicates that exactly the reverse was true: in 1991, on a scale where 10 represents the highest category of trade restrictiveness and 1 the lowest, Mauritius is given a rating of 10 while Mozambique is accorded 7. By 1998, Mozambique’s restrictiveness rating had dwindled to 2, while Mauritius’ stood comparatively firm at 7 (Subramanian et al., 2000, p.7). The average scores across the whole sample of Eastern and Southern African (ESA) countries were 9.7 for 1991, and 5.9 for 1998, indicating overall trends towards liberalisation. These trends were not, however, best exemplified by Mauritius, whose trade regime was consistently marked by above-average restrictiveness. Similarly, looking specifically at non-tariff barriers (NTBs), the IMF finds ‘substantial usage’ of NTBs by Mauritius, both in 1991 and 1998. Conversely, by 1998, fourteen ESA countries had either ‘few’ or no NTBs, including Mozambique –

mischaracterised by Sachs and Warner as a closed economy where Mauritius was mischaracterised as ‘open’ (Ibid., p.8).

Meanwhile, work at the World Bank corroborates the IMF’s findings with an even starker conclusion. Table 3.5 shows a quantitative summary of tariff barriers for a geographically diffuse sample of African countries at the end of the 1990s. As we can see, Mauritius (highlighted in yellow) has well above average barrier restrictions across all variables *except* column 7, Perceptions of Corruption Index. Moreover, Mauritius is the single most protected economy in the sample, with Zimbabwe coming in at second. Again, several economies contrasted by Sachs and Warner as ‘closed’ or ‘ambiguous’ against Mauritius’ ‘openness’ sit well below it in this quantitative ranking schema, including Malawi (‘ambiguous case’) and Côte d’Ivoire (‘Consensus non-reformer’) (Sachs and Warner, 1997, p.362).

**Table 3.5: Multivariate ranking of tariff barriers for African states**

Country	Year	Overall distortions in resource allocation (EPR) (a)	Unweighted NPTR on Domestically Produced Consumer goods	Import-weighted average tariff &sc on dutiable Consumer goods	Distortionary Effects on consumer choices (b)	Tariff &sc revenues as % of GDP	Normalised Rescaled TI Perceptions of Corruption Index (c)	MVI Weighted Average (d)	MVI unweighted average
Benin	1996	0	13.7	9.6	11.7	1.1	N/A	0.1	0.2
Mali	1997	1.3	33.6	16.5	25.1	2.2	N/A	1.9	2.4
Cameroon	1996	2.5	30.9	19.4	25.2	1.3	10	2.4	2.4
Uganda	1997	2.9	30.8	18.4	24.6	0.08	6.8	2.4	2.1
South Africa	1996	2.9	39.0	15.2	27.1	0.8	0	2.5	2.2
Ghana	1996	3.4	33.0	17.4	25.2	1.1	5.0	2.8	2.4
Tanzania	1996	4.1	50.3	18.8	34.6	2.0	8.7	4.0	3.9
Cote d’Ivoire	1996	4.7	43.0	15.5	29.3	1.8	5.5	4.0	3.5
Burkina Faso	1996	3.9	43.8	17.5	30.7	3.3	NA	4.1	4.3
Malawi	1995	5.3	43.1	27.9	35.5	3.0	2.9	5.3	5.3
Senegal	1996	5.3	51.7	21.4	36.6	4.2	5.0	5.6	5.8
Zimbabwe	1997	6.0	68.4	33.7	51.1	6.1	2.6	7.6	8.6
<b>Mauritius domestic industry</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>63.8</b>	<b>25.2</b>	<b>44.5</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>9.3</b>
<b>Mean</b>		4.0	41.9	19.7	30.9	2.6	4.7	4.0	4.0
<b>Median</b>		3.9	43.0	18.4	29.3	2.0	5.0	4.0	3.5

Source: Hinkle et al., 2003, p.37

The weight of literature elsewhere is tilted heavily in favour of the view that Mauritius was, notwithstanding its EPZ, a ‘highly protected’ economy until the mid-1980s (Matadeen et al., 2011; Woldekidan, 1993, p.187; Subramanian and Roy, 2001), whereupon a slow trend of liberalisation began leaving modest chinks in the country’s protective edifice before accelerating into the twenty-first century. Thus, it is difficult to understand, in light of abundant empirical indicators, why and on what basis the total ‘economic openness’ thesis was conceived *vis-à-vis* Mauritius. Sachs and Warner’s framework for GDP growth in developing economies might, in other regards, be empirically defensible, but on the question of the Mauritian Miracle it is manifestly founded on a false premise. The *heterodox opening* argument, on the other hand, at least has the distinct advantage of accurately capturing the country’s trade policies and dynamics in the years following independence. But accurately capturing a set of dynamics and ascribing to those same dynamics primary power of causality are, of course, different things. Mauritius’ EPZ system represents a sophisticated *modus vivendi* between export and import competing sectors, without which the fecund growth rates and relative class equilibrium that came to define the Mauritian Miracle would have been stunted, or else in grave jeopardy.

But a simple method of similarities will show that it cannot be the sole or even leading piece of the puzzle we are trailing. In the ESA alone, Botswana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Namibia, Uganda, and Tanzania all had EPZs of their own by 1998. In none of these countries were the schemes a great success, falling prey in some cases to significant tax revenue losses, distortive impacts on domestic firm competitiveness, and corruption (Subramanian et al., 2000). And in none of these countries did the anticipated gains in FDI, production, and employment announce themselves with anything like the ardour of the Mauritian case. Further afield, Senegal, Cameroon, and Zimbabwe all experimented with EPZ systems; experimented and swiftly found themselves ensnared in a dysfunctional apparatus (Hinkle et al., 2003, p.49). In fact, success of EPZs in sub-Saharan Africa generally has been “rather limited” (Subramanian et al., 2000, p.28). Clearly, a programme of heterodox opening to international markets built around a formal Export Processing Zone is not enough to galvanise an economic miracle; the administrative capacity to guide, manage, and adjust activity inside the EPZ is of equal importance. But before we refer to that point in

more detail, it pays to mention a second shortcoming of the heterodox opening thesis, namely that it underplays the importance of *preferential trade deals* in Mauritius' development. Evidence shown in section 3.3, particularly Tables 3.1 and 3.3, demonstrate that Mauritius enjoyed significant benefits from its preferential access to EC/EU and US markets, in GDP, employment, and other associated dynamic gains. The Sugar Protocol and Multifibre Agreement are, therefore, indubitably part of the story of Mauritius' postcolonial development, emblazoned with the hallmarks of a bygone era in capital accumulation; an era defined by pre-WTO 'embedded liberalism' and non-reciprocity (Ruggie, 1982), with all the accompanying instruments like quotas, guaranteed prices, and so on.

Agriculture was more or less exempt from the GATT's more stringent rules on trade, arising largely from interest group dynamics in the US at the time of the Agreement's inception (Ackrill and Kay, 2009, p.488; Goldstein, 1998, p.23-24). In the EC/EU, agriculture has, for similar reasons, traditionally been treated as an 'exception', benefitting from extraordinary levels of 'compartmentalisation' or protection (Duagbjerg and Swinbank, 2006), governed by the staid (though not immutable) Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) (Interviewee 1 [FD], Jan 16 2020; Interviewee 2 [WD], Jan 16 2020). EC/EU sugar, having survived the MacSharry (1992) and Fischler (2003) reforms to the CAP, stands as arguably the continent's single most protected agricultural commodity (Richardson, 2009). These exogenous phenomena combined to create the conditions for developmental regimes like the Sugar Protocol. The MFA was, as we saw in section 3.3, designed to limit, not enhance, the supply of competitive textile manufactures into the EC/EU and US, but Mauritius was able to use it to its advantage, again in ways described. Thus, trumpeting the EPZ for its significant boost to Mauritian exports *without* adequately acknowledging the considerable export rents accrued via preferential access is, indeed, an oversight (Subramanian and Roy, 2001, p.20). As an ensemble, they take us some way further to understanding Mauritius' peculiar trajectory. But not all the way. For, the same problem that burns the heterodox opening thesis burns preferential access, underscored, again, by a simple method of similarities comparison.

There were eighteen other signatories to the Sugar Protocol, and while Mauritius was the single largest quota recipient under the terms of the agreement (see Table 3.1), the rents generated from it accounted for a larger share of GDP in several other participant countries.

Variables pertaining to socio-economic growth, stability, and diversification are erratic across the sample throughout the Protocol years (1975-2009)<sup>27</sup>, and no one state experienced a multifaceted ‘miracle’ of the magnitude seen in Mauritius. Jamaica – which forms the second case study in this thesis – was the fourth largest quota-recipient under the terms of the Sugar Protocol, and was also party to the MFA. Compounded by an ostensibly better economic inheritance at independence (1962), Jamaica should have enjoyed comparable success to Mauritius during the Protocol and MFA heydays, if the preferential access argument is to be validated. But Jamaica’s developmental experience was chequered to say the least (examined fully in chapters 4 and 5), including specifically around the question of rents raised through preferential access. Supplementing preferences with EPZs is no guarantee of broad-based development, either. Fiji, Kenya, Madagascar, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe all had allocated Sugar Protocol quotas along with EPZ systems. While it is far too simplistic to use any of these countries as synonyms for ‘economic failure’, none were able to engender stable, equitable growth and sectorial diversification in the manner achieved by Mauritius<sup>28</sup>. In any event, as Subramanian and Roy point out, many other African and developing countries enjoyed lucrative preferential trade deals with developed markets alongside domestic EPZ systems and failed to draw commensurate benefits (Subramanian and Roy, 2001, p.25).

Thus, a theme is emerging. Again, the formal capacity to effectively absorb and redistribute rents from preferential access must have been a vital precondition of Mauritius’ development. Though important and quite possibly necessary, neither EPZs nor preferential deals, nor a combination of the two, would, alone, have secured the same outcomes, as gleaned from a simple comparison with states that meet the same criteria. The issue with the *FDI and the importation of ideas* thesis advanced by Romer (1993) is that the pattern of ownership in Mauritius’ EPZ was disproportionately local when compared with other developing states’ EPZs. While it is true that the Mauritian government did not place any arbitrary restrictions on foreign involvement, it is equally true that domestic firms and capital consistently

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27 Source: data.worldbank.org <https://data.worldbank.org>

28 Fiji, for example, experienced healthy growth rates and political stability over the past half-century but remains a largely subsistence-agriculture economy. Kenya has high-value knowledge- and tech-intensive industry but is marred by inequality, corruption, and terrorism. Source: data.worldbank.org <https://data.worldbank.org/country/kenya> <https://data.worldbank.org/country/fiji>

maintained a substantial or majority presence in the national EPZ throughout the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. In 1984, for example, 35 percent of the companies operating in the EPZ were entirely or at least two-thirds owned by Mauritian nationals, a further 35 percent were joint-ventures between Mauritians and foreign investors, and a final 30 percent wholly or more than 80 percent owned by foreign nationals (Woldekidan, 1993, pp.16-17). In the same year, only 12 percent of total EPZ employment was accounted for by firms that were wholly foreign-owned, while the corresponding figures in Korea, the Philippines and Malaysia were 72, 42, and 64 percent respectively (Subramanian and Roy, 2001, p.24). Overall, it is estimated that around 50 percent of the total equity of firms in the Mauritian EPZ belonged to domestic investors (Ibid., p.24).

So, while Romer's explanation for the Mauritian Miracle deserves plaudits for injecting intersubjective and epistemic dimensions into a debate often dominated by material calculus, and while it is quite probable FDI pollinated the Mauritian economy with dynamic ideas gains, an argument that hangs its entire causality on that hook alone is problematic. Given the structure of Mauritius' EPZ and the relative density of Mauritian ownership, attributing its success to enlightened outsiders seems a doubtful and slightly disparaging enterprise, all the more so if we apply it to the Mauritian Miracle *in toto*. What begins with Romer and intersubjectivity crystallises fully around the *associational ties and social embeddedness* framework, which warrants its highest commendation not for its non-material but rather its *historical* inflections. For, in addition to the three umbrella theories of precocious Mauritian development advanced and assessed here, we could add a fourth, namely *institutionalism bereft of history*. The reviewed literature can be broken into two camps: that which treats optimal trade policies, good governance, and consequent strong development as *ad nihilo* phenomena emergent around the advent of independence (Sachs and Warner, 1997; Romer, 1993; Laaksonen et al., 2006), and that which acknowledges the causal beneficence of strong, capable institutions (Subramanian and Roy, 2001; Rodrik, 1999). The former handles the variables of interest as rabbits in a hat-trick, pulled from a dark, mysterious origin. The latter acknowledges a foregoing source of agency, necessary if other variables are to resonate.

But both suffer from chronofetishism, in which the present is effectively sealed-off from the past, obscuring historical contexts and making synchronic phenomena appear static, self-

constituting, and autonomous in the process (Hobson, 2002, pp.6-7). Even the assessments that place state institutional capacity in Mauritius on a par with the niceties of domestic tax and trade policy, or the positive-sum largesse of international and regional bodies in the postcolonial era, fail to adequately or even inadequately provide an archaeology of those very same state institutions. Yes, state institutions in Mauritius already possessed considerable wherewithal as the country ascended the foothills of independence in 1968 (Interviewee 4 [SS], Mar 24 2021). Yes, this wherewithal far outstripped that of many other developing countries. But why? Where did it come from? And how? An answer to these questions will lead us to the causal coordinates of the so-called Mauritian Miracle, a perhaps over-reified concept that nonetheless describes a unique process in whose wake much educated hubris foundered. Marx memorably likened the role of primitive or ‘previous’ accumulation in Adam Smith’s political economy to original sin in theology, where “Adam bit the apple, and thereupon sin fell on the human race” (Marx, 1990, p.873). Comparably, in exegeses of the Mauritian Miracle, robust and effective institutions – even when acknowledged as forbears *sine qua non* to later developments – enjoy a sort of immaculate conception; one moment invisible, the next omnipresent. Lange’s associational ties and social embeddedness, then, represents a greatly welcome and long overdue foray into the twinned historical development of Mauritian civil society and the Mauritian state. But in its probing, it fails to fully apprehend or theorise the latter, and as a result over-privileges the former. For example, Lange writes:

“In contrast to other African colonies that were dominated by a miniscule state dependent on indigenous strongmen for the control of local populations, it (Mauritius) had a large and centralized state apparatus with direct and formal control over the entire colony for nearly two hundred years before independence” (Lange, 2003, p.404).

But the deeper reasons as to exactly *why* such an anomalous approach to state-building was undertaken by the British in Mauritius are left unsaid. Later, references are made to the fact that “although sugar was already cultivated before British rule, the British encouraged its production by reducing tariffs and constructing hundreds of miles of roads to enable the transportation of sugarcane” (Ibid., p.406). Again, however, quite what possessed the British

Empire to affirmatively weigh-up the opportunity cost of resource-transfer to build a Weberian state in little, far-flung Mauritius is not clear. In short, Lange's thesis shatters the chronofetishism and ahistoricism of alternative assessments to take us back to the second act of the Mauritian Miracle. What we require, however – if extraordinary state capacity is the determinant factor, as it appears to be – is nothing less than a thorough exposition of act one. From Polanyi (1944), to Gramsci (1929-35), to Putnam (1993), civil society has always been a vital organ of reproductive power, engaged in complex and asymmetric feedback with economic and political forces. In the Mauritian case, however, existence truly does precede essence. The synergistic relationship between the development of formal bureaucracy and social groups situated in dense, associational networks (Lange, 2003, p.412) is, to the extent that it existed, presupposed by the relations that drove the emergence of the forerunning state. Which is why none of the theories surveyed, nor even a complementary composite of them, satisfactorily corners the sources of putative Mauritian exceptionalism in the post-independence period.

### 3.5: Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen several things. First, Mauritius' pantheonisation as a romantic and idyllic place, full of exotic wonder and natural intrigue, was sketched through diary extracts and commentary from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The characteristic limitations of this admiration were then teased-out by tracing the discourse into the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, where the fast-approaching zeitgeist of decolonisation created an intellectual and moral atmosphere of trepidation and, at its more extreme, contempt for soon-to-be independent states. On the basis of standard assumptions, all sorts of good reasons abounded to be anxious about the prospects of Mauritian development in a competitive capitalist world economy; from geographical remoteness, to ethnolinguistic fractionalisation, to a mono-crop export product in the form of sugar. Nonetheless, Mauritius straddled and surmounted its peaceful development mountain, consolidating an inclusive welfare state and a democratic social contract in the process. Some two short decades after gloomy, initial assessments by Western observers, Mauritius' transformation was being hailed as a 'miracle'.



As a result, and quite naturally, Mauritius has attracted a reasonable amount of attention from scholars and international organisations (IOs), each determined to uncover and admonish others on the causes of Mauritius' stable road to prosperity. Core among these theories pertain to economic openness, preferential trade deals, and associational ties and social embeddedness, all outlined and assessed in this chapter. The fatal defect that overarches them all is a failure to properly forage Mauritian history for the institutional roots of the Mauritian Miracle, an elision that particularly afflicts the first two sets of concepts. In part of the literature, the indispensable importance of Mauritius' anomalously robust state institutions in its development is acknowledged. In the other part, it is not. But even in the acknowledging literature, the nettle is left ungrasped with regards to the conditions and circumstances that drove the emergence of the instrumental Mauritian state, underwriting the prodigious development that arose thereafter.

We need not throw the baby out with the bathwater, as the saying goes. Several of the theories canvassed in this chapter loan important modes of understanding viz. the Mauritian Miracle. It is virtually impossible to conceive of commensurate developmental success without some refined combination of the 'heterodox opening' to trade, access to preferential markets via the Sugar Protocol and the MFA, epistemic gains borne by FDI, and the prevalence of longstanding social networks, or what Ferdinand Tönnies called *gemeinschaft*, on the island of Mauritius. But, in ways discussed, each is insufficient alone, and as a coherent mass they are conspicuously prefigured by the birth of a peculiar state, under peculiar circumstances. Not in the development of every state and political economy is such farsighted fidelity to history warranted. In some settings, marked, say, by more recent structural dislocation and recalibration, delving into the mists of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century for phenomena causally-relevant today might well be a decadent intellectual adventure. But in the history of Mauritius, intuited by a method of differences, we notice the colossal fixity of the Mauritian state as a fount of socio-economic and political continuity against a backdrop of postcolonial development often kaleidoscopic in its unpredictability. In the end, then, the real decadence lies in *not* delving into those mists, a project undertaken in the coming chapter as we explore the conditions and circumstances of the Mauritian state's emergence, linking this process explicitly to the Mauritian Miracle.

## **Chapter 4: From the Uninhabited Island to the Proto-Weberian State: Sugar in Mauritius, 1715-1967**

*'... guitars/ravanes/invade us/*

*triangles/maravanes/carry us/*

*it's the hour of the campfire/*

*it's the hour of the campfire among the filaos tree/*

*it's the hour of the campfire of the bush rum/*

*it's the hour of an incandescent memory*

*existing even before*

*the native island was founded.'*

*- Edouard Maunick (Mauritian poet), 'A-BO-LI-TION'.*

### **4.1: Introduction**

In this chapter, we continue where chapter 3 left-off by examining the origins and root-cause of the so-called Mauritian Miracle, a term employed by scholars to describe the country's prodigious and unexpected economic development in the postcolonial era. Contrary to assessments that privilege variables like good trade policies and favourable terms of trade in the post-independence era, the contention of this chapter and thesis is that these variables are heavily indebted to Mauritius' strong state institutions, which are, themselves, indebted to processes that took place deep in the colonial era of Mauritian history. Accordingly, this chapter concludes our coverage of the first of our two case studies, Mauritius, and presages chapters 5 and 6, which repeat the investigation in the Jamaican context. In a wider sense,

this chapter attempts to complete the Mauritian half of a development ‘puzzle’, namely that the Indian Ocean island state developed impressively along capitalist lines despite inauspicious expectations. In so doing, it clears the ground for our ostensibly-inverse, Jamaican half of the puzzle.

This chapter is organised as follows: In section 4.2, it is argued that the absence of an indigenous population in Mauritius, as well as the absence of social or power structures prior to colonisation, enabled the eventual emergence and consolidation of a uniquely cohesive and homogenous class of sugar planters on the island, in circumstances described here as ‘heterodox’ primitive accumulation. Important in this process, too, was the constant reorganisation of imperial power that enveloped the island, and the preventative effect that this had on the development of one or multiple productive sectors in Mauritius throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In section 4.3, building on arguments made by Saylor (2012, 2014), a sugar commodity boom occurring from 1825 onwards compelled merchants and investors to back, or otherwise become, large sugar planters, and revealed three major problems or economic ‘bottlenecks’: in labour, in transportation infrastructure, and in scientific and research capabilities. Unlike elites in colonial environments with a more heterogeneous social inheritance, the uniquely homogenous Mauritian sugar planters were able to overcome dilemmas of collective action and successfully appeal to the Mauritian state for assistance in solving their bottleneck problems. For its part, because the colony of Mauritius was at once a marginal part of the British Empire *and* an important supplier of its sugar, the island state was able to successfully secure support from the metropole. The upshot of these transferrals and interventions is, as shown, a path-dependent process of high capacity state-building throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Section 4.4 concludes this chapter, summarising insights and situating them in the wider literature on Mauritian development.

## 4.2: The Tabula Rasa Society

We saw, in chapter 3, how the Nobel Prize-Winning British-Trinidadian and Tobagonian novelist, V.S. Naipaul, described Mauritius as “an agricultural colony, created by empire in an empty island” (Naipaul, 1972). On this, at least, Naipaul was mostly correct. The Age of

Discovery – a necessarily Eurocentric descriptor that erases entire civilisations from the history books – was at its most benign when its pioneers described lands genuinely uninhabited by human populations. But while Columbus was extirpating indigenous peoples in the Americas, and Vasco da Gama was subjugating autochthones in the East, the tiny island of Mauritius went unnoticed, a barren tropical bolthole lost in the Indian Ocean (Allen, 1999). Underwater volcanic eruptions forged the ruggedly beautiful landscape of Mauritius and its neighbouring Mascarene Islands (which includes the islands of Réunion and Rodrigues) around 8 million years ago. Even here there is a political economic, agronomical relevance in the present, because the rich volcanic soil that lined the island ensured it was highly fertile for the cultivation and production of tropical crops once it was finally discovered and settled (Brookfield, 1959, pp.25-27; Holmberg, 1962, p.8). While Arab and Swahili sailors might have been the first to intimate this process, setting foot on the island long before the Age of Discovery was more than a glint in a pontiff’s eye, the Portuguese explorers of the early 1500s were the first to leave a material legacy, destroying a great deal of fauna, hunting and killing “everything that came within reach”, and introducing a number of animals harmful to native bird life (Ibid., p.7).

But Portuguese contact did not extend ultimately beyond destructive dilettantism, and by the late 1500s and early 1600s a new European colonial pathbreaker, the Dutch East India Company, was eyeing-up Mauritius as a longer-term prospect. The island’s location made it an ideal waystation for Dutch ships as they completed their journeys back and forth between the European metropole and the East Indies periphery. Furthermore, while their Portuguese predecessors might have ploughed a wake of despoliation through the island’s fauna, they also left its dense forests largely intact, meaning abundant reserves of ebony were ripe for the picking (Ibid., p.7; Allen, 1999, p.9). Despite proclamations from within the Dutch sphere of influence that the number of ebony trees felled in Mauritius must not exceed a certain limit, Dutch settlers and merchants disregarded these orders and “saturated the European market” (Holmberg, 1961, p.7). Gradually, however, the strategic and financial spoils promised by Mauritius were judged to be insufficient, and the embryonic colony was formally abandoned by the Dutch in 1710. European and East Indian interests came first, and the scattered, often ramshackle colonies erected on the island were expensive and logistically burdensome to maintain (Allen, 1999, p.9). But before the Dutch left, they imparted three enduring legacies: The extinction of the endemic dodo bird; the name ‘Mauritius’, in honour of Maurice of

Nassau, later Prince of Orange; and the introduction of the sugarcane crop, imported from Java in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century by the Dutch General Governor (Holmberg, 1961, p.10). That sugar should have become the unlikely and often blood-stained archangel of Mauritian development was, at this juncture, neither evident nor determined. Indeed, the commodity's main purpose during this period seems to have been in the artisanal production of arrack, the highly alcoholic beverage made from sugar molasses. Consequently, daily life in Mauritius was characterised by "very hard drinking", a pursuit that quite possibly retarded economic development (Ibid., p.10).

Five years elapsed between Dutch abandonment and the arrival of the French in 1715, five years in which the Edenic garden lionised a hundred or so years later by Darwin and Huxley was ruled over by none but lush vegetation, wild animals, and the decaying remnants of human contact. When Guillaume Dufresne d'Arsel recolonised the island using the machinery of the French East India Company, renaming it Ile de France in the process, it was not with tropical commodity production in mind, but, again, with the imperatives of geostrategy (Allen, 1999, p.11). Despite neglect and the perennial spectre of re-abandonment in the 1720s and 30s, Mauritius finally achieved a permanent colonial *raison d'être* and identity with the appointment of Bertrand-François Mahé de La Bourdonnais as governor of the island in 1735. La Bourdonnais ordered construction of the first Mauritian roads, imported oxen from neighbouring Madagascar, built ox carts en masse, and led experiments in agriculture, most significantly through the establishment of the island's first sugar mill in Rosalie-Villebague, Pamplemousses, in the 1740s (Holmberg, 1961, p.10). Thus, with La Bourdonnais' appointment, the earliest contours of contemporary Mauritian society begin to emerge, beckoned by the governor's foresight and sense of posterity. His vision, though formative, nonetheless still conceived of Mauritius primarily as a base from which to support larger French interests in the East Indies; interests which were, themselves, subsumed within grand imperial battles of statecraft between the French and British crowns, and which would not culminate until the Napoleonic Wars of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (Allen, 1999, p.11).

Mauritian agricultural production in the early to mid-18<sup>th</sup> century was, therefore, calibrated to meet the demands of French forces and extraneous populations in the Indian Ocean, not to satisfy faraway demand, or generate and conquer new markets. La Bourdonnais' tenure as

governor ended in 1746, but his influence over Mauritian political economy lasted at least until the late 1760s. In 1767, the bankrupted French East India Company passed Mauritius to the French crown of Louis XV. The first royal comptroller, Pierre Poivre (1767-72), had an altogether different vision for Mauritius, one in which it would become a plantation economy engaged in the mass production of tropical commodities like cotton, indigo, spice and, of course, sugar (Ibid., p.11). Now, the Mauritian colony was re-conceptualised as a mini-engine of agricultural capitalist production in the southern hemisphere. But Poivre's "wild dreams" barely cleared the first hurdle (Holmberg, 1961). The Dutch spice monopoly, in particular, was too strong to topple, and among the other commodities, as well, there were long-established producers whose local supremacy proved indomitable. Furthermore, with the repeal of the French East India Company's monopoly on French East Asian trade in 1769, all French nationals were now permitted to trade at Port Louis, heralding the arrival of more profitable commercial and maritime activities that further dampened the appeal of tropical commodity production (Allen, 1999, p.11).

It might have seemed like the mercantilist age – with its state charters and licenced monopolism – was passing. Elsewhere, traditional mercantilism was alive and well, but on little Mauritius it had been formally abrogated, animating "a period of some four decades during which the island served as an increasingly important commercial entrepôt for the Western Indian Ocean" (Ibid., p.11). This process met with a sudden jolt of intensification in 1787, with the designation of Mauritius as a free port open to all foreign nationals. The number of merchants and traders in Port Louis rose from 103 in 1776, to 365 in 1808. The number of vessels docking annually at the port climbed from 78 in 1769, to 347 in 1803 – some of them from as far afield as Northern Europe and the United States (Ibid., pp.11-12). But this seeming pivot towards freer maritime commerce was interrupted by British rule. Mauritius, the once-barren tropical island, was about to be colonised by a third imperial regime in a hundred years.

French *haute* politics, society, and wider empire had been in violent flux since the Revolution of 1789, and through various permutations had produced the Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte (1804-14, 15). For much of the Anglo-French peripheries, this meant subordination to the strategic military exigencies of the Napoleonic Wars, and Mauritius – then still Isle de France

– was no exception. After repeated attacks on British commercial ships by French corsairs based on the island, a naval expedition was sent to capture it in December 1810. The British raids were successful, and Mauritius was formally ceded to Britain under the terms of the Treaty of Paris in 1814 (govmu.org). Amid the complex collapsing scenery of Napoleonic rule, two points demand our attention. One, that, in accordance with the Treaty, the British committed to respecting and preserving the language, customs, domestic laws and – most importantly – property rights of the French settler, or Franco-Mauritian, inhabitant population. Two, that, with its accession to the British Empire, Mauritius fell under the jurisdiction of the Navigation Acts, restricting its trade and commercial activities once more. This return to mercantilist principles after a four decade’s sojourn, combined with intense commercial rivalry from another of Britain’s colonies, the Cape of Good Hope (in modern-day South Africa), meant that Mauritius’ days as a budding commercial hub were over. It is at this juncture – hemmed-in by faraway strategic designs drawn-up by an altogether new metropole – that tropical commodity mass-production, overwhelmingly centred on sugarcane, was embraced by the Mauritian settler-colonists (Allen, 1999, p.12; Brookfield, 1959, p.25), transforming the island into a mono-crop plantation economy over the next century and a half. The manner in which this transformation occurred, and its causal relevance to Mauritian state-building and the later Mauritian Miracle, will be examined in detail in section 4.3. First, however, it is important to explain why the foregoing analysis is significant beyond historiographical exposition.

There is broad acceptance – among scholars who recognise Mauritian historical sociology as inalienable from its later development – that the very non-existence of indigenous peoples on the island was, in and of itself, impactful on the path Mauritian socio-economic and political development took (Houbert, 1981; Lamusse, 1982, p.62; Saylor, 2012, p.468; Greig et al., 2011, p.160; Neveling, 2013, p.122). What is lacking, however, is a general theorisation of why this was so. As we saw in chapter 2, primitive accumulation is the “historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production... whereby the social means of subsistence and production are turned into capital, and the immediate producers are turned into wage labourers” (Marx, 1990, pp.874-875). Via this process – whose typical methods are forcible usurpation, individual acts of violence, and the ‘parliamentary form of robbery’ (Glassman, 2006, p.610) – the groundwork for capital accumulation, or capitalism, is laid. Primitive accumulation, then, is the violent pre-requisite to capitalism, encompassing the

dispersal of inhabitant populations, the valorisation of subsistence land, and the gradual proletarianisation of surplus peoples. Marx acknowledges that this “history of expropriation assumes different aspects in different countries, and runs through its various phases in different orders of succession, and different historical epochs” (Marx, 1990, p.876). All but the most metrocentric, nomothetic, and elite-driven accounts of capital accumulation through colonial and imperial rule factor-in some element of resistance from subaltern populations (Escobar, 1995, pp.94-96; Maddox, 1993), or else allow for a dynamic if asymmetric synthesis of interests and strategies arising from the complex interaction of metropolises and peripheries, capitalists and workers, across space and time (Chibber, 2013). Where, in the course of this process, capital encounters multiple populations to dispossess, we can expect multiple path-dependent processes to be set in train, each articulated with a variable and evolving remnant of their original condition (Pierson, 2004).

What is remarkable about Mauritius in this connection is that primitive accumulation was, for want of a better phrase, easy. There was no indigenous population to dispossess, no peasantry to proletarianise and, consequently, no contestation to the acquisition and consolidation of productive land. Slaves, the capitalist’s *deus ex machina par excellence* throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century, were sought as an obvious solution to the absence of Mauritian labour. Estimates are that, between 1670 and 1810, some 160,000 enslaved peoples (the majority of them from Africa) landed on Mauritius and the neighbouring island of Reunion. By the time Mauritius was designated a free port open to all French nationals in 1769, approximately 45,000 slaves had already been purchased and forcibly brought to the islands by the French East India Company (Allen, 1999, p.14). Following the collapse of the Company, the spoils of the lucrative trade in human beings were scattered among colonists and merchants Empire-wide, and an estimated 3,000 slaves per year arrived on the shores between 1769-1793. Amid the political oscillations of the French Revolution and Bonapartism, slavery was proscribed throughout the French Empire in 1793, but colonists in the Mascarenes paid little attention and business proceeded more or less as before (Ibid., p14). Of the slaves that remained in Mauritius, the nature of their labour must have been varied for, as we have seen, the plantation system predicated overwhelmingly on sugar production was not born until British rule. Certainly, tropical commodity production would have been among the range of tasks they were compelled to perform. Snapshots of the composition of Mauritian society throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century are particularly startling: In 1735, there were 648 slaves for 190



colonists. By 1787, the corresponding figures were 33,83 and 4,372 – a ratio of roughly eight to one (Holmberg, 1961, p.11).

The slaves kidnapped and forcibly brought to the Mascarenes in the one-hundred and forty years between 1670 and 1810 were of Madagascan (45 percent), Mozambican and other East African (40 percent), Indian (13 percent), and West African (2 percent) descent. But no matter; “enslavement is a process of displacement – of alienating a person from his or her social roots” (Burbank and Cooper, 2010, p.178). Once a generation or two has been born into chattel slavery, and a generation or two behind it has perished, the project of wholesale, total deracination is complete; all the links of heritage and identity, broken. Thus, a people whose history had been wrenched from it was cast onto *terra nullius*; a land without human history. The effect of establishing primitive accumulation, or the productive relations prerequisite for capital accumulation, in such a vacuum had formative and lasting implications for later development. In the main, it enabled the emergence and consolidation of a uniquely cohesive and homogenous planter class whose hegemony is reflected in its exceptional ability to seek and secure aid from British administrators, both in Mauritius itself and further afield in the London metropole (Saylor, 2012). The absence of inter-elite competition arising from the *tabula rasa* society meant that dilemmas of collective action, the likes of which might bedevil and hamstring socially and economically diversified colonies, were mostly non-existent. The plantation heritage was “created” and not “colonised” by Britain and its French predecessor. Everything had to be imported into the islands – labour, machines, financial capital, and technology. This conferred “a certain uniformity to the pattern of settlement” of Mauritius and its “common social, economic, institutional” and demographic background, forming “a natural bond between them” (Lamusse, 1982, p.62).

Elsewhere on the African continent, and in the British peripheries more widely, considerations pertaining to local stability often forestalled the early development of widespread capitalist production and export-oriented coalitions, such as occurred in Mauritius at the outset of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Saylor, 2012, pp.476-477). Capitalist production would have its day, to be sure, and prior histories were expunged where feasible, but the prevalence in mainland Africa of deep-rooted traditional power structures built on kinship, religion, and tribal loyalty represented a towering impediment to unadulterated imperial and pioneer

capitalist design that would last, in some cases, until the advent of decolonisation after World War II (Phillips, 1989; Lange, 2003, p.406). But where, in other parts of the Empire, tributary strategies of extraction were necessitated by stubborn pre-capitalist sociological formations, in Mauritius such formations and alliances were no obstacle whatsoever, for the simple reason that they did not exist. Add to this that, as outlined in the opening paragraphs, various exogenous phenomena – themselves largely cipher to imperial *realpolitik* – conspired to forestall the embedding of one or multiple productive sectors during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and one is left with an environment unusually amenable to the emergence, under the right circumstances, of cohesive class interests based on capitalist production. Quite what those circumstances were will be examined in detail in the coming section (4.3). First, some closing remarks and observations on our theorisation of Mauritius’ instrumental uninhibitedness.

At first glance, conceptualising the colonisation of uninhabited land, the emigration of proto-capitalists, and the importation of slaves *en masse* as ‘primitive accumulation’ – even when supplied with the prefix ‘unique’ – might appear heterodox. After all, primitive accumulation is first and foremost about transforming immanent peasants into wage labourers; about igniting, in other words, a process of proletarianisation (Glassman, 2006, p.611). It is also, commonly, about depopulating land rather than populating it; clearing it as opposed to filling it (Marx, 1990, pp.890-894). To this ideal typical problematisation, four responses present themselves. First, *de facto* primitive accumulation unfolded, at least in part, in the peripheries. While Marx might quite characteristically have used examples drawn from European, and particularly British, enclosure, industrialisation, and so on to illustrate his concepts, he nevertheless made the following statement:

“The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the indigenous population of that continent, the beginnings of the conquest and plunder of India, and the conversion of Africa into a preserve for the commercial hunting of blackskins, are all things which characterize the dawn of the era of capitalist production. *These idyllic proceedings are the chief moments of primitive accumulation*” (Ibid., p.915)  
(Italics added).

The notion that capitalist development in Europe and the Americas was kindled first by the predations of empire and, specifically, the circular bloodletting of the transatlantic slave trade is laid-out most forcefully and systematically by Eric Williams – later the first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago – in his 1944 *magnum opus* ‘*Capitalism and Slavery*’. We need not adopt the most extreme interpretation of his thesis to appreciate that, while much primitive accumulation of capital might have taken place at the expense of the domestic European peasant or serf, it was also amassed in the colonial peripheries, by slaves and local populations brought into the orbit of a distant imperium. Point one, then, extends the scope of primitive accumulation so that it becomes of global and colonial concern.

Second, the hard typological divisions between capitalism and the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> century superstructure built on international slave labour are, insofar as they are still advanced, more formulaic than empirical. It is quite true that neither the horrors of the mobile and expansive slave trade nor the static miseries borne in the confluence of slave and plantocracy are components contained in early and ideal evocations of market capitalism, whether envisaged by Smith, Ricardo, or Stuart Mill. In practice, too, many logical differences separated them. But as Blackburn vividly points out (1997), the two systems shared commonalities. They nourished one another materially and operationally, above and beyond the *de facto* primitive accumulation suggested above. For one, very significant thing, the tropical commodities produced by slaves on plantations were, for the most part, exchanged onto European and North American consumer markets. This was certainly true of early slave-produced Mauritian sugar, as we will see shortly. Blackburn consequently designates plantocratic production a ‘hybrid’ system as opposed to one entirely *sui generis* (Blackburn, 1997, p.376).

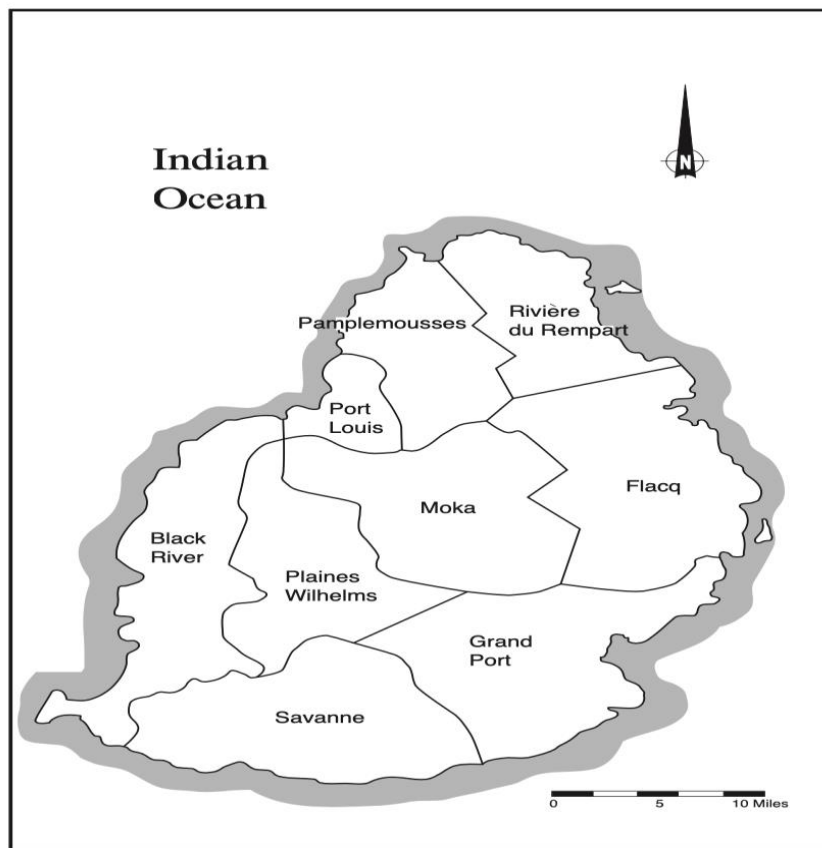
Third, and related, Marx indicates that primitive accumulation is a spatially unbound and fluid phenomenon, allowing for us to accommodate the possibility that initial population displacement and eventual sites of accumulation might be separated by geography, as was inevitable in most enslavement and certainly in Mauritius, where, to reiterate, no aboriginals existed. At the heart of primitive accumulation is displacement, and slavery represents nothing if not human history’s superlative exercise in displacement. Once carried into the pulsating currents of international finance, the process’ fluidity is virtually guaranteed. For

example, Marx writes: “Along with the national debt there arose an international credit system, which often conceals one of the sources of primitive accumulation in this or that people... A great deal of capital, which appears today in the United States without any birth-certificate, was yesterday, in England, the capitalized blood of children” (Marx, 1990, p.920). This stretching of capital’s original or primitive ontology across oceans and continents could be overdone – for once it is funnelled into the vortex of a pre-existing accumulation it ceases to be primitive, surely? – but transplanted to a site like 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century Mauritius, where little to no accumulation had yet taken place, it remains highly apposite.

Fourth and finally, lasting outcomes speak louder than conjunctures. Within twenty years of British rule in Mauritius, a capitalist mode of agricultural production was widespread, slavery had been abolished; the slaves and their descendants en route to proletarianisation by way of a brutal detour through indentured servitude. We look at this next phase of Mauritian development in the upcoming section. For now, the overriding point is that the establishment of an identifiably capitalist marketplace had occurred on the island of Mauritius inside of a generation. Such an outcome implies a prior accumulation not capitalist in nature, but its point of departure (Ibid., p.873) – regardless its conjunctural or intervening quasi- or ‘non-capitalist’ features. Points one through four highlight that, while heterodox, the circumstances and methods of primitive accumulation in Mauritius are grounded, ultimately, in Marx’s concept. Our thesis in section 4.2 has been that precisely *because* the circumstances and methods were heterodox – namely an uninhabited terrain, a proto-capitalist class, imported slave labour – coalition, capital, and state formation faced fewer initial obstacles in Mauritius than they did in many pre- or long-inhabited colonies. Collective action dilemmas were significantly easier to surmount; clear class interests easier to identify and enact. This is a claim previously alluded to by scholars of Mauritian development but hitherto bereft of systematic conceptualisation. We turn now, in section 4.3, to examining how and why the greater coalitional latitude afforded by the *tabula rasa* society manifested itself in the hegemony of the sugar planter class, the transferal of state-building resources from metropole to periphery, and, in turn, the socio-economic development later referred to as the ‘Mauritian Miracle’.

### 4.3: The Sugar Boom, the Birth of a Class, and the Birth of the State

**Figure 4.1: Administrative map of Mauritius**



*Source: Allen, 1999, p.38.*

If the non-existence of pre-colonial and pre-capitalist society meant Mauritius was an environment with few path-dependent processes upon British acquisition, then the dawn of path dependence was about to break. Coverage in section 4.2 demonstrates how the ingredients of capitalist development came to be in place, if hitherto stymied. The French-Mauritian population was situated – landed proto-capitalists with their property rights enshrined in the Treaty of Paris (1814). Now all they needed was a major commodity and an army of labour. At the outset of British rule, and for a decade or so afterwards, Mauritius was marked by a bare state presence outside of its capital, Port Louis. Nationwide taxation was virtually non-existent, and transportation infrastructure was basic. The arterial road that would eventually connect the capital to its east and west coasts was under construction, such

that the relatively small amounts of sugar then being produced on the island had to be transported from coastal pick-up points to Port Louis via boat (Lamusse, 1964, p.356). Customs duties accounted for the lion's share of tax revenues, with real estate taxes, taxes on slaves detained at Port Louis, and licence, stamp and registration fees contributing the rest (Kyshe, 1870, p.115). Mauritius was, in other words, "the unfettered domain" of non-state agents beyond its capital – predominantly, a scattered and incipient planter class. Even in Port Louis, however, there was "little formal governance" beyond the order imposed by its wealthy and powerful inhabitants (Saylor, 2012, pp.468-469; Saylor, 2014, p.113; Martin, 1839, pp.507-509).

In 1825, everything began to change with the onset of a commodity boom in sugar – a turn in circumstances that would ultimately transmute the weak and heterogeneous island state sketched above into a highly developed, centralised force modelled on European-style bureaucratic organisation (Seekings, 2011, p.159). The full crystallisation of this process would be gradual, but in tracing it we recover the development of the 'strong' and 'capable' state institutions whose later impact on Mauritian success is acknowledged in existing scholarship, if too often in a chronofetishist or ahistorical manner (for e.g.: Subramanian and Roy, 2001; Rodrik, 1999). The changes in conditions that caused the sugar boom were threefold: First, in 1825, Britain repealed a preferential tariff granting favourable market access to West Indian producers (Gordon, 1957, p.4). Mauritius was thus invited into the British market on equal terms to the West Indies. This immediately made investment in Mauritian sugar more attractive to foreign speculators, and led to a very expedited 'revolution' in Mauritian agriculture (Allen, 1999, p.12). Between 1825-1829, Mauritian sugar exports doubled while, in the same period, the area of the island dedicated to cane cultivation proliferated from 24,000 arpents<sup>29</sup> to 51,000. By comparison, in the fifteen years between 1810 and 1825, the arpentage used for cane cultivation grew only from 10,000 to 24,000 (Ibid., p.12).

Second, the price fetched for sugar on the London market rose by around 45% between the beginning of the 1830s and the middle of the 1840s, from £27 to £39.2 per tonne (Saylor,

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<sup>29</sup> An arpent is a now-archaic French unit of measurement, equal to around 1.043 acres.

2014, p.115). British demand for sugar had been climbing spectacularly for more than a century, and the 1830s were no exception, bearing witness to a particularly sharp upsurge. As Parker explains: “Sugar had achieved a revolution in eating habits in England... once a luxury, sugar became essential. The tea break had arrived, with even the poorest labourer taking sustenance from the combination of stimulant and calorie hit” (Parker, 2011, pp.296-297). The world was becoming addicted to sugar, and while in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries that fact meant untold and exponential treasure for the West Indian planter first and foremost, after the 1825 tariff repeal the Mauritian planter class enjoyed parity. Third, finally, and synergistically, the British Crown repealed a ban on foreign ships docking in its colonial ports in 1851, a footnote to the repeal of the mercantilist Navigation Acts that had taken place two years earlier in 1849 (HL Deb, 17 June 1851). The 1851 repeal – one further, small expression of the spirit of free trade that was bewitching the United Kingdom and several of its European rivals – effectively opened Mauritius’ ports, and the commodities passing through them, to the wider global economy.

Like almost all historical commodity booms, the Belle Epoch of 19<sup>th</sup> century Mauritian sugar did not last forever. Before we enumerate in detail its lasting impact on class formation and state-building, let us consider its quantitative aspects a little further. By the middle of the 1800s, the three factors named above had combined to make Mauritius the single largest supplier of sugar to Britain, responsible for 9% of total global output, and even, briefly, the largest producer of sugar in the world (Brookfield, 1925, p.25; Lange, 2003, p.406; Saylor, 2012, p.469). On the eve of the 1825 tariff repeal that initiated phase one of the sugar boom, Mauritius exported 11,107 tonnes of sugar annually. By the early 1860s, that figure had ballooned more than ten times to 123,000 tonnes per annum. Growth in the commodity’s value was enormous as well, from an annual average of £170,000 in the mid-1820s, to £2.1 million by the 1860s (Ibid., p.469). As the boom in production and value took hold, sugar gradually enveloped the island’s territory, spreading from 51,000 arpents in 1829, to 123,000 arpents by the 1860s (Ibid., p.469). The number of sugar factories rose from 106, in 1820, to 171, in 1827, peaking at 259 in 1858. The sugar estate – that enduring emblem of tropical commodity production and the rapacious human exploitation underpinning it – became a ubiquitous feature of the young island colony; by 1830, there were already 1,589 sizeable estates producing sugar (Bräutigam, 2008, p.140). Land consolidation, as we saw in section 4.2, was propitiated by the absence of an indigenous Mauritian population, as well as by the

terms of the Treaty of Paris (1814), which recognised pre-existing property rights. Table 4.1 shows the secular-term relationship of the Mauritian sugar industry to the global market, covering the period of the sugar boom and beyond.

**Table 4.1: Mauritius and the global sugar industry**

Period	Annual Average per quinquennium			
	Exports (tonnes)	% World cane production	% Total world production	Average price (£/tonne)
1812-14	426	-	-	61.3
1815-19	3,097	-	-	52.8
1820-24	11,107	-	-	32.5
1825-29	20,407	-	-	33.6
1830-34	33,784	-	-	27.0
1835-39	32,502	-	-	37.4
1840-44	34,707	4.0	3.8	39.2
1845-49	56,069	5.4	5.0	28.2
1850-54	71,388	6.0	5.2	21.6
1855-59	111,522	8.6	6.8	26.6
1860-64	123,609	9.0	6.8	22.6
1865-69	113,311	7.0	4.9	22.2
1870-74	111,445	6.3	3.9	23.6
1875-79	115,844	6.3	3.6	21.0
1880-84	116,019	5.7	2.8	18.8
1885-89	119,815	5.1	2.3	13.2
1890-94	113,219	3.5	1.6	13.1
1895-99	143,641	5.0	1.9	10.0
1900-04	167,380	2.9	1.4	9.3
1905-09	181,636	2.5	1.3	9.8
1910-14	223,746	2.5	1.3	11.0
1915-19	223,139	2.0	1.4	28.3
1920-24	218,682	1.7	1.1	27.8
1925-29	216,359	1.3	0.9	11.9
1930-34	191,820	1.2	0.8	5.7

Source: Allen, 1999, p.23.  
a - Price in London

With the sugar boom emerged an expansive and powerful sugar planter class in Mauritius. Urban merchants, foreign investors, and planters in other tropical commodities began diverting their attention and resources towards Mauritian sugar production after 1825 (Napal, 1984, pp.29-30). The bulk of the meteoric planter class was composed of Franco-Mauritians,



who, by the 1830s, constituted only around nine percent of the total population<sup>30</sup>. In that nine percent, however, the overwhelming mass of economic and political power was concentrated (Storey, 1997, pp.19-20; Lange, 2003, pp.72-73). As the windfall from the sugar boom started rolling in, many of the sugar planters invested in improving their productive technology, thus enhancing efficiency gains and presiding over a ‘virtuous cycle’ of capital. The Industrial Revolution was in full swing, and steam power was transforming sugar production across the world. In Mauritius, in 1823, thirty-nine percent of sugar factories were powered by animals and only four percent by steam. A mere 25 years later, in 1848, none were powered by animals and around eighty percent now ran on steam (Saylor, 2014, pp.115-116). In other words, the sugarcane crop crystallised new class relations in Mauritius, headed by the predominantly Franco-Mauritian sugar planters; a landed elite that grew more numerous, wealthy, and powerful because of the piecemeal tripartite shift in global market conditions described above. The absence of pre-existing social structures, the failure of alternative and rival economic sectors to embed themselves locally and, *a fortiori*, to become hegemonic prior to the 1825 boom, and the velocity of capital accumulation once the boom arrived, all meant that, not only were the Mauritian sugar planters able to act with remarkable unity, but also that their unified demands and interests were virtually co-extensive with the Mauritian colony’s as a whole. As shown already, though the sugar boom attracted new actors and investment to the commodity, the newly-segmented Mauritian planter class remained fairly small in number, further enhancing its ability to act collectively and cohesively.

Thus, a peculiar dual dynamic commenced: On the one hand, Mauritius was a colonial dependency of Britain. On the other, it was a fairly marginal part of the British Empire, despite its growing importance as a supplier of sugar (Saylor, 2012, p.467). The colonial governor – the Empire’s chief representative on the island – received few directives from London, and possessed considerable discretionary authority. Given that the colony’s economic viability depended on sugar exports, it is little surprise, therefore, that the governor(s) became closely entangled with the domestic sugar interests (Lange 2009, pp.76–77). The Franco-Mauritians “dominated island politics despite the facade of British rule and pulled the levers of the colonial state... British officials may have formally exercised control

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30 For e.g., in 1832, there were approximately 150 large Franco-Mauritian sugar planters (Teelock, 1998, pp.297-301).

in Mauritius but they did so in close collaboration with sugar planters” (Saylor, 2012, p.467). As early as 1831, half of the seats on the island’s legislative council were occupied by sugar planters. By the middle of the century this had been revised upwards so that the planters held a majority (Ibid., p.468). It is with this multiscalar *mise en scene* in place – locally, a supreme and uniquely homogenous class articulated around a single commodity, as well as a pliant but hitherto spartan state; globally, the ‘pericentric’ pressures exerted from colonies to metropolises and metropolitan feedback charged with imperatives of expansion, order, and economic subservience – that the architecture of the robust Mauritian state begins to accrete.

Mauritius’ high capacity state, in short, emerged first as a function of domestic sugar planter interests in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and, in particular, of the exigencies associated with and arising from the comparatively shorter-term sugar boom. For despite the fortunes it created, the sugar boom also revealed three major challenges for the hegemonic sugar planters, challenges whose solutions were propulsive of state-building – as frequently in the form of coercive oppression as in the form of public goods (Ibid.; Saylor, 2014, pp.110-130). As we trace and examine the manifestation of these solutions, we notice the tandem proliferation of institutions and institutional practice. The first major challenge, or economic ‘bottleneck’, encountered by the planters was an *insufficient labour supply*. As we have seen, all labour had to be imported into Mauritius because there was no inhabitant population prior to colonisation. But maroonage, or the flight of slaves from captivity, had always been an issue for colonists and planters in Mauritius, and in Ile de France before it (Allen, 1999; 2002). In 1723, a century before the sugar boom took off, the French Empire’s Code Noir was extended to Mauritius and Reunion, seeking to regulate socio-economic relations between masters and slaves throughout the Empire, then under the rule of Louis XV. In accordance with the Code, Maroons, or fugitive slaves, were to be punished via a three-strike system: A first attempt at escape would be met with both ears being cut off and a *fleur de lis* branded on one shoulder. A slave who attempted to escape a second time could expect to be branded again and to have their hamstring cut. A third attempt to flee was punishable by death (Riddell, 1925, p.325). While the Code long pre-dates the sugar boom and the imperatives it threw-up, there is ample evidence that its regulation of the Maroon question “influenced social and economic relationships on Mauritius long after the abolition of slavery in 1835” (Allen, 1999, p.37).

For one thing, the appalling treatment of predominantly African slaves meant that, after the Abolition Act of 1833 prohibited slavery in the British Empire, large sugar planters in Mauritius struggled to retain freed slaves as workers – the latter tending to favour relocation and establishment as small farmers in their own right (Ibid., pp.55-57; Northrup, 1995, p.20). The competitiveness and viability of the Mauritian sugar industry, then only eight years into its major export boom, relied heavily on the inexpensiveness of its labour (Saylor, 2014, p117). The integral nature of slavocracy to Mauritius' very existence was salient enough for the first British governor of Mauritius, Robert Farquhar, to seek an exemption from the abolition of the international slave trade in 1807. Farquhar's exhortations failed, but the trade of enslaved humans into Mauritius continued illegally regardless, and there was no contestation to the use of already-patriated slaves for purposes of production and accumulation. All that started to change with abolition in 1833. At first, the legislation passed many thousands of miles away in the British Houses of Parliament was not equal to overnight manumission for the millions of enslaved peoples – predominantly black Africans – held captive by the British Empire. 'Apprenticeships' were imposed upon all former slaves over the age of six (HC Deb, 22 March 1836). In practice, this meant that the slave-owning class was able to retain the free labour of its emancipated slaves for several years more. In Mauritius, 61,045 slaves were enrolled as apprentices in 1835, the year the programme became effective (Nwulia, 1978, p.91). By March 1839, the date of the system's termination on the island, around 53,000 former-slaves-cum-former-apprentices found themselves despatched onto yet another terrain – that of the nominally-free labour market (Allen, 1999, p.106).

From the perspective of the (largely) Franco-Mauritian sugar planters, the apprenticeship system was a pyrrhic victory, as was the £2 million compensation they collectively received for the manumission of their slaves and the loss of valuable property (Saylor, 2014, p.116). Upon the system's termination, as mentioned above, the general tendency was for the freedmen to leave the unimaginable horrors of the sugar plantations behind them (insofar as that was possible) and resettle as urban proletariat or, more often initially, as small sugar farmers. It is estimated that only "4,000-5,000 ex-apprentices agreed to work as agricultural laborers in 1839, most of whom did so only because they had nowhere else to go or had been coerced or tricked into signing contracts" (Allen, 1999, p.107). To add to matters, there was

also widespread fear of ex-slave retribution, freedmen uprisings, and the like; anxieties that raced and rippled across the entire post-emancipation British Empire. Yet unlike in many other locales of the Empire – now in its earliest epoch of Victorian rule – the Mauritian ruling class was blessed with a unique oneness of purpose, vision, and voice, while also enjoying considerable discretion. The landed sugar class was, therefore, uniquely able to prey in aid to, and secure support from, British administrators and the metropole in a manner that often eluded colonial environments with a more heterogenous inheritance. The effect and legacy of this relatively unimpeded state-aid from metropole to periphery was a path-dependent, high-capacity, post-independence state at odds with its counterparts in much of the postcolonial world.

If the problem was labour shortage, the solutions were many. First, the sugar planters took to importing tens of thousands of indentured labourers from India to plug the island's supply gap (Christopher, 1992, p.58). On average, indentured Indian labourers cost around one-third less to employ than freedmen, making them highly popular with the planters (Saylor, 2012, p.470). In 1834, there were a mere forty Indian labourers working as indentured servants in Mauritius. Four years later, in 1838, there were some 24,000 – over a third of the manumitted slave population (Nwulia, 1978, p.99). The overwhelming majority of these labourers were employed on the sugar estates, toiling in the cane fields or in the refinement mills. Under the terms of the indenture contracts, the imported labourers were tied to sugar plantations for approximately five years then free to return to their country of origin or settle elsewhere in Mauritius. But, with only a temporary reprieve in the form of the apprentice system, the sugar planter class in Mauritius apparently chose the habit of a lifetime over medium to longer-term circumspection, treating the imported Indian labourers with a brutality reminiscent of conditions under slavery (Lamusse, 1982, p.64; Lange, 2003, p.407). For the state's part, stipendiary magistrates – originally sent by the metropole to oversee the transition from slavery in the colonies – tolerated, and often found in favour of, the sugar planters' conduct (Carter, 1995, pp.209-212). As a result, abolitionists in both Britain and India became preoccupied with the plight of the imported Indo-Mauritian worker, finally leading administrators in India to ban indentured migration from the subcontinent to the island in 1838. Scarcely a year later, the apprenticeship system was terminated, condemning sugar planters to a perfect storm of their own making. Global sugar prices continued to rise, but

production in Mauritius stalled by a third (Saylor, 2012, p.470). The sugar boom was *in absentia* until a solution could be found.

It was found in 1842 when Franco-Mauritian assurances of improved working conditions on the sugar plantations persuaded the Indian government to lift the emigration ban and the flow of indentured servitude resumed. By the end of the 1840s, 95,000 Indian labourers had arrived on the island, with a further 180,000 disembarking in the 1850s (Saylor, 2014, p.17). By 1920, a total of 300,000 indentured workers had been brought to Mauritius from India, as well as a further 1,000 from China (Lange, 2003, p.407). Table 4.2 demonstrates that the vast majority of the imported Indian migrants worked in agriculture well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which – given the mono-crop nature of Mauritius’ economy – meant working in sugar production.

**Table 4.2: Indian population by occupation**

	(Percent)									
Occupation	1846	1851	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921	1931
Agriculture	83.6	77.7	72.7	65.2	67.6	72.9	78.8	73.9	64.0	73.5
Commerce	0.1	1.6	2.8	7.8	7.7	9.0	8.4	10.7	17.8	9.7
Crafts and trades	2.1	4.3	4.5	3.2	2.9	3.1	3.0	8.1	10.4	5.2
Domestic service	7.7	8.2	8.4	11.2	9.6	7.6	8.6	5.6	5.0	8.2
Independent proprietor	<sup>a</sup>	0.1	0.3	0.6	1.1	-	-	-	-	-
Professionals <sup>b</sup>	0.2	0.5	1.1	0.8	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.7	2.8	3.4
Other <sup>c</sup>	6.3	7.4	10.4	11.5	10.4	5.1	-	-	-	-

Source: Allen, 1999, p.147.

<sup>a</sup> - Less than 0.1 percent.

<sup>b</sup> - Includes "other educated persons" and those in government service.

<sup>c</sup> - Mostly labourers.

The second and third wave of indentured immigration from India effectively resolved the Mauritian labour bottleneck problem, which arose from, on the one hand, a collision of rapidly heightened demand in the form of the sugar boom and, on the other, the asphyxiation

of the labour supply caused by abolition. If, in the first phase of indentures (1834-1838), the supportive role of the Mauritian state and its British masters had been negative, in the sense that it relied on the permissive *inaction* of stipendiary magistrates rather than action, its role in the second wave was to be decidedly positive and proactive. For, the Mauritian state subsidised the importation of labour after the 1842 repeal, to offset for losses in the preceding period, and to administer a shot in the arm to this globally competitive but still emerging and vulnerable industry. £7 towards the cost of transit for each immigrant worker was thereafter provided by the state, and, rather than saddling the cost of the subsidy squarely on the sugar planters' shoulders, it was distributed among the general population in the form of wine and liquor duties (Saylor, 2012, p.471). In total, the cost of the subsidy in the period 1843-1848 was equal to one third of the entire state budget for the colony (Lamusse, 1964, p.357). As stated, Mauritius' destiny was, by now, intimately bound-up with the survival and success of its domestic sugar industry. Add to this the fact that the governor and state had considerable discretionary authority away from the British Empire, and that the Empire was, itself, acquiring an increasingly sweet tooth for Mauritian sugar, and the stage is probably already well set for a state bail-out of the Franco Mauritian planter class in the form of subsidised immigration. But, not taking any chances, the planters used their unique cohesion to inaugurate a long and effective process of institutionalisation that would at once act to expand and enlarge the island state's machinery *and* underwrite its umbilical connection to their collective class interests long into the future. The Mauritian Free Labour Association (MFLA), for example, was the principle vehicle through which the planters, bereft of their cheap labour supply, successfully lobbied the colonial state to, in its turn, lobby the British metropole and its Indian administrators over the ban (Saylor, 2012, p.470; 2014, pp.117-118).

Third, with a sufficient labour supply restored in the form of subsidised indentured servitude from India, the colonial Mauritian state now started to monopolise and mobilise violence and oppressive coercion in a way that reflected the interests of the sugar planters, at the expense of its imported workforce (Reports from Commissioners, 1875, pp.15-69). Sharply reneging on civilised assurances made in pursuit of the immigration ban repeal, state 'regulation' and oversight of labour market practices in Mauritius after 1842 were almost exclusively one-sided: A free market for the capitalist class and a highly controlled and restrictive environment for its labourers. Not only were worker desertion rates from the sugar plantations high, but the nature of indenture contracts meant that, after 5 years' service on the

plantation was up, workers were nominally free to depart with the same rights, if not resources, as their employers (Mookherji, 1959). But in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Mauritius, the relationship between rights and resources was close. In theory, and often in practice, more labour could always be imported from India with government subsidy, but then there was the expense of re-training a fresh workforce. Accordingly, the planters favoured retaining existing labour wherever possible, and set about importuning the state to load its arsenal with laws. Ordinance No. 21 (1843) prohibited any person introduced into the colony from Africa or Asia as an agricultural labourer from working in a shop or warehouse without government approval. Ordinance No. 22 (1847) required previously established immigrants to carry a ticket as proof of their status (Reports from Commissioners, 1875, p.54; p.69). The draconian ‘double cut’ system (1847) obliged workers to perform an extra two days’ work for every day they were illegally absent from the plantation. The typical cumulative effect of this policy was to extend the average indentured contract from five to seven years<sup>31</sup> (Saylor, 2012, p.471).

As the sugar boom started to taper-off in the mid-1860s and 70s, and the Mauritian planters looked ahead to stagnating market prices and increased external competition (see: Table 4.1), the pressure they exerted on the state to ‘re-engage’ the Indian labour force became even more unremitting and intense. ‘Vagrancy’ became at once a watchword and a bogeyman. In Port Louis alone, an astonishing 84 percent of contractual labourers were arrested on anti-vagrancy charges annually between 1864 and 1871, and across the island more generally around 20,000 Indian workers were arrested per annum on identical charges throughout the 1860s (Saylor, 2014, p.119). But so-called ‘vagrancy’ could not prevent gradual and consistent haemorrhaging of Indian indentured workers from the big plantations to other parts of the countryside, where a rising Indian smallholder peasantry was developing (Interviewee 4 [SS], Mar 24 2021; Lange, 2003; see: Chapter 3) within, and adjacent to, a larger process of *petit morcellement* – the sub-division of large sugar estates into smaller patches (Allen, 1999; Carter, 2009, pp.53-54). The Franco-Mauritian planter class was not going to give up without a fight, however, and enlisted the state to further buttress its diminishing returns with punitive legislation. Ordinance No. 65 (1860) allowed for the renewal of three-year contracts if, three months prior to the termination of the original contract, Indian workers failed to apply to an

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<sup>31</sup> This system was not abolished until 1910 (Allen, 1999, p.63).

Immigration Agent to commute their contracts to a cash payment or to re-indenture with a different master. The most comprehensive legislation of all came with the Labour Law of 1867, or ordinance 31, which “consolidated and reaffirmed police and judicial powers dating to the 1830s” (Ibid., p.63). Among these powers, special taxes were placed on Indian workers who had the temerity to work outside of the sugar industry, and internal passports complete with the new technology of photography were to be made mandatory and borne by the worker at an annual cost equivalent to roughly two months’ salary (Saylor, 2012, p.471).

The sprawl of pro-planter labour laws described here, and the mechanisms of enforcement required to effectuate them, drove an expansion of state presence and state capacity throughout the island of Mauritius in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, such that the weak and threadbare colonial backwater poised at the outset of the sugar boom in 1825 was, by the 1870s and 80s, an unusually (by the standards of colonial society) centralised, bureaucratised, and pervasive force. The Bureau de Police became more numerous, significantly better funded, and geographically diffuse (Carter, 1995, pp.196-198; pp.213-220). In 1886 alone, the island’s court system handled over 20,000 cases (Lange, 2009, p.72). A ‘surveillance society’, meanwhile, rose in the midst of the many ordinances designed to control and ‘make legible’ the predominantly Indian labouring population. The Mauritian Immigration Department, in an example of the *pari passu* augmentation of formal institutions, became “a nucleus of identification and registration” (Saylor, 2012, p.472). But solutions to the labour bottleneck problem – subsidised mass importation of workers and brutal ‘regulation’ and discipline of the labour market – only account for part of the prodigious state-building that took place in Mauritius in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For the sugar boom and its longer-term dynamics exposed a second and third major challenge, or economic bottleneck, for the grand coalition of export-oriented sugar barons and colonial administrators in Mauritius, challenges whose solutions were propulsive of yet further state expansion and integration through the construction of public goods (Ibid., p.473). For, in addition to an insufficient labour supply, the sugar boom and later associated competitive pressures revealed wholly *inadequate transportation infrastructure* and *undiversified cane stock* on the island colony. Both of these long-simmering, latent problems were greatly exacerbated after the 1860s, the result of three shifts in the exogenous environment and the competitive pressures they produced. First, European sugar beet production was developing in leaps and bounds, often with state-support of its own. This furnished the global market with a major new supplier, in turn deflating the



price of Mauritian (and every other global supplier's) sugar. Second, following the Suez Canal's opening in 1869, an enormous shift in the commercial centre of gravity occurred across multiple markets. In the process of this re-ordering, some of Mauritius' competitors became less remote to global consumer hubs, further diminishing Mauritius' market share. Third and finally, sugarcane's notorious vulnerability to environmental factors was laid bare in Mauritius throughout the 1860s and 70s, struck as it was by a range of climatic disasters, from droughts and cyclones, to malaria outbreaks and borer pest infestations (Ibid., p.473).

However, even short of these exogenous shifts and the need to recuperate costs that they awakened, the exponential growth of Mauritian sugar production after 1825 (enumerated in Table 4.1) placed great strain on Mauritius' predominantly 18<sup>th</sup> century transportation and communications infrastructure. Slaves and convicts had built the few major roads that existed on the island, but beyond this the vast majority of sugar was still being transported to Port Louis for export by boat, as it had been some half a century earlier when its volumes were incomparably smaller (Lamusse, 1964). The first boom in railway building passed Mauritius by without impression because, at that time, the returns on Mauritian sugar were so high that the Franco-Mauritian planters had little incentive to invest in modernising the island's transportation networks. Their collective clout was, as we have seen, directed instead at securing and regulating labour, leading to a flourishing of the state's functions and capacity. But now sugar prices were showing signs of terminal decline, and the planters turned their attention to transportation infrastructure. In so doing, we again notice the emergence and evolution of institutions that survive into the present. In 1853, the planters established the Chamber of Agriculture, "which served for nearly half a century as the only body with whom the government could negotiate policies for the sugar sector" (Bräutigam, 2008, p.143). The Chamber would later become the state's formal Department of Agriculture. The planters organised for an upgrade of their colony's transportation infrastructure using the Chamber as their vehicle. The state responded with several instrumental initiatives. First, it performed reconnaissance on the island for possible railway routes in 1858-59, following a request from the Chamber two years earlier in 1856. In this endeavour, the colonial government successfully secured an engineer from London (Jessop, 1964, pp.1-2). Second, the colonial state heavily assisted with the financing of the railways, first by investing in construction directly and second by issuing bonds on the London bond market at very favourable rates.

Third, the state operated the railways for long stretches of time at a financial loss (Ibid., pp.2-5; Napal, 1984, p.213).

The sugar planters' efforts, as well as the colonial state's and the Empire's assistance, bore definite fruit. By 1895, Mauritius lay claim to 167 kilometres of railway, yielding a 'railway density' measure of 0.08<sup>32</sup> – around ten times higher than African colonies with high density in the mid-twentieth century. Likewise, Mauritius' road density was impressive: 0.51 as of 1897, which, again, stood it at ten times the typical road density found in African states in the mid-twentieth century<sup>33</sup> (Saylor, 2012, p.474). At this juncture, the distinction between the Mauritian state and the sugar planter class might be more analytic than empirical. Insofar as it existed, however, the expansion of transportation networks was symbiotic and positive sum in its effects. The planters had the connectivity they required to keep their sugar as competitive as possible amid inauspiciously shifting circumstances, and the state was able to mobilise and situate its functionaries with far greater speed. The march and spill-over of bureaucratic institutionalisation continued too, with a professionalised Railway Department placed in charge of railway management (Jessop, 1964).

As concerns the undiversified cane stock problem, the solution came in the form of state-assisted research and development (R&D) programmes. The borer pest infestation that had begun in Mauritius in the 1850s and become particularly detrimental to cane stocks in the 1860s called for the development of more cane varieties. Aside from this specific issue: “When farmers rely on one single plant such as the Otaheite cane variety<sup>34</sup> over long periods of time, it tends to deteriorate. Insects and pathogens adapt themselves to the inherited attributes of plants and cause old varieties to decline in usefulness. Occasionally, unwelcome mutations may occur” (Storey, 1997, p.45). Conscious of the spectre of 'free riders' (Olson, 1965), the Franco-Mauritian sugar planters used their old stomping ground, the Chamber of Agriculture, to influence state actors into lending centralised and externalising succour.

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32 Whose simple equation is: Kilometres of railway ÷ total square kilometres of land.

33 As footnote 32 will show, it is important to consider that Mauritius was aided in these achievements by its relatively small size.

34 This was the main variety of cane used in Mauritius before diversification.

Accordingly, and after some deliberation, the state earmarked its Royal Botanical Gardens in the Pamplemousses district (see: Figure 4.1) for the “collection, husbandry, and dissemination of new cane stocks” (Saylor, 2014, p.124). The earthly paradise once panegyricised by the greatest botanists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was to have its Botanical Gardens become a storage and development site for varieties of sugarcane from around the world. Three varieties arrived from Java in 1866, ten more in 1867. A further three arrived from Trinidad in 1868, along with eight from Queensland and several from British Guiana. In 1869, Jamaican cane stocks arrived in Mauritius, along with varieties from Penang (Storey, 1997, p.51). The metropole played its part, too, ensuring through the Colonial Office that Kew Gardens in London provided personnel to Pamplemousses, in the form of directors and assistant directors. Furthermore, “The gardens' staff corresponded regularly with Kew, contributed to Kew's cataloguing of the British Empire's flora, and received several important international botanical journals” (Ibid., p.48).

The conjoined efforts of the Chamber of Commerce, the colonial state in Mauritius, and a British metropole then at the noon of its powers helped to conquer and overcome the undiversified cane stock problem, and make the Royal Botanical Gardens in Pamplemousses an international leader in sugarcane research in the process (Saylor, 2014, p.124). Not only did this inexorably enhance and refine the Mauritian state's scientific nous and capabilities, but it also portended the birth of the Department of Agriculture in 1913. Some century and a half after the existential undiversified stock problem, the Royal Botanical Gardens is still going strong; renamed Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Botanical Gardens, in honour of the independent state's founding father. For the large sugar estates and the predominantly Franco-Mauritian planters who owned them, state-led and collaborative R&D was an untrammelled boon, since taxes raised to fund the programmes were levied on the politically powerless but burgeoning Indo-Mauritian smallholder class. At the same time, while they were footing the costs of the research, the Indo-Mauritians were granted little access to its payoffs, because the new varieties of cane were by and large being procured by the Franco-Mauritian elite (Ibid., p.125).

It is for this and other, examined factors that Lange's appraisal of the Indo-Mauritian experience (see: Chapter 3) and its impact on the so-called Mauritian Miracle reads as

slightly jejune at times. State capacity in colonial Mauritius was already high long before it concatenated or ‘synergised’ with popular Indian agitation and rights-production. Moreover, much of this prodigious capacity rose directly because of the brutal, multiform oppression of the Indo-Mauritian population – imported *en masse* then naturalised – in ways chronicled. Saylor, too, admits a flash of jejuneness, when he writes:

“In Mauritius... one finds something of a developmental paradox: although the long-term consequences of state building have led to a regional ‘miracle’, the way in which the island’s elite and government laid the groundwork for it was normatively reprehensible” (Saylor, 2012, p.467).

On the contrary, as many rich empirical works of scholarship in the tradition of primitive accumulation will demonstrate, and as chapters 5 and 6 covering Jamaica will seek to amplify, all ‘economic miracles’ begin with ‘normatively reprehensible’ groundwork. Historically and inductively speaking, it appears to be a necessary, though not sufficient, condition. If Mauritius’ history and development is remarkable, it is not for that alone, but for attending factors advanced in this chapter.

Nevertheless, from the Greeks’ ‘hubris-nemesis-tragedy’ triptych, to ‘secondary’ modes of resistance against European colonialism and Empire via the mass internalisation of nationalism, power structures and orders that are more coercion than consent are always, in some sense, living on borrowed time. They contain, as it were, the seeds of their own destruction, because the conscious agents over which they seek to reign are, ultimately, impassive. So it was in early and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Mauritius, where the state capacity, bureaucratisation, and institutionalisation established deep in the shoals of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to facilitate capital accumulation off the back of a commodity boom in sugar, finally provided the conduits for popular-elite intercourse and, later, mass representation and suffrage (Interviewee 4 [SS], Mar 24 2021). In this, Lange is quite correct that ‘horizontal’ social relations developed by Indo-Mauritians away from the brutality of the sugar estates and their state emissaries bolstered both processes of resistance *and* processes of state development, through state-corporate coherence (Lange, 2003). The island’s fifteenth governor (1883-1889), John Pope Hennessey, was something of a reformer, leading with the slogan

‘Mauritius for the Mauritians’. While this did not represent the cry for independence it might be construed as by today’s reader, it nonetheless meant that Mauritius’ growing bureaucracies should be administered and staffed by fewer British colonists and more locals, and that its employees should be meritocratically chosen, in a definite turn towards legal-rationalism away from prevalent plutocracy or nepotism. Resultantly, “the civil service grew to 4000 strong by 1900. In all, 93% of bureaucrats were Mauritians and obtained their posts through competitive civil service exams, rather than obtaining posts through personal connections” (Saylor, 2012, p.476). The state-supported public goods embodied in national transportation infrastructure and scientific and technological R&D, though initially the preserve of the Franco-Mauritian elite, were gradually utilised by the colony’s population at large. A sophisticated ‘fiscal state’ emerged through the export tax levied on sugar, later spurring mass agricultural and urban welfare programmes, as well as further institutionalisation in the forms of the Mauritian Sugar Syndicate (1919) and the Mauritius Sugar Industry Research Institute (MSIRI) (1953) (Bräutigam, 2008). Agricultural labour unrest in 1937, 1938 and 1943 (Croucher and McIlroy, 2013), as well as the new Atlee government’s post-War approach to colonial management, marked the final nails in the coffin for Franco-Mauritian omnipotence.

Such a decline evokes the ‘unintended outcomes’ of powerful agents, classes, and institutions to which Political Marxism sensitises us (Knafo and Teschke, 2020; Brenner, 1977; 1982), as well as their potentially nonergodic or path-dependent nature advanced in Historical Institutionalism (Pierson, 2004, p.18). “People never fully control the terms under which they make history, they never fully control what emerges from their innovations” (Knafo and Teschke, 2020, p.20). So it was with the Franco-Mauritian sugar planters.

#### 4.4: Conclusion

Leading off where chapter 3 finished, chapter 4 has sought to explain the foundations and origins of the so-called Mauritian Miracle, a term widely employed in the relevant scholarly literature to describe the island state’s unexpected, robust, and relatively equitable socio-economic development following independence in 1968. As we saw in chapter 3, a number

of Mauritius' observers and analysts, while lending important synchronic insights to our understanding of the country's success, failed to sufficiently explore diachronic dimensions of its development. As such, they suffered from chronofetishism. Beneficent policies appeared as if from nowhere, and effective institutions were immaculately conceived. Notable exceptions to this rule include Saylor (2012, 2014), Lange (2003), and Bräutigam (2008), and it is to these works that this present chapter is a contribution. But even these works, and others on historical Mauritian political economy and state development, decline to adequately conceptualise the causal impact Mauritius' uninhibitedness had on the complex processes of class consolidation and state formation that came after.

The absence of an indigenous population in Mauritius meant the absence of existing social structures prior to colonisation. Once colonists properly settled on the tropical island, this lack of endogenous power contestation allowed, in part, for the emergence and consolidation of a uniquely cohesive and homogenous class of sugar planters. Another crucial factor came as a consequence of imperial realpolitik, whose distant permutations conspired to forestall the embedding of one or multiple productive sectors in Mauritius – or Isle de France – during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Into this *tabula rasa* social mix, proto-capitalists and slaves engaged in a heterodox mode of primitive accumulation. That sugar should have become the commodity to seize both parties, ossify their relations, and colour their destinies was by no means pre-determined. It resulted, rather, from a boom in the commodity that started in 1825, with the repeal of a preferential tariff on West Indian sugar, and continued long into the middle of the century with a rise in global demand, and the lifting of a maritime ban on foreign ships in British ports. As the sugar boom progressed, making the predominantly Franco-Mauritian sugar planters wealthy and powerful, three problems or economic 'bottlenecks' became legible. First, a labour shortage was exacerbated by the British Empire's abolition of slavery in 1833 (effective 1835). Second, Mauritius' transportation infrastructure was highly inferior in the face of dramatically expanding production. Third, it suffered from a malaise of undiversified cane stock, making it vulnerable to pests and pathogens.

Unlike elites in colonial environments with a more heterogeneous social inheritance, the Mauritian sugar planters were able to overcome dilemmas of collective action owing to their unique cohesion and homogeneity, and in turn appeal to the Mauritian state for assistance in

solving their bottleneck problems. The resulting process of widespread labour regulation and public goods investment was, in the case of the former at least, brutal. But it was also highly symbiotic, in that it fixed the planters' problems *and* spawned and enhanced Mauritian state capacity manifold. Because Mauritius was both a marginal part of the British Empire and at the same time an important supplier of its sugar, its domestic administrators were granted both discretion and support by the metropole. As we shift into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Mauritius' high state capacity becomes increasingly bureaucratised and horizontalised, as the Franco-Mauritian sugar planting elite loses its grip on total power to the Indo-Mauritian majority once brought to the island as indentured servants.

Thus, as we arrive at the moment of Mauritius' independence in 1968 and re-join the many analyses and authors of chapter 3, we see that Mauritius' anomalously 'strong institutions' of the postcolonial era did not fall from the sky, nor were they immaculately conceived. They were, in fact, the shadow cast initially by the collective agency and interests of the sugar planter class, a shadow that become reproduced in ever more complex, extensive, and cemented forms over time. In its complexity, however, its oligarchic and patrimonial intent became gradually subsumed and usurped by greater degrees of universalism. All of the synchronic causes for the so-called Mauritian Miracle advanced in chapter 3 are prefigured by these path-dependent historical developments.

## **Chapter 5: Defeat from the Jaws of Victory:**

### **Sugar in Jamaica, 1962-2020**

*'Jamaica never gets worse or better, it just finds new ways to stay the same.'* – Marlon James, *'A Brief History of Seven Killings'*.

#### **5.1: Introduction**

In this chapter, Jamaica's fraught post-independence development is established, and the key explanations pertaining to it outlined and assessed. This is undertaken primarily to demonstrate that, despite important and illuminative contributions, none of the main scholarly explanations for the Caribbean state's struggles adequately capture their root-cause.

Accordingly, and mirroring the structure applied to our first case study, Mauritius, this chapter acts as an essential primer for chapter 6, which concludes our coverage of Jamaica by seeking to plug the gap in the literature with an historical materialist analysis. In a wider sense, this chapter functions to slot the second piece of our political economy 'puzzle', defined by Jamaica's chequered incorporation into a competitive capitalist world economy, despite a more favourable economic inheritance than Mauritius. Where, as we saw in chapters 3 and 4, Mauritius was able to straddle and surmount its unlikely peaceful development mountain, Jamaica has succumbed to economic stagnation, gang violence, and widespread corruption (Weis, 2004; Munroe and Blake, 2016; Figueroa and Sives, 2002). There are multiple ways to measure socioeconomic 'success', and this bears emphasising. But adopting standard capitalist indicators, Jamaica's experience has been undeniably, and often dramatically, mixed.

This chapter is organised as follows: In section 5.2, we launch by visiting the recent past, and David Cameron's insouciant dismissal of calls from his Jamaican counterpart for Britain to pay reparations. We show why such reparations might be welcome in the present context,



demonstrating via a range of quantitative and qualitative indicators that Jamaican development has stalled or reversed over the past fifty years. In section 5.3, we move onto a review of existing literature on the Jamaican predicament, all of which seeks-out a causal explanation. The dominant frameworks are bunched into four, main camps: 1) Neoliberal restructuring, 2) the decline of state capacity, 3) the removal of preferences, and 4) the CDT and Plantation framework. In section 5.4, it is argued that, despite shedding light on important aspects of Jamaica's post-independence developmental dilemma, each of these four perspectives is incomplete and/or flawed on its own merits. Furthermore, to the extent that they can be reconciled into a single, multivariate explanation, they still fail to unearth the taproot of Jamaica's malaise. This is because they suffer either from ahistoricism or structural over-determinism, in ways that will be explored. Finally, section 5.5 concludes the coverage, pivoting our attention towards chapter 6 where, as in the Mauritian context, both historicism and institutionalism are granted due elevation on the backs of class dynamics, colonial state-building, and sugar.

## 5.2: 'All Aspects of the Past': From High Hopes to Bittersweet Development

At the end of September 2015, David Cameron became the first sitting British Prime Minister to visit Jamaica in 14 years. The Caribbean island state had once been a British colony without interruption for 307 years, spanning a period of British history from the Cromwellian Interregnum, in 1655, to the release of The Beatles' first hit single, in 1962<sup>35</sup>. As far as Cameron was concerned, however, he was paying a flying visit to the country that autumn to discuss future trade, not shared history. His Jamaican Prime Ministerial counterpart of the day, Portia Simpson-Miller, apparently harboured quite different ideas. At a joint press conference, with a faintly dumbfounded Cameron rooted immediately to her left, she seized the opportunity to raise the spectre of empire, stating:

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<sup>35</sup> The Cromwellian Interregnum is dated 1649-1660, and The Beatles' first hit single was 'Love Me Do'.

“I brought to the Prime Minister’s attention the issue of reparations, indicating that Jamaica is involved in a process, under the auspices of the Caribbean Community, to engage the U.K. on the matter” (Simpson-Miller, 2015).

Mrs. Simpson-Miller’s comments were, as they suggest, not incubated in a vacuum of her own will, but foreshadowed by a unanimous vote in the Jamaican Parliament, as well as by a formal reparations project launched by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), complete with its own designated Reparations Commission (CARICOM Secretariat, 2013). For his part, Cameron’s dismissal of the Jamaican premier’s overtures was, likewise, less a bolt from the blue than an accurate distillation of majority British public opinion on the matter (YouGov, 2014).

“My view is that, as we look into the past, we should think of all of the aspects of the past, not least the action that Britain took for many decades to wipe slavery off the high seas and off the face of our planet, so I don’t think reparations are the right answer... *the purpose of my visit is to look to the future*. I think, frankly, while Britain and the Caribbean and Jamaica had a very strong relationship, we’ve underplayed it; there’s been, if you like, almost benign neglect. And I’m here to say: no more of that, and that’s why this £300 million infrastructure fund – that can help build roads, and ports, and rail services; vital infrastructure across the Caribbean – this should be part of a new partnership between Britain and the Caribbean” (Cameron, 2015) (Italics added).

Of the £300 million pledged in this quote by the then-British Prime Minister, the most concrete proposal earmarked around £30 million for the building of a prison, to be erected on the Jamaican mainland (Foreign Policy, 2015). In it, convicts of Jamaican origin who were currently hauled-up in British prisons could be safely repatriated to Jamaica to see out the remainder of their sentences at no further cost to the British taxpayer. Considering all aspects of the recent past, in line with Cameron’s advice, we might reflect that this unsavoury *quid pro quo* – historical amnesia in exchange for a prison to house Jamaican criminals currently residing in Britain – was a terrible glimpse into the culture that we now know to have been so pervasive inside the relevant Offices of State during that era of British politics; ruptured, if

unresolved (and unresolvable), with the emergence of the Windrush Scandal in 2018. Moreover, this episode from the near-past powerfully encapsulates two attitudes and discourses on Jamaican, as well as wider post-colonial, development. On the one hand, Simpson-Miller's not disinterested acknowledgment that socio-economic unevenness and imbalance are deeply and complexly entwined into Jamaica's colonial history. To that history, therefore, we must return if we are to begin the difficult business of repair and redress. On the other hand, Cameron's politically well-attuned emphasis on the future, on partnership and common interests. In this latter landscape, material legacies come with a statute of causal limitations. Raking over them is, therefore, little more than an exercise in self-flagellation on the part of the former-oppressor, with little more than symbolic catharsis to be gained by the former-oppressed.

While 'repair and redress' are well beyond the remit of the following two chapters of this thesis, a scholarly contribution to an understanding of how colonial history in Jamaica *did* condition and constrain state-building and development in the post-colonial period is its object. Jamaica achieved independence and statehood on 6 August 1962. Covered inland by verdant, tropical mountains, and on its coasts by indolent golden beaches, it comes in third (at 4,200 square miles) in the pecking-order of Caribbean islands by size, after Cuba 90 miles to its north, and Hispaniola (comprised of Haiti and the Dominican Republic) 100 miles to its east. Compared with Mauritius, Jamaica's economic inheritance – or material endowment around the time of independence – was broadly favourable. For one thing, the world's largest economy, the United States, sat just several hundred miles to its north at a time when the U.S. accounted for roughly 40% of global GDP<sup>36</sup>, meaning that Jamaica was far closer to the economic 'centre of gravity' than Indian Ocean-based Mauritius, with Mozambique, Madagascar, and Réunion for its neighbours. Jamaica also enjoyed a far less circuitous route to that other, re-emerging pole of economic prowess – Europe. Second, in line with the assumption that high levels of ethnolinguistic fractionalisation have an adverse impact on economic growth (Sachs and Warner, 1997), Jamaica fares better than Mauritius, and has done for all of its post-independence history. For example, applying the Fearon method that measures fractionalisation on a scale of 0 to 1 (0 representing total homogeneity of spoken

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36 data.worldbank.org <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?end=2019&locations=US-1W&start=1960&view=chart>

language within a population, 1 representing total heterogeneity<sup>37</sup>), Jamaica scores 0.027 in 2003, while Mauritius scores 0.448 (Fearon, 2003, pp.218-219).

Third, Jamaica's economy in the 1950s and 60s – though still heavily commodity-reliant – was already considerably more diversified than Mauritius'. In Mauritius, as we saw in chapters 3 and 4, sugar accounted for around 96% of total exports and 27.6 per cent of GDP at the time of independence (Laaksonen et al., 2006, p.18; Woldekidan, 1992, p.1). In Jamaica, across the same indices, sugar's role was by then a humbler affair; shrunken against an array of higher value industry despite having been the historical engine of the Jamaican economy. Even in the milieu of commodities, sugar was merely one in a chorus that included lucrative bauxite and alumina mining, coffee, and bananas. Table 5.1 demonstrates the relatively marginal contribution of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (into which sugar is subsumed) to GDP in the decade or so following Jamaican independence, while Table 5.2 shows the comparative export values accrued for selected major commodities in the same period.

**Table 5.1: Contribution to Jamaican GDP by industry, 1969-74**

INDUSTRIAL SECTOR	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	7.9	7.5	8.1	7.5	7.0	7.1
Mining and Quarrying	8.7	10.0	10.5	10.2	11.5	13.1
Manufacture	18.4	17.4	17.3	17.6	17.5	17.0
Electricity and Water	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.0
Construction and Installation	12.2	13.1	12.8	11.3	9.8	9.4
Distributive Trade	22.5	21.1	21.1	22.5	21.5	18.0
Transport, Storage and Communication	5.5	5.4	5.6	5.4	5.5	6.0
Finance and Insurance Services	4.0	3.7	3.4	3.7	3.7	4.1

<sup>37</sup> I.e., the entire population speaks at least two languages.

<b>Real Estate and Business Services</b>	9.7	9.7	9.3	8.7	9.1	9.0
<b>Producers of Government Services</b>	6.8	7.2	6.8	7.5	8.8	11.1
<b>Miscellaneous Services</b>	5.3	5.3	5.4	5.6	5.5	5.3
<b>Household and Private Non-profit Institutions</b>	1.2	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.7	1.8
<b>Less Imported Service Charges</b>	3.0	2.6	2.6	2.4	2.6	2.9
<b>GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT AT CONSTANT PRICE</b>	<b>100.0.</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Witter and Ramjeesingh, 1986, p.6.

\* Based on constant 1974 prices

**Table 5.2: Export values for selected major commodities**

<b>Selected Items</b>	<b>1969</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1971</b>	<b>1972</b>	<b>1973</b>	<b>1974</b>
<b>Sugar (J\$mn)</b>	27.9	30.0	30.0.	33.8	35.4	76.6
<b>Bauxite &amp; Alumina (J\$mn)</b>	147.1	187.6	179.0	188.3	277.3	481.4
<b>Tourism (J\$mn)</b>	75.6	79.6	90.8	107.9	115.8	122.8
	250.6	297.2	299.8	330.0	378.5	680.8
<b>Total Export Goods &amp; Services</b>	364.9	389.0	433.8	471.7	542.6	848.2
<b>Selected as % of Total Export</b>	72.1	79.4	71.8	72.5	72.8	81.6
<b>Total Commodity Export</b>	243.7	277.7	274.8	292.6	347.7	604.4
<b>Bauxite and Alumina As % of Commodity Export</b>	88.2	81.0	77.7	77.9	78.9	85.7

Source: Witter and Ramjeesingh, 1986, p.6.

\* Based on constant 1974 prices

As per Table 5.2, sugar's export rents – though both significant and increasing throughout the observed time period – were minor compared to those generated in the bauxite and alumina and tourism sectors. Thus, in the epoch of decolonisation, the macro-economic structure of Jamaica's economy was already far more diversified than Mauritius', and far more diversified than many other postcolonial economies, too. Fourth, despite being battered by the Great Depression in the 1930s and 40s, the colonial economy of Jamaica was buoyed by rapid growth and largescale foreign investment in the 1950s and 60s (Beckford and Witter, 1982, pp.72-73). GDP grew at an average rate of 7 percent per annum throughout those two decades, peaking for five years between 1950 and 1955 at around 10 percent annually (Kirton and Ferguson, 1992, p.14). So, while Jamaica's economic inheritance presented it with many of the structural issues facing newly politico-juridically independent, but economically *dependent*, states as they became integrated into a global capitalist economy heavily striated with imperial power relations, the instances of Meades or Naipauls predicting rank socio-economic implosion are fewer and less evangelical.

Finally, as referenced in chapter 1's introduction, as well as throughout chapters 3 and 4, Jamaica, like Mauritius, was adorned with preferential trade deals before, during, and after its inception as an independent, self-governing country in 1962. The Commonwealth Sugar Agreement (CSA), as outlined in chapter 3, was signed in 1951 by the ailing British Empire and a number of its dominions past and present. The CSA operated via a two-tier quota system: The Basic Overall Agreement Quota (OAQ) granted Commonwealth producers access to the U.K., New Zealand, and Canadian markets to the tune of 2,535,000 tonnes of raw sugar annually. Alongside this, the U.K. guaranteed that 1,717,000 tonnes of the annual OAQ would be purchased at negotiated prices that were "reasonably remunerative to efficient producers" (Girwar, 1974, p.26). This latter quota was termed the Negotiated Price Quota (NPQ). Sugar that fell within the OAQ but not the NPQ was sold at world market prices. Commonwealth suppliers initially incorporated into the CSA were the British West Indies (which included Jamaica), Mauritius, Australia, South Africa, Fiji, the East African territories and British Honduras (Moynagh, 1977, p.170). Far more impactfully, following Britain's accession to the European Communities (EC) in 1973, signatories to the CSA were

incorporated into the EC-ACP Lomé Sugar Protocol in 1975. The twin pillars of the Sugar Protocol were its quota and guaranteed price mechanisms. Table 5.3 shows the 19 ACP Sugar Protocol countries and their allocated quotas, plus the share of GDP accounted for by sugar and the number of people engaged directly in its production. At 118 696 tonnes per annum, Jamaica's was the fourth largest quota for sugar, after Mauritius', Fiji's, and Guyana's.

**Table 5.3: ACP Sugar Protocol countries – allocated quotas, sugar as share of GDP and direct employment figures**

Country	Quotas Tonnes	Sugar revenue as % of GDP	Number employed, directly
Barbados	50 312	1.7	3 500
Belize	40 348	10.5	9 000
Congo	10 186	N/A	2 000
Fiji	165 348	10.8	35 000
Guyana	159 410	26	23 000
Cote d'Ivoire	10 186	0.9	5 000
Jamaica	118 969	2.6	42 000
Kenya*	0	N/A	N/A
Madagascar	10 760	3.9	9 000
Malawi	20 824	3.5	14 400
Mauritius	491 030	7	37 000
St. Kitts & Nevis	15 590	49	3 100
Suriname	0	N/A	N/A
Swaziland	117 844	60	9 000
Tanzania	10 186	3.1	32 000
Trinidad & Tobago	43 751	2.7	19 000
Uganda	0	N/A	N/A
Zambia	0	2.3	8 000
Zimbabwe	30 244	2.7	25 000
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 294 700</b>		

Source: Laaksonen et al., 2006

\*Countries marked 0 frequently failed to utilise their quotas. While these countries remained members of the Sugar Protocol, their unused quotas were distributed among other members.

\*\*These figures date from the middle-late 1990s, contemporaneous with Lomé IV – the final iteration of the Convention before Cotonou replaced it in 2000.

The total quota figure of 1.3 million tonnes shown at the bottom of the table remained fixed for the duration of the Sugar Protocol (1975-2009). Sugar that fell within this bracket was

exportable to the EC on a duty-free basis, at an annually-negotiated guaranteed price that was close-knit with the intervention price offered to internal (i.e. domestic EC/EU) sugar producers (€631.9/t for white sugar and €523.7/t for raw sugar) (LaForce, 2013, p.53; Chaplin and Matthews, 2006, p.17). Because this intervention price stood high above average world market prices (Busse and Jerosch, 2006, p.104), Sugar Protocol recipients were to a considerable extent insulated from quixotic global agricultural commodity markets. The fixed quota system ensured steady and stable demand, regardless of global market conditions or the efficiency or competitiveness of producers. The allocative structure of the quota demonstrated in Table 5.3 reflected Britain's historical trading relationships and associated trade volumes (Chaplin and Matthews, 2006, p.17). In addition to the main Protocol quota, EC/EU-ACP Special Preferential Sugar (SPS) quotas were offered on imports of raw sugar at 85% of the Protocol price. The main beneficiaries of the SPS quota were Swaziland (39,000 tonnes), followed by Guyana (27,000), Zimbabwe (26,000), Mauritius (26,000), Fiji (24,000) and Jamaica (23,000) (Laaksonen et al., 2006, p.4). Lastly, as well as the CSA and, later, the Lomé Sugar Protocol quotas, Jamaica benefits from a tariff-rate quota (TRQ) negotiated between the CARICOM and the United States, which stood at 11, 584 tonnes<sup>38</sup> in 2019 (USDA Report, 2019). While the U.S.-Jamaica TRQ has been declining in volume since its introduction in the 1980s, it remunerates at a rate equal to domestic U.S. sugar prices, which, like the EU's internal price mechanism, typically exceeds the world market by some distance (Evans and Davis, 2000, p.2).

Despite the five relatively favourable aspects of economic inheritance outlined here – proximity to the commercial centre of gravity, ethnolinguistic homogeneity, a diversified sectorial base, rapid and robust late colonial and early postcolonial growth, and access to preferential trade deals – Jamaica's socio-economic development since independence has been chequered (Interviewee 3 [GC], Feb 24 2021). Where Mauritius was able to straddle and surmount its unlikely peaceful development mountain over the past half-century, marrying virile economic growth with “a degree of equity, a remarkable welfare state, and a consolidated democracy” (Sandbrook, 2005, p.550), Jamaica succumbed to economic

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<sup>38</sup> This figure refers to Jamaica's US TRQ alone; not the CARICOM's collectively.



stagnation, gang violence, and widespread corruption<sup>39</sup> (Weis, 2004; Munroe and Blake, 2016; Figueroa and Sives, 2002). At this stage, it is important to briefly reemphasise two points made in chapter 1's introduction. First, that the object of this study is socio-economic under/-development along traditionally capitalist lines. It should go without saying that there are countless other measures of the plenitude and success of a society and its people. Second, that there are palpable, material causes for Jamaica's developmental straits; causes that have their provenance deep in the island's colonial history, and whose thorough exposition is undertaken in chapter 6. Jamaica's 'failure', in other words, is not necessarily failure beyond the narrow definitions offered here, nor was it pre-wired into its culture or geography like a genetic script. Within the confines of socio-economic development in a capitalist world economy, however, Jamaica did demonstrably struggle, both as a postcolonial state in the Global South, and as an isolated comparator to Mauritius. Many of these struggles persist to the present day (Interviewee 3 [GC], Feb 24 2021).

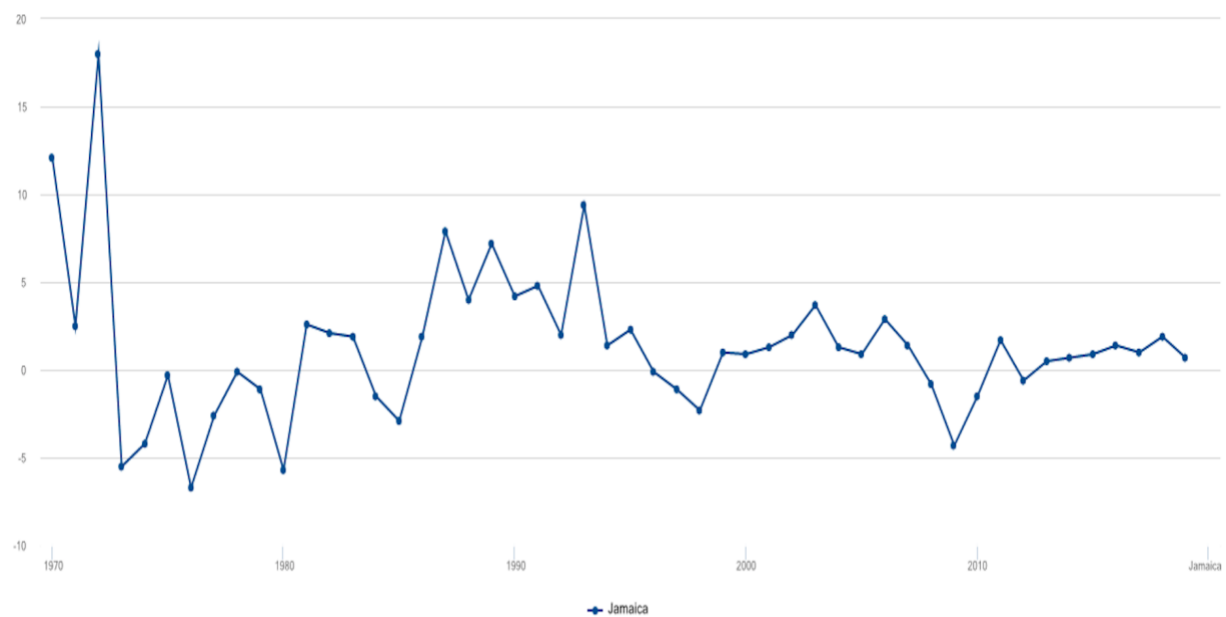
Between 1975 and 2003, per capita growth in Jamaica averaged a sluggish 0.4 per cent per annum (Laaksonen et al., 2006, p.23), hindered in part by severe contractions in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. From 1997-2017, annual GDP growth (total output) averaged 0.47 per cent, making Jamaica "one of the slowest growing developing countries in the world"<sup>40</sup>.

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39 Source: data.worldbank.org <https://data.worldbank.org/country/jamaica>

40 Source: data.worldbank.org <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/jamaica/overview>  
<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/VC.IHR.PSRC.P5?locations=JM-1W-BB>

**Figure 5.1: Annual GDP growth, Jamaica – 1970-2019**



Source: *data.worldbank.org*

Trade deficits and high levels of public debt bedevilled the Jamaican economy over the same period, too. Between 1980 and 1990, Jamaica’s trade deficit nearly quadrupled, growing from \$216m to \$785m. Between 1990 and 2003, it nearly trebled again, with exports now equal to roughly two-fifths of imports<sup>41</sup> (Weis, 2004, p.474). Not only did these imbalances reduce public revenues in Jamaica, they also fed a cycle of borrowing that rendered the country one of the most indebted in the world by the 2010s; peaking in 2013 with a debt-to-GDP ratio of 147%<sup>42</sup> (IMF, 2019). The United Nations’ Human Development Index (HDI) has consistently found Jamaica’s human development poor in comparison to its Caribbean neighbours. For example, the 2018 HDI gave Jamaica a score of 0.726, placing it at 96<sup>th</sup> in the world<sup>43</sup> – behind Barbados (0.813, 56<sup>th</sup>), Trinidad and Tobago (0.799, 63<sup>rd</sup>), Saint Kitts and Nevis (0.777, 73<sup>rd</sup>), Saint Lucia (0.745, 89<sup>th</sup>), and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (0.728, 94<sup>th</sup>) (UNDP, 2020). To deconstruct these outcomes in more qualitative and quotidian terms, Jamaican institutions struggle to effectively disseminate and enforce the rule of law (Dawson,

41 Witter (2000) has consequently termed the modern Jamaican economy a ‘consumer appendage’ to the United States.

42 Public debt in Jamaica was declining as a % of GDP in the run-up to the COVID-19 pandemic, dropping below 100% in 2019 for the first time since 2001 (Wigglesworth, 2020).

43 Mauritius’ 2018 HDI score was 0.796, placing it at 66<sup>th</sup> in the world.

2013), electoral fraud and manipulation are rife in the country's political system, and have been for decades (Figueroa and Sives, 2002), patron-client relations dominate national power structures, and organised crime, inter-gang street violence, and homicide rates have all increased since the 1980s (Munroe and Blake, 2016). Each of these phenomena arise from causal dynamics that can be understood with reference to long-term, diachronic processes of Jamaican state-building, but which – bedecked with a downscaled lens of analysis – can also be attributed to shorter-term, localised, and synchronic causes. The purpose of outlining them here is to vindicate the developmental ‘problem’ at the heart of our second case.

As the foregoing analysis demonstrates, sugar's role in the Jamaican economy ebbed over the past half-century. Unlike in Mauritius, however, this decline was not necessarily a salutary or linear complement to the ‘modernising’ transition from a primary to a secondary and/or tertiary industrial base. Despite the plethora of preferential trade deals discussed in this section, Jamaican sugar production flagged and declined: from 523,000 tonnes in 1965, to 217,000 tonnes in 2000, to 83,000 tonnes in 2016, with projections of a sharp reduction to 60,000 tonnes in 2020 (Laaksonen et al., 2006, p.25; USDA Report, 2017; 2019). Likewise, long-term export figures chart a downward spiral: From an annual average of 400,000 tonnes in the early 1960s, to 150,000 tonnes in 1980, to little more than 50,000 tonnes in 2017 (Laaksonen et al., 2006, p.26; USDA Report, 2017). “Without urgent and significant diversification”, commentators have argued, Jamaican sugar faces “very little hope of survival”, with small farmers most deleteriously and directly impacted (Burrell, 2016, p.103). The area of Jamaican land planted in sugarcane has contracted in recent years, and the number of the country's sugar factories has decreased from six to four. And yet, for many small farmers and hired labourers, sugar remains the only – or at least the most dependable – game in town (Interviewee 3 [GC], Feb 24 2021), reflecting wider regional and rural developmental unevenness and imbalance in the modern Jamaican economy. Table 5.3 indicates that 42,000 Jamaicans were employed directly in sugar in 2005, when its data were compiled. By 2016, despite sugar's quantitative etiolation, some 36,000 people still relied on the commodity directly for their livelihoods, including some 15,000 small farmers and 2,200 factory workers. In addition, 100,000 Jamaicans owe indirect employment to sugar, in allied industries like rum, molasses and ethanol (Burrell, 2016, p.111). Consequently, sugar remains, by some reckoning, the single largest employer in Jamaica (Reid, 2014, p.161).

The history of socio-economic development in Jamaica is, in other words, correctly and inextricably viewed through the bittersweet prism of sugar, but so too its current fortunes are disproportionately (as a share of the national economy) tied to the crop's destiny. In Mauritius, it is not hyperbole to suggest that sugar acted as the (often bloodied) flywheel of a reasonably equitable industrial revolution in the postcolonial context. Now we turn in section 5.3 to several compelling, but ultimately unsatisfactory, explanations as to why a similar process was not replicated in Jamaica, despite a better ostensible economic inheritance outlined in this section.

### 5.3: Young Lineages for an Old Quandary

The first of these interrelated explanations centres on *neoliberal restructuring*. According to this framework, Washington-directed neoliberal policies – instigated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, and arbitrated by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) – gradually compelled successive Jamaican governments to abandon their domestic agricultural sector, or served, at any rate, to seriously undermine it (Burrell, 2016; Richardson-Ngwenya, 2010; Richardson, 2009; Harrison, 2001; Weis, 2004). This, in turn, caused the sector's virtual collapse, sending a series of near-catastrophic social and economic reverberations across Jamaica as a whole (Ibid., 2004). In 1972, reform-minded and left-populist Prime Minister, Michael Manley<sup>44</sup>, was swept to power as leader of the People's National Party (PNP), winning 37 out of a possible 53 seats in the Jamaican Parliament. As part of his mandate, Manley implemented 'Operation GROW' ('Growing and Reaping Our Wealth') in 1973, designed primarily to assist small farmers acquire land through extendable leases. By 1976, the scheme had distributed some 45,000 acres of land to 23,000 peasants (Kaufman, 1985). By 1980, those numbers had swelled to 70,000 acres shared among 36,000 farmers – many of whom had previously been landless. GROW's repertoire of supports to small farmers also included access to credit, R&D, rural infrastructure, and the opening of training cooperatives aimed particularly at unemployed youth (Weis, 2004, pp.464-465).

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<sup>44</sup> Manley's father, Norman Manley, co-founded the PNP in 1938. Later, he served as both Jamaica's Chief Minister (1955-59) and Premier (1959-62), before independence in 1962.

Whatever GROW's successes, however, they would prove short-lived. The advent of neoliberal orthodoxy was in the ascendance, both in the developing and the developed world; turbocharged by the socioeconomic convulsions of the 1970s starting with the oil shock in 1973. Jamaica, like the vast majority of the capitalist world, was adversely impacted by the almighty exogenous shock, its balance of payments growing increasingly out of order. It is in this context that the first phase of neoliberal restructuring began, ushered in via IMF loan conditionalities that avowed cuts to public expenditure (Davies, 1986; Weis, 2004). Further loans and structural adjustments followed in the late 1970s and early 1980s, issued by both the IMF and the World Bank, deepening a programme of "state budget austerity, the liberalization of trade and interest and exchange rates, investment deregulation, reductions of real wage levels and the establishment of export-processing zones" (Ibid., p.466). The Manley government lost power in 1980 to the Jamaica Labour Party's Edward Seaga, and any residual misgivings or anxieties about the new course being pursued were consigned to the recent past. The real-terms effects of Washington's policy prescriptions on agriculture and the wider Jamaican economy were, this framework argues, threefold: First, they rolled-back the frontiers of the Jamaican state, as domestic development programmes were retrenched and external forces were left to run the economy. Agricultural budgets declined as a share of government expenditure, with the consequences for output and employment partially quoted in section 5.2 (in the context of sugar). Second, privatisation of sugar production, as well as further trade liberalisation following the birth of the WTO and the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) in 1995, greatly compromised Jamaica's food security, cementing its transition as a net-importer of agricultural commodities. Particularly ailed by these developments are Jamaica's small sugarcane farmers, for whom the project of liberalisation since the 1980s has generated little beyond high production costs, low prices, insecure land tenure, land fragmentation, inability to access loans, and high transportation costs (Burrell, 2016, p.124).

Third, because of agriculture's, and particularly sugar's, persistent and disproportionate importance to Jamaican political economy – in regards to regional economy, general employment, export revenues, and tributary industry – the woes that betide the agricultural sector have exerted dynamic spillover effects on other areas of economy and society,

disrupting a sometimes fragile postcolonial political ecology. While the efficiency gains portended by market-orientated resource allocation scarcely materialised in Jamaica's neoliberal period, gleaned in part from the macro-paralysis outlined in section 5.2, the 'hollowing-out' of the Jamaican state that accompanied and facilitated it generated and intensified disorder and violence on Jamaica's streets, as 'law and order' competencies traditionally the preserve of state institutions were increasingly fulfilled by drug kingpins and community dons (Munroe and Blake, 2016). Ultimately, then, neoliberal restructuring commencing in the late-1970s and expanding throughout the 1980s, 90s, and 2000s is responsible for postcolonial Jamaica's stagnation, de- or under-development, as bespoke protectionist policies were abandoned in favour of 'stabilising' loans and structural adjustments issued by the IMF and the World Bank.

A second explanation for postcolonial Jamaica's socio-economic straits is built more explicitly on the notion of the *decline of Jamaican state capacity since independence*. Although this framework is closely linked to neoliberal restructuring, it tends in distinct directions. At the time of independence, it argues, Jamaica inherited a political system "based on patronage, a polarized partisan political culture, and the monopolization of power by economic and political elites". Yet, at the same time, it also found itself in receipt of a malleable civil service, a ready stock of national leaders, and political institutions such as parties, elections and trade unions, all of which served to "cement attitudes and values supportive of democracy" (Warmington-Granston and Blake, 2020, p.121). From this combustible and seemingly inchoate mix, a kind of informal corporatism between the State and Jamaica's community 'strongmen' emerged, inducing a degree of societal order, national identity, and a participatory political culture. Garrisons became akin to 'political enclaves', wherein criminal actors served – with state-imprimatur – as conduits between civilians and the formal institutions of government. In this sense, the strongmen became political enforcers; "co-opted, deployed, and used by the Jamaican state elites to extend the predatory and monopolistic features of the state. They did not challenge or subvert the power of state elites, but rather complemented their authority and control, especially in garrison communities" (Ibid., pp.121-123).

From this descriptive premise, a theoretical schema is derived in which Jamaican state capacity went from being high – at the time of independence and for a decade or so thereafter – to ‘low-moderate’, and finally to ‘low-low’ from the 1980s onwards. In the high capacity period, state actors played an expansive and active role in the Jamaican economy, improving health and education, increasing life expectancy and literacy, and overseeing industrial and urban development and export promotion (Ibid., p.127). Thus, the impressive growth figures quoted in section 5.2 – in which Jamaican GDP climbed at an average rate of 7 percent per annum throughout the 1950s and 60s – owed principally to the wherewithal of the late-colonial and early-postcolonial Jamaican state, and the developmental interventionism it orchestrated. The compact between the state and garrison strongmen, while conducive to heterodox forms of state expansion and order via the outsourcing of violence, is defined as marking a period of ‘low-moderate’ state capacity because “violence has a destabilizing side effect on a state and its overall society,” ultimately weakening the long-term state-building process, even if it generates punctuated equilibrium along the way (Ibid., p.124). Following on from this latter point, Jamaica finally slipped into its present ‘low-low’ era of state development when neoliberal reforms and globalisation interacted with domestic and regional criminal enterprise. This process had two main, non-discrete features: First, the state was forced to retreat in multiple areas over which it had previously governed, limiting its ability to distribute resources to its citizens (via, for example, welfare) and its community enforcers (via patronage and largesse). Second, the ‘de-embedding’ (Polanyi, 1944) of the Jamaican economy made it far more vulnerable to external shocks. One such shock<sup>45</sup> was the exponential growth in demand for cocaine in the U.S. and Europe throughout the 1970s and 80s. Grappling with the diminishing returns of state largesse, strongmen enforcers turned to Colombian drug cartels to make-up the shortfall, agreeing to transport the drug “through the Caribbean into the major US cities of Miami and New York City as well as into Canada and the UK” (Warmington-Granston and Blake, 2020, p.129).

In sum, this framework holds that state-building in the Anglo-Caribbean bears an instrumental relation to economic development. It also holds that it is a non-linear process, oscillating across stages of high, moderate, and low development. In Jamaica, state capacity has consistently declined since independence, from a high to a low-level, with predictable

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<sup>45</sup> One among many - including the ‘shattering’ of Caribbean agriculture (Warmington-Granston and Blake, 2020, p.118).

ramifications for socio-economic development. The main forces behind these shifts in centralised capacity arose from an interaction of neoliberal globalisation and precarious informal corporatist arrangements between the Jamaican state and community strongmen. All the same, decline is not synonymous with failure, observable in the fact that Jamaica's democracy has never experienced any reversal or collapse, military coups, or assassinations of heads of government (Ibid., pp.110-112; p.124).

Linked, again, to the two frameworks outlined above, but independent in its causal priorities and focus, a rich and persuasive literature exists on the *removal of preferences* that befell, and continues to befall, Jamaica, as well as many other economies in the Global South (Richardson, 2009; Richardson-Ngwenya, 2010; Laaksonen et al., 2006). This perspective on contemporary Jamaican strife is situated, its authors agree, in a broader turn away from a global economy whose 'rules of the game' permitted and encouraged mechanisms such as preferential markets and quota-based production as a means of spurring development across the postcolonial world. Once these norms passed out of vogue, superannuated in favour of prevailing, market-driven logics, the struggles and crises that Jamaica (and many, though not all, of her counterparts in the Global South) had grown accustomed to were deepened and exacerbated (Interviewee 3 [GC], Feb 24 2021). Of central concern was the staggered demise of the Lomé Sugar Protocol, owing in part to sugar's continuing structural significance to the Jamaican economy in ways discussed, and in part to the extent that the system had theretofore existed. As explained in section 5.2, and detailed in Table 5.3, the ACP-EC/EU Lomé Sugar Protocol granted 19 former colonies of EC/EU member-states a fixed quota of 1.3 million tonnes per annum from 1975-2009 (including Jamaica, which received the fourth largest quota), exportable into the EC on a duty-free basis and at an annually-negotiated guaranteed price that was closely linked to the EU's artificially-high internal (Common Market Organisation) intervention price (LaForce, 2013, p.53; Chaplin and Matthews, 2006, p.17; Busse and Jerosch, 2006, p.104; Interviewee 1 [FD], Jan 16 2020). Lomé was a non-reciprocal regime, but after the creation of the WTO as a successor regime to the GATT in 1995, the 'most favoured nation' clause put the principle of non-reciprocity on notice (Sepos, 2013, p.270; Kopp et al., 2016, p.1339; LaForce, 2013, pp.45-46). Other areas of Lomé – namely, the Banana Protocol – were ruled to be discriminatory by the WTO's Appellate Body.



Shortly after, in June 2000, the WTO- and MFN-compliant Cotonou Agreement was signed in Benin by the EU-15 and an ACP made-up of 77 members, superseding the Lomé Accords that preceded it. Jamaica and the other 18 Sugar Protocol states saw their quotas and favourable prices extended by means of a 2001 WTO waiver, which expired on December 31<sup>st</sup> 2007. Less than two years later, in October 2009, the EU took the decision to fully-rescind the Sugar Protocol in phases, starting with a 36% reduction in its guaranteed price, and culminating in its total replacement with duty-free quota-free (DFQF) access for all Everything but Arms (EBA) sugar producers, as well as all non-EBA ACP producers to have successfully completed Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) negotiations with the EU, either independently or through regional groupings (LaForce, 2013, p.44; Garcia-Duran and Casanova, 2009; European Commission, 2020). Unlike in Mauritius, however, the journey from Lomé to Cotonou – itself an epiphenomenal step in a larger journey from ‘embedded liberal’ (Ruggie, 1982) to neoliberal conceptions of development – was neither smooth nor kind, and continues to grievously impact Jamaica’s sugar and wider agricultural sectors (Burrell, 2016; Richardson and Richardson-Ngwenya, 2013). The country’s sugar industry was simply not efficient enough to offset the losses borne by the demolition of the Sugar Protocol by the capture of new, non-preferential markets. The sudden cessation of guaranteed and generous EU sugar rents thus hit Jamaica’s sugarcane farmers and producers very hard indeed, and the opportunities in the rest of the economy that typically accrue from effective diversification and development have been insufficient to fully absorb the shock.

At its core, then, this framework stops short of suggesting that the removal of EC/EU preferential trading arrangements created the developmental issues and crises that have intermittently enshrouded Jamaican economy and society over the past fifty years (that, at any rate, would be a demonstrably anachronistic claim). Nonetheless, their gradual replacement by a WTO-compatible regime amounted to a giant rug pulled underfoot of structurally-important and fragile sectors, sending their diffuse and already-beleaguered stakeholders and interests into a tailspin.

A fourth and final assessment of postcolonial Jamaica’s relative capitalist ‘failure’ is rooted in the critical scholarly tradition of dependency, specifically Caribbean Dependency Theory

(CDT). The *CDT and Plantation* framework was, throughout the late-1960s and early-1970s, the “leading tendency in Caribbean scholarship” (Harris, 1978 [quoted in Girvan, 2006, p.339]). Again, some of its intellectual threads could be, and indeed were, plausibly re-embroidered into later critiques of neoliberalisation in Jamaica and the wider Caribbean, including those canvassed above. But in its methodological emphases on history, on historical institutions, and on psychological and other non-material, intersubjective dimensions of subjugation and underdevelopment, it varies. Indeed, CDT and the Plantation school, like its historical and critical counterparts in the Mauritian context (discussed in chapter 2, and applied throughout chapter 4), is to be commended for framing Jamaican (under-)development as a diachronic process that played-out in the *longue durée*. Inso doing, it broke with mainstream and predominantly synchronic and chronofetishist development models that dominated at the time of its emergence, extrapolated on the basis of economies from former or soon-to-be-former colonial metropolises in the Global North, and consequently carrying limited analytic value for those newly independent states and subordinate economies of the former peripheries. What those economies badly needed, according to CDT scholars, was to be conceptualised and analysed on their own terms, paying particular attention to the timing and process of their integration into the capitalist world economy, and the versatile but rigid logics and legacies of regional and national development that that integration imparted.

Though theoretical and analytical differentiation was the CDT and Plantation framework’s driving impulse, it nonetheless established the parameters of its *problématique* within the Dependency and World-systems thought-worlds (referenced in chapter 2), underpinned by the assumption that uneven patterns of capitalist development are chiefly determined by the structure of world-economic trade (Wallerstein, 1979; Gunder-Frank, 2014). In its approach to Jamaican historical development, this thesis in chapter 6 takes a more ‘ground-up’, class-centred perspective, in line with the Political Marxist framework outlined in chapter 2. At the same time, our Janus-faced historical materialism (again articulated in chapter 2, indebted to Tomich) ensures that no sharp or prohibitive zero-sum exists between the two flanks of Marxist thought. While our analysis finds that, ultimately, CDT and Plantation school arguments leave some questions lingering in the context of our puzzle, the proponents of them have nonetheless shed critical scholarly light on aspects of uneven and combined Caribbean (under-)development that, left to their own devices, economists and political scientists in the Global North might never have uncovered, so distantly prefabricated and

superimposed were their formulae. It bears emphasising that this thesis, whatever its theoretical and conclusive deviations from CDT, owes a great deal to both the tradition's focus and wider empirical contributions.

It also bears mention that the CDT and Plantation scholarly community is not monolithic, with important distinctions separating its leading lights on matters of outlook and accenting. Like the more universalist Dependency Theory of Andre Gunder Frank and others, CDT starts from the premise that debilitating power asymmetry exists in relations between regions and modern states, then progresses to infer a series of claims pertaining specifically to the political economies and history of the Caribbean. Beckford argues, for example, that the plantation economy exemplified in Jamaica and much of the Caribbean must be understood as a unique socio-economic category, one which does not accord to the regular functioning or principles of the capitalist world economy; even as part of what Dependency terms 'the periphery'. This *terra incognita* status arises, Beckford and others posit, because of two, interconnected dynamics: first, the "synthesis of how race and class make plantation society a sort of 'special case' in the history of social formations", where the "labour regime is based on race". This synthesis frustrates class definitions in the classical Marxist sense, replacing the proletariat with black labour, and class exploitation with black dispossession (Beckford, 2000; 1978; Girvan, 2006, p.337). Thus, if we wish to properly comprehend Jamaica's modern-day struggles, we must first comprehend the enduring legacies of racial and social stratification, hierarchisation, and organisation bequeathed to it by the colonial and postcolonial plantation system.

Second, the economic legacy of plantation production is, in the main, a rigid structural logic that locks resource allocation into the plantation sector(s), preventing diversification into the truly transformative non-plantation areas of the economy (Best and Levitt, 1969; Beckford, 1972). This latter point appends to the general condition of economic dependence that CDT scholarship asserts overarches and constrains the peripheral Caribbean economies. Modern economic thought – whether classical Marxist or neoclassical in tenor – proceeds on the basis of certain assumptions about the capitalist economy as a contraption; that laws of supply and demand, endogenous growth, and fiscal and monetary policy all essentially obtain (however skewed they may be in the Marxian thought-world). These assumptions, however, were

formulated against the grade of the Eurocentric, Westphalian nation-state and its economies. Thus, to superimpose them onto the plantation economies of Jamaica and her island-neighbours is to licence and ensure grave analytic error. In the reality of Caribbean political economy:

“The level of exports was the chief determinant of the level of economic activity, and exports were foreign-owned and dependent on foreign markets. Therefore, governments were largely powerless to influence local economic activity by means of monetary policy, and deficit financing of public spending was constrained by the structure of a small, open economy (Girvan, 2006, p.333).

These facets were, and to some extent still are, taken by CDT and some of its adherents as evidence of the structural dependency of the Jamaican and wider Caribbean economies. The answer, therefore, underlying faltering or weak capitalist development in Jamaica lies in the enduring subordinating productive logic immanent in plantation societies, in ways outlined.

Closely related to the foregoing point, Bogues exhorted for an altogether new, regional epistemology, one which eschewed imported Western concepts of development and focused instead on a “Caribbean-centred cosmology and theory of society” (Ibid., p.332) and the “epistemic decolonization of the region” (Bogues 2003, p.149). Others, such as Brewster and Thomas and Best and Levitt, pointed to Jamaica’s inherent geographical limitations as a small island as a key determining factor in its economic dependency and, *ipso facto*, in its stunted post-independence development (for e.g.: Brewster and Thomas, 1967; Best and Levitt, 1969). Both Jamaica and Mauritius are recognised by the United Nations as SIDS - ‘Small Island Developing States’, typically bound by common constraints such as narrow resource bases; small domestic markets and heavy dependence on a few external and remote markets; high costs for energy, infrastructure, transportation, communication and servicing; little resilience to natural disasters; and growing populations (UN-OHRLLS, 2020).

To briefly recapitulate on the CDT and Plantation framework’s core, if diverse, claims, Jamaica was integrated into the world economy after 1962 haunted by several structural

impediments that were, and remain, region-specific. First among these was the plantation system of productive and social organisation, which generated a unique and consequential form of racial stratification, as well as foreign-owned, primary export-oriented economic dependence. For this reason, a unique Caribbean epistemology is needed to understand and address Caribbean underdevelopment in the context of the modern capitalist world-system and the plantation logic it fostered. As we will see in chapter 6, the plantation itself was no mythical maleficent; it was, instead, a material venue for the growth, cropping, and refining of one, predominant agricultural commodity, ready to be sold onto the fabulously lucrative consumer markets that scored Europe and the Americas. That commodity was, of course, sugar.

In summary of section 5.3, neoliberal restructuring, the decline of Jamaican state capacity since independence, the removal of trading preferences, and the plantation system as conceptualised by CDT encompass four of the major scholarly explanations for purported failures of Jamaican development since its independence in 1962. We turn now to an assessment of these interpretations in section 5.4.

#### 5.4: (Non-)Existence Precedes Essence

Despite shedding light on important aspects of Jamaica's post-independence developmental dilemma, each of the four theories advanced in section 5.3 is incomplete and/or flawed on its own merits. Furthermore, to the extent that the four perspectives can be reconciled into a single, multivariate explanation, they still fail to grasp the causal nettle we seek.

The *neoliberal restructuring* thesis, while capturing important elements of rupture and transition in Jamaican agriculture and political economy over the past forty years, tends towards something of a cacth-22 conclusion. Weis, for example, argues that neoliberalisation “demobilized the state's role in agricultural development in Jamaica, intensifying historic landscape and institutional inequities” (Weis, 2004, p.483). It is assumed, therefore, that the

state's substantive capacity to effectuate policy has been significantly reduced in the neoliberal period. Yet, in the same article, a raft of state-based solutions are prescribed, all geared towards reclaiming sovereignty as "a social, economic and environmental imperative" (Ibid., p.484). A thesis such as ours, pitting two postcolonial states against one another and demonstrating variation, would never make the case that neoliberal reform is ineluctable, nor even that it is irreversible. But a framework that argues neoliberalism retrenched Jamaican state functions to debilitating extents, then poses the Jamaican state as the likeliest bulwark against neoliberalism, at least requires an ontology of state capacity, as well as due consideration of how it might be credibly recovered from its purported abyss.

One has only to correlate the plethora of IMF and World Bank loan conditionalities (or structural adjustments), WTO Agreement on Agriculture reforms, and the net outcomes for Jamaica's sugar and wider agricultural industries, exports, GDP, and debt levels to see that the stated objectives of the reforms have been less than successful, with stifling and pernicious consequences for aspects of Jamaican society. But if some postcolonial states in the global south are manifestly able to resist procrustean external neoliberal reforms and persist with a bespoke mixture of openness and protection – as in Mauritius – then the larger development question is: Why are some not? Jamaica clearly falls into the latter category, since, as we have seen, the Manley government's (1972-1980) Operation GROW programme was emblematic of such determined, tailor-made attempts at domestic development – before it expeditiously collapsed under the weight of external shock. One particularly striking example of this general antinomy between states that are more or less able to capture the benefits of liberalisation occurs when Weis refers to Jamaica's Export Processing Zone (EPZ) as one in a procession of Washington-based policy prescriptions that has disfigured Jamaican agriculture and the wider economy (Ibid., p.466). As we saw in chapter 3, however, Mauritius' own EPZ provided a 'heterodox opening' to external trade and investment that helped carry it towards prodigious growth and development following independence. The underlying causal explanation lies, then, before the dawn of neoliberalism, in the balance of forces that might latently accept or oppose it. State capacity, as the neoliberal restructuring framework argues, is a necessary if insufficient prerequisite to a fine-tuned, resisted, or

rolled-back hegemonic neoliberal reformism. But just as nonergodic<sup>46</sup>, path dependent processes are generated by state-building, so too are they beget by acts of state-retrenchment, as new logics flood in to fulfil decentralised functions.

In any event, as we will see in greater detail in chapter 6, any arc that conceptualises the Jamaican state as having moved from a position of high wherewithal at the outset of independence, to one of low capacity by the 1980s and beyond, is simply inaccurate. Jamaica's dysfunctional state, and its inability to spur development through the management of major industry, was a marked legacy of empire, and herein lies one of four key flaws with the *decline of state capacity* thesis. First, to expand (though in a manner that adumbrates deeper examination in chapter 6), the period of rapid growth in the Jamaican economy throughout the 1950s and 1960s was in fact a period of "growth without development", in which oligopolistic industries were largely owned and controlled by foreign capital, and profits were siphoned off before they could generate local benefits (Henry Fe, 1984). The rapid growth borne by the post-War FDI influx lent verisimilitude, however, to the notion that the Jamaican economy was enjoying its own late-colonial Caribbean roar, obscuring the fact that numerous, severe, internal contradictions lay below the edifice, soon to announce themselves in the forms so far outlined. Again, the nature of these contradictions and their forerunning causes will be delved into later. For now, the matter that requires our attention is that neither the Jamaican economy nor its state was ever as robust or as capable as the 'decline of state capacity' thesis claims. "From the 1950s through to the late 1970s, state leaders played an expansive and active role in the Jamaican economy", argue Warmington-Granston and Blake (Warmington-Granston and Blake, 2020, p.127). What was actually taking place was the de-sovereignisation of Jamaican industrial and agricultural firepower.

Second, evidence of this empirical and conceptual slippage becomes quickly apparent when we consider the rapidity and facility of incursions made by neoliberalism into the so-called 'high capacity' state. Mirroring some of the elisions attending the neoliberal restructuring

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46 'Nonergodic' is a term borrowed from mathematical and statistical analysis to denote phenomena in which accidental developments are not overwritten by 'normal' processes in time, but are instead fed into future choices and decision-making, and are, as a result, one determinant of eventual outcomes, of which potentially limitless versions once existed (Arthur, 1994, p.45).

thesis, the Jamaican state makes the journey, in broad brushstrokes, from master of its own destiny, to withering maidservant of external interests, without sufficient explanation of how this implausible dynamic unfolded. If the Jamaican state of the immediate pre- and post-independence period had really been so capable and assertive, we can surely expect it to have at least resisted retrenchment of those functions deemed essential to its stability and survival – such as in the distribution of resources to garrison strongman. The final two issues of the framework under scrutiny are of less direct consequence to our thesis, but nonetheless worth briefly enumerating: Third, there is a persistent tendency to essentialise violence in Jamaican society and culture (Ibid., p.119). To be sure, violent crime in Jamaica is high, and has been consistently since the 1960s<sup>47</sup>. So too is it the case that a nexus of state and informal community-based authority has prevailed and evolved (Charles, 2002; Charles and Beckford, 2012; Johnson and Soeters, 2008; Leslie, 2010, pp.12-13). What is particularly telling from our standpoint, however, is that these facts are attributed to contemporary socio-cultural phenomena, an endemic ‘Jamaican temperament’ of sorts; as opposed to being viewed as feedback from three-hundred years of colonial history and violent subordination. Fourth and finally, while the view that: “In the opening decade of its independence, Jamaica’s economy helped to stabilize the state” (Warmington-Granston and Blake, 2020, p.129) might be forgiven for analytically segmenting the two entities (*pace* Polanyi), it ought to nonetheless be held accountable for reversing the primacy of the two, displayed in the claim, quoted above, that “state leaders played an expansive and active role in the Jamaican economy” for two decades from the 1950s to the 70s (Ibid., p.127).

Questions surrounding the *removal of preferences* in Jamaica – particularly the final removal of the Lomé Sugar Protocol in 2009 – are hugely important for addressing the material predicament that prevails upon its sugar farmers, as well as tens of thousands of other key agricultural workers. There are, of course, cumulative fiscal dimensions to consider, too; since a reduction in guaranteed rents ostensibly means a reduction in government revenues. But – as this cache of literature would no doubt acknowledge – it cannot take us any further back than the 1990s (at the earliest) in its exposition of Jamaica’s economic and related schisms. As this chapter has shown, the issues under consideration are far older than that. A simple method of differences, using the example of our other case study, will show that the

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47 Source: data.worldbank.org <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/VC.IHR.PSRC.P5?locations=JM-1W-BB>



withdrawal of trading preferences in the context of a broader turn away from embedded liberal market interventionism is not, in and of itself, a cause for decline. In Mauritius, which had received the largest Sugar Protocol quota between 1975 and 2009 (see: Table 5.3), the ‘broad shoulders’ of the economy were indeed broad enough to absorb any shock generated by the twilight of EU-ACP preferences. Endogenous to sugar, there was enough efficiency and domestic support to survive. Across the economy as a whole, diversification had taken place, ensuring opportunities for resource re-allocation. Therefore, the question becomes: Why had a similar process not taken root in Jamaica, contemporaneous with a period when rents and demand for its major historical commodity had been so reliably (artificially so) high? The removal of preferences framework is intrinsically incapable of answering this prefiguring question.

Finally, there are legitimate scepticisms about the necessary beneficence of preferences in the first place, in contexts like Jamaica’s. The implied corollary of the analysis that the removal of preferences is bad is that their existence was, ultimately, ‘good’. Certainly, for many thousands of small sugar farmers and hired labourers, the Sugar Protocol provided sustenance and more. But, viewed through a more macroeconomic lens, this reading becomes potentially idyllic. Given the largely foreign and oligopolistic structure of the Jamaican sugar industry throughout the Protocol period, and given the often close-knit relationship of the state to criminal and violent societal elements, the propriety and utility of large, guaranteed, regular influxes of foreign rents is questionable. Furthermore, it is questionable whether – in environments with reduced state capacity and, therefore, less leverage to intervene in the economy, redirect revenues, and underwrite competition and diversification – creating an artificial comparative advantage in primary commodities like sugar does not forestall development across the economy as a whole, because it effectively prolongs the lifespan of otherwise inefficient or lower-value production at the expense of higher-value enterprise<sup>48</sup>. But just as these observations give pause for thought to the view that preferences are *necessarily* advantageous to development, it is equally true that they cannot be sought as a primary cause of the issues under consideration, since, again, Mauritius and other Sugar

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<sup>48</sup> Rooted in David Ricardo’s theory of comparative advantage (1817), deployed by Mytelka (1977), for e.g., in the context of Lomé and the world-systemic division of Labour.

Protocol-recipients captured the benefits of quotas and guaranteed prices, implying the existence of an intervening variable.

All three perspectives on postcolonial Jamaican (under)development so far assessed and deemed inadequate – namely neoliberal restructuring, the decline of state capacity, and the removal of preferences – suffer from a kind of causal chronofetishism, which, as we saw in chapter 3, was also the case with much of the existing literature on Mauritius. This is not to suggest that searching for proximal causes is illegitimate or redundant, or that only the long-view matters. Understanding dynamics that are *sui generis* to a particular time is of great worth in itself, but our thesis is that divergent developmental outcomes in postcolonial Jamaica and Mauritius can only be meaningfully understood with reference to processes that took place during their respective colonial periods, sown in dynamics of class and state-formation. Absent or threadbare historical and institutional analyses are redressed by the *CDT and Plantation* framework, which is also to be commended for achieving a greater depth of understanding on the intersubjective, epistemic, and psychological deficits impressed by highly-racialised colonial rule, and the complex ways these pernicious legacies intersect with their more discernibly material equivalents (for e.g.: Beckford and Witter, 1982; Beckford, 2000; 1978). As mentioned in 5.3, however, the diversified output of the CDT and Plantation school – despite providing critical animus to this research – does leave some questions lingering in the wake of its puzzle. First, in a cameo of a problem that led wider Dependency Theory out to pasture, variation across plantation-based Caribbean economies and societies has occurred over the past few decades. The sectorial configuration of the once-plantation economies of Jamaica, Antigua, Trinidad and Tobago, and Barbados (to name but a few) has shown some divergence and nonlinearity, indicating the limitations of a thesis that suggests their structural and collective productive boundedness. This might, itself, be reflective of glitches in the conceptual mothership to which CDT is anchored; in other words, in the excessively structural nature of wider Dependency’s model, relying on core-periphery-semi periphery dynamics, with little stock placed in the differentiating power of the unitary state (Gunder Frank, 2014). This generates something of an irony in that CDT – whose *idée fixe* was to pluck Caribbean political economy from overly-generalised principles and render it idiographic – runs the risk of homogenising and overdetermining Caribbean developmental experiences, by neglecting inter- and intra-societal distinctions. It is pertinent to note, however, that many CDT scholars have subsequently acknowledged this, and have made

attempts to accommodate these developments in their later analyses (for e.g.: Levitt, 2003; Best, 1998). Furthermore, a cameo of the Dependency model's wider limitations it may be, but a cameo only. For, while original Dependency draws assumptions about the operational structure and future of the entire world economy, the CDT and the Plantation school's claims stop at the Caribbean water's edge.

A second discernible question asked of CDT by our thesis and, particularly, its comparative case studies relate to its segmentation of the Caribbean as a unique domain of historical capitalist development, and the inverted Caribbean exceptionalism this threatens to engender. We know, for example, that Mauritius' economy was defined almost entirely by plantation logic up until its independence, and that it had also suffered under the yoke of extreme racial hierarchisation and stratification from the moment its (predominantly) African slaves and Indian indentured servants were cast ashore. We also know that Mauritius was a small, remote island, belying the 'small island' thesis that suggests a component of abject dependence and underdevelopment was hardwired into its DNA. To plumb the depths and causes of Jamaica's developmental problems in the post-independence period, therefore, CDT's insights need to be triangulated with a more dialectical approach to the plantation system and its dark history; one in which class, state, empire, and plantation production interact to forge particular, path-dependent conditions across given settings. Our dovetailed theoretical framework – incorporating both class-centred, or 'political', Marxism and Historical Institutionalism – provides a cogent means of attacking these variables. The specific involution and pattern of plantation production elevated in CDT is, of course, analytically important. Alongside this, however, we must ensure that its privileging does not dim or invisibilise other, vital aspects of productive, social and power relations.

As we have seen in this section, none of the four, broad sets of appraisals covering Jamaica's chequered development in the postcolonial period is sufficient to capture its root cause. The first three – neoliberal restructuring, the decline of state capacity, and the removal of preferences – are averse to historical explanation, despite offering some important synchronic insights. The fourth – the CDT and Plantation paradigm – is well-versed in history, but is hemmed-in by structural assumptions inherited from forerunning intellectual streams. Insofar

as the four perspectives can be reconciled into a single, multivariate explanation, they still do not address the underlying causality of Jamaica's 'failed' development, for reasons given.

## 5.5: Conclusion

Chapter 5 has demonstrated several things. First, Jamaica's decolonisation in August 1962 conferred upon it a broadly favourable economic inheritance. As compared with Mauritius, Jamaica enjoyed greater proximity to the commercial centre of gravity, greater ethnolinguistic homogeneity, higher levels of sectorial diversification, and faster and more robust late colonial and early postcolonial growth. It also enjoyed equal access to preferential trade deals, under the terms of the Commonwealth Sugar Agreement and, later, the ACP-EC/EU Lomé Sugar Protocol. Despite these nominal advantages, Jamaican socio-economic development over the past half-century has been chequered, succumbing at times to economic stagnation, eye-watering public debt, trade imbalances, gang violence, and widespread corruption. The Caribbean country's historic commodity and industry, sugar, has passed through multiple vicissitudes since independence, subject to a high dose of foreign investment and control, external preferences, and far-reaching domestic agricultural development programmes. The sector remains, by all accounts, on some form of life-support, too big to fail for reasons that exceed the symbolic: Foremost, its importance as a direct and indirect employer, exacerbated by the geographic unevenness of the Jamaican economy.

Several, broad explanations attempt to tackle the causes underlying this dysfunctional picture, categorised into 'neoliberal restructuring', 'the decline of state capacity', 'the removal of preferences', and 'the CDT and Plantation' framework. The first three, although useful within their own, limited confines, suffer from blocking presentism when applied to a deeper, diachronic mode of causality. The fourth, although intellectually protean, makes general strides in reversing the historiophobia, insufficient institutionalism, and material exclusivity of its aforementioned counterparts, and in so doing provides this research with critical coordinates. However, some of the school's (natively acknowledged) empirical slippages do licence conceptual re-examination of the Caribbean, as its once-plantation economies and

societies experienced developmental divergence throughout the late-20<sup>th</sup> and early-21<sup>st</sup> centuries. To some extent, these slippages were predictable in the structural over-determinism of some elements of CDT and Plantation thought, in ways outlined.

Thus, the second half of our thesis' puzzle is left incomplete. In the next chapter, we address this elision by building around initial CDT insights; examining and tracing the processes of colonisation, endogenous class-formation, colonial state-building, and overarching metro-periphery dynamics that conspired, at particular moments and junctures of Jamaican history, to generate a weak, contested, and heterogenous state by the time of independence in the 1960s – with the comparatively disordered effects on postcolonial political economy made familiar to us throughout this chapter. The common denominator in all of these processes is tropical sugarcane production. Left axiomatic, 'the state as developmental silver bullet' becomes rather facile. Its analytic puissance is leavened, instead, in an *a posteriori* investigation of the peculiar circumstances under which class and state, cohesive or otherwise, emerged. Or, to put it as Trevor Munroe did, in "applying historical materialism to the concrete conditions of class formation in the Caribbean" (Munroe, 1990). It is to this endeavour that we turn next.

# **Chapter 6: Growth Without Development: Sugar in Jamaica, 1655-1961**

## **6.1: Introduction**

As we saw in the previous chapter, the historical linkages of Jamaica's colonial and postcolonial development are either nebulous or overgeneralised. The most prominent systematic bridge built from the island's past to its present is constructed by Dependency and Plantation theory, and while productive of some highly valuable insights into the brutal, exploitative, and path-dependent nature of historical institutions in the Caribbean, the framework nonetheless loses its analytic grip as Caribbean developmental outcomes and experiences begin to diverge across space and time. This chapter makes the case that, to a significant degree, the difference between postcolonial Jamaica and postcolonial Mauritius' success lies in the configuration and development of their respective colonial states; in Jamaica's case, relatively weak and dysfunctional, with limited or compromised capacity at the moment of independence; in Mauritius', relatively efficacious, with highly-bureaucratised and professionalised institutions ready to tackle the profound and lasting economic decisions heralded by decolonisation and sovereign independence.

Much of what unfolded in Jamaica between its earliest colonisation in 1494, and its juridico-political liberation from British rule in 1962, can be most aptly described as *growth without development*. Development, that is, as broadly conceived – to encompass not only economic but also political and social institutions. Such an observation must, just as quickly as it is made, be qualified with the acknowledgement that *some* development of said areas did of course occur throughout the colonial period. It is not as though the complex economic and socio-political terrain inherited by Jamaicans in 1962 remotely resembled the material and organisational realities of Amerindian life encountered by Spanish colonists in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. But between growth and development, there is a great disparity in Jamaican history. One of the enduring legacies of this disparity is a relative deficit in state capacity. This

deficit, at the moment of independence, rendered Jamaica considerably less capable than Mauritius in its efforts to manage and direct peaceful, democratic, domestic development in a capitalist world economy, despite many similarities and a more favourable economic inheritance across other indicators. In Mauritius, as we saw in chapter 4, it was the particular form of primitive accumulation, the nature of class-formation and alliance, the manner in which these localised processes fed into wider metro-periphery dynamics, and the economic obstacles domestic elites faced, that entwined and fused to generate the robust character of the mid- and late-colonial Mauritian state. What were the parallel contingencies and exigencies that gestated and midwifed the comparatively weaker Jamaican state?

This chapter is organised as follows: Section 6.2 argues that, from the very beginning, the colony of Jamaica was regarded by the English metropole as something of a ‘problem child’; unruly, chaotic, and violent. Three main factors account for this perception: The island’s status as a ‘consolation prize’ in the context of Cromwell’s wider Western Design, the persistence of Maroon rebellion, and the internecine power struggle between buccaneers and sugar planters. This initial metropolitan ambivalence had ramifications for early statecraft and development on the island, which are shown. Section 6.3 examines how the Jamaican sugar planters, now hegemonic but disproportionately absent, secured supports from the British metropole in the form of monopolistic tariff preferences. These supports helped enrich them, but they also ensured growth without development on the island, because the monopoly they were given was in raw sugar. Moreover, combined with the monocultural nature of the Jamaican economy, the monopoly had the effect of masking or cushioning the kinds of productive bottlenecks that had, in colonial Mauritius, generated state capacity and socioeconomic development. Section 6.4 concludes the coverage of our second, and final, case study.

## 6.2: The Bicephalous Elite and the Struggle for Dominance: 1655-1689

Unlike the beautiful and uninhabited Mauritius, Jamaica had been home to an indigenous population – the Arawak, who had lived on the Caribbean island for around 3,000 years

before Spanish arrival in May 1494, two years after Columbus' men first clapped eyes on the American continent. Columbus' objective was in the acquisition of that most primitive of primitive accumulations: Gold. No gold existed on the island, however, and its political economy was soon subordinated to other productive endeavours. Through "forced labour, the transmission of foreign diseases, wanton murder, and suicide induced by the fear of impending destruction", the Arawak population was reduced from its onetime glory of approximately 60,000 members to virtual extinction by as early as 1519 (Beckford and Witter, 1982, p.14; Shepherd, 1991, p.628). Whereas this instance of primitive accumulation is more recognisable to orthodox accounts than the heterodox first accumulation evident in Mauritius throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century (insofar as it overthrew an immanent, land-dwelling population), the transformational element of wage labour would, similarly, have to wait out several centuries before coming into fruition. Moreover, as distinguished from parts of mainland Africa and other peripheral loci of the British and European empires where the density of pre-existing, deep-rooted power structures often modulated the grand designs of capitalist imperialism (Saylor, 2012, pp.476-477; Phillips, 1989), the rapid and merciless liquidation of Jamaican Arawak civilisation suggests it posed no substantial obstacle to a pre- or primer-capitalist consolidation of productive forces. The tragic reality is that, while Jamaican proto-capitalists and elites would discover alternative ways to scupper and strain their collective action, such negation did not arise from Arawak resistance, at least not at the time of initial colonisation<sup>49</sup>. In Mauritius, primitive accumulation took place in a sort of social vacuum, shorn of human populace. In Jamaica, genocide against the island's aboriginals was so abject that virtually the same *tabula rasa* effect was achieved (Dunn, 1972, p.35-36; p.151).

Just shy of one hundred and fifty years elapsed between the near-destruction of the Arawaks and the advent of English capture and rule, in turn spurring the emergence of the sugar economy, the birth of the plantation system, the importation of slaves from Africa *en masse*, and the incremental development of a state to facilitate these institutions. Behind all of the aforesaid was a powerful class of sugar planters, as in Mauritius. In the meantime, however, the Spanish colonists preoccupied themselves with tanneries, cocoa groves, a few sugar

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<sup>49</sup> There is an argument to suggest that Arawak resistance, ineffective though it was in its own time, provided symbolic inspiration to later, more impactful Maroon resistance. This is referenced in-text further on in the chapter.



works, scattered corn, yuca, cotton and indigo fields, as well as diverse livestock farming – all of which operated at different times on both a subsistence and commercial basis. There was, however, no “hint of wealth or luxury” (Ibid., p.151) present on the island, a reality the English planters would soon alter. In the end, it would be livestock farming that would eclipse its minor agricultural rivals and come to dominate the once-diversified economy of Spanish Jamaica. Columbus had brought war horses, beasts of burden, jennets, mares, cattle, and pigs to the region as early as 1494, and before long they were being widely reared and bred in Jamaica’s southern savannah lands (Shepherd, 1991, p.628). For the eventual supremacy of livestock farming there is both an internal and an external cause. First, the supply of labour and the historical extirpation of the Arawak population collided, because the latter significantly depleted the former. Since livestock husbandry was less labour intensive than plantation agriculture, it was favoured and embraced by the Spanish colonists in Jamaica. Second, demand for hides and leather was riding a high crest back in the Spanish metropole, consequently transforming them into the key Jamaican export of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Bishko, 1952). Livestock farming, or ‘pen-keeping’ as it was known locally, was later swallowed-up by the all-consuming juggernaut of sugar production, surviving as an appendage to the plantation monoculture by supplying sugar estates with oxen, mules, and heifers for draught carriage of crops and raw sugar, food provisions for slaves and other persons engaged in estate production, and manure for soil fertilisation (Shepherd, 1991). Thus, the expansion of sugar did not consign livestock production to oblivion, but rather rapidly diminished its importance, assimilated its symbiotic elements, and bound its fate closely to its own.

From the start, the colony of Jamaica was regarded by the English metropole as something of a ‘problem child’; unruly, chaotic, and violent. This fractious and weary attitude arose from three, key realities: First, and probably least importantly, Jamaica was never the desideratum of English expeditionism in the Caribbean, but captured instead as a ‘consolation prize’ following the failed invasion of Hispaniola. Lord Protector Cromwell had sent General. Robert Venables and Admiral. William Penn to freeboot the Caribbean for Spanish gold in 1654, supplying his commanders with some 8,200 men for their naval-military mission (Dunn, 1972, p.152). But Hispaniola proved impenetrable, claiming the lives of a thousand men in the process. Beleaguered and crestfallen, the two commanders steered their fleet to nearby Jamaica for recovery in 1655. By now, there were an estimated fifteen hundred

residents left on the island; a mixture of Spaniards, Portuguese Jews, Africans, and Arawaks, living in widely scattered cattle ranches along the south coast and in the one town – Villa de la Vega (modern-day Spanish Town) (Ibid., p.151). Thus, contrary to Hispaniola, Jamaica was neither very much wanted by the English, nor was it in a position to put up much of a fight against invasion. While an air of humiliation might have initially beclouded the nascent colony in the English imagination – a pitiful diminution of the geostrategic canvas that the Lord Protector’s ‘Western Design’<sup>50</sup> had originally envisaged – it was not long before “the laborious colonization of a single island became a priority”, if for nothing else but to begrudge the Spanish (Pestana, 2017, p.3). Accordingly, Jamaica was ceded to the English under the terms of the Treaty of Madrid in 1670, twelve years after Cromwell’s death in 1658. In sum, an ambivalence of attitude visited Jamaica from the very start, one which had implications for metro-periphery relations, resource-transfer, and colonial state-building, as we will see shortly.

A second, and more instrumental, reality that cast the rakish and burdensome light in which early Jamaica was regarded among English elites was the prevalence and magnitude of rebellion on the island; by and large Maroon, or escaped slave, rebellion. Enslaved Africans had been brought to Jamaica as early as 1517, first by Spanish masters to perform household duties (Beckford and Witter, 1982, p.14). By the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, some one hundred and eighty years later, around 85,000 enslaved Africans had landed on the island in the last fifty years alone. Some of these were sold onto other colonies, many of them, however, were forced to settle and perform back-breaking labour on the vast, sprawling sugar plantations that now crisscrossed the territory. Jamaica’s 17<sup>th</sup> century share of chattel slaves kidnapped and imported from the African continent was, itself, a mere trifle of the estimated 1.3 million brought to the Americas *in that century alone*, whose lucrative traffic was, at different stages, conducted by English and Dutch private traders, as well as under the chartered monopoly provided to the Royal African Company (Dunn, 1972, pp.229-232). In turn, the 17<sup>th</sup> century’s claim of 1.3 million is subsumed within, and dwarfed by, the transatlantic slave trade’s four centuries’ toll of between 12-13 million in human ‘cargo’ – many millions of whom were sacrificed at the altar of sugar, to satisfy rapacious consumer tastes in Europe and the colonies further afield, and to amass the spectacular wealth of a small handful of sugar

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50 The name given to Cromwell’s bid for empire in the Americas.

planters and refiners in the process. Once the Royal African Company's slaving monopoly was crippled, beginning in 1698 and culminating in 1710, the slave population flowing into Jamaica and the wider Caribbean grew exponentially. But already by 1670 the white Jamaican colonists were outnumbered by their African slaves, and by 1713 the ratio across the English Caribbean as a whole stood at one white colonist for every four black Africans (Ibid., p.237). The only solution, from the perspective of the white slave-owning minority, was to create hard, racialised social stratifications and typologies; typologies that would need to proliferate as the physical rape and impregnation of the female slave population by their white masters became ever-widespread.

As we saw in chapter 4, fear of slave retribution was a seismic component in the colonial psyche of the English and British Empires, both across space and time. In Mauritius, various brutal methods were deployed by the burgeoning state to recruit, retain, limit, and surveil the workforce, both during and after the *de jure* practice of chattel slavery. But unlike in Mauritius, where the steady inflow of coercive resources comparatively late-on in the British Empire's lifespan was at least in part contingent on the continuation of pacific results, maroonage and slave uprisings in Jamaica were, from the outset, seemingly endemic<sup>51</sup>. Just as soon as sugar plantations were enveloping the island's geography and economy, slaves were escaping and fleeing *en masse* to the country's mountainous interior, where they established autonomous communities in two, main clusters: the Leeward Maroons to the west of the island, and the Windward Maroons in the east. The economy of the Maroons was subsistence-based, comprised of hunting and the cultivation of small garden plots, and supplemented by frequent raids and ambushes on the coastal sugar plantations from which they had fled (Jaffe, 2015, p.52). Thus developed a sort of dual society and economy on the island (Beckford and Witter, 1982, p.14), where large-scale, sugar-based plantocracy exerted utmost brutality, oppression, and hierarchy within sealed (but manifestly porous) communities, on the one hand, and renegade Maroon communities fortified themselves in close proximity using guerrilla tactics, on the other.

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<sup>51</sup> Indeed, the Jamaican Maroons and their example provided inspiration for the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804), particularly after the French Revolutionary example of 1789 collapsed into bourgeoisie reactionism and Bonapartist status quo. Among Toussaint Louverture's men were Jamaican Maroons who had travelled to Haiti by canoe (Beckford and Witter, 1982, p.19), assisting in the formation of the first independent, black majority-led state in the Americas.

Image 6.1:



Maroons ambush British troops on the Dromilly Estate, Jamaica. Source: British Library.uk.

To the planters and the colonial state they were instrumentally engaged in building, not only did the Maroons represent a credible lodestar and motive for the flight of their slaves, they also represented the periodic and perennial threat of physical and material attack, such that they soon became “the dread of the British colonial state” (Wilson, 2009, p.46). Accordingly, a formal treaty was signed between Jamaican colonists, the emergent state under the governorship of Edward Trelawny, and the Maroons represented by Captain Cudjoe and Captain Accompong, for the Leeward clan, and the Captain Quao, for the Windwards. The 1739 treaties, following a decade of idiosyncratic, bloody, and inconclusive battles between the parties, hastened forth mutual recognition. Swathes of the Jamaican interior were recognised as autonomous Maroon territory, within which distinct legal and judicial systems, as well as distinct forms of economic production, were tolerated by the colonial state. Crucially, Maroons were to be recognised as free man, legally impermissible as slaves. In exchange, however, Maroons would agree to cease attacks outside of their designated territories, assist the British in suppressing future uprisings, and agree to capture and return any future runaways. Essentially, then, the Maroons traded military assistance to the British

for freedom and political autonomy (if not outright sovereignty), and in so doing demonstrated that they contained, among their multitudes, the capacity to be both “formidable adversaries as well as loyal subjects” (Ibid., p.47; Jaffe, 2015, p.52). This apposition reached its disquieting height when they provided assistance to the colonial state as counterinsurgents during the Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865, an event sparked by poor post-Emancipation conditions among Jamaican freedmen. Morant Bay sent shockwaves through the British Empire all the way to Mauritius and beyond, and further coloured the ambivalent lens through which the ‘raucous’ Jamaica was seen in the British metropole.

But that was much later. For now, let us refer back to the thoroughgoing observation that the spectre of rebellion in the colony of Jamaica was present from the very start, and was deemed so formidable by the island’s English colonists – crowned by an interplay of the planter class and state administrators – that it demanded a formal *modus vivendi* with the rebels. This was yet another early and preliminary check against the *enfant terrible* of England’s swelling colonial portfolio, Jamaica, one which compromised and complicated formative metro-periphery state-building enterprises. Maroonage and slave uprising existed in early colonial Mauritius, but for reasons advanced in chapter 4 (the relatively late acquisition of the previously uninhabited island, the homogeneity of the planter class, the general marginality but specific importance of the colony *as a supplier of sugar*) the developing Mauritian state was able to respond to, and neutralise, the threat with greater effect. This then moved things in a virtuous and cyclical direction, encouraging further resource transfer as returns on the investment were vindicated. In Jamaica, the argument has been made that holistic conceptions of sovereignty have always been closer to ideal than actual, undermined by everything from doomed but semiotically-charged Arawak resistance (Beckford and Witter, 1982, p.15), to the continuing influence and informal authority of community dons (Munroe and Blake, 2016; Jaffe, 2015), to insurmountable Maroon rebellion. Certainly, in comparison with Mauritius, challenges to sovereignty and stability on the Caribbean island throughout time have been severe, and form one of several reasons it was looked upon askance by a sector of English colonial administrators from the very beginning, reflected in a paucity of resource transfer for state-building purposes (examined in greater detail further on). In an inversion of the virtuous logic present in Mauritius, these paucities and insufficiencies likely only served to deepen the contradictions in colonial Jamaica, and caution against freer, discretionary metro-periphery resource transfers.

A third, final, and superlative cause of Jamaica's early reputation as England's most "boisterous" and "lawless" colony (Dunn, 1972, p.149) resides in the nature of formative battles for class hegemony on the island. Protracted across thirty years or so after the English first acquired the colony, a fierce showdown between buccaneers and the eventually supreme sugar planting class unfolded, each bloodily vying for control of the island's latent prosperity and future. What the English poet W.H. Auden called "the error bred in the bone"<sup>52</sup> was, in early Jamaica, geography: Positioned in the centre of the Caribbean Sea, she was the perfect strategic base for strikes against Spanish vessels, as well as for raids on the islands of Cuba, Hispaniola, and mainland Central America. The loot and treasure amassed from the raids could then be sold on to the merchants in Port Royal<sup>53</sup>, a venue that quickly earned the epithet 'Sodom and Gomorrah of the Indies' owing to the buccaneers' bawdy, brawling behaviour, and the plethora of brothels and taverns that sprung up to service it (Ibid., p.149). At the same time, Jamaica was blessed (or cursed) with superb agricultural resources, lined with rich, volcanic soil much like in Mauritius, expansive coastal plains, and considerably more acreage than that afforded in neighbouring English sugar colonies Barbados and the Leeward Islands. These combined ecological endowments naturally drew sugar planters large and small, from the English metropole but a good many also from Barbados and the Leewards, amid them scores of poor whites who had hitherto struggled to discover the land of milk and honey propagandised by empire. This motley constellation set about gobbling-up large tracts of Jamaica's coastal plains and interior valleys, importing slaves, and establishing fully-operative sugar works. Sir Thomas Modyford – Royal Governor from 1664 to 1671 and a sugar baron himself who had migrated from Barbados – did more than any other individual in this period to spur the aforesaid developments, lobbying the British Crown (newly re-emplaced following the termination of the Cromwellian experiment) for tax allowances and other incentives to aggrandise metropolitan and colonial investment and settlement in fledgeling Jamaican sugar (Ibid., p.150; p.154).

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52 From 'September 1, 1939' (Auden, 1979, p.88).

53 Port Royal was later destroyed by an earthquake and ensuing tsunami in 1692, whereas Sodom and Gomorrah, we are told, was put paid to by fire and brimstone.

The Spanish ceded formal possession of the island in 1670, but now the collision course was set for internecine class strife between the freebooting buccaneers and the sugar planters, inaugurating a period of around two decades where a deadlocked bicephalous elite competed for dominance of the colony and its destiny. Ostensibly, there were geographic spheres of influence that might have insulated the dual claimants to power from a zero-sum mentality and the violent skirmishes it kindled; the buccaneers quite congruously dwelled in Port Royal, while the sugar planters distributed themselves throughout the countryside. But not only did the buccaneers regularly squat the sugar planters' land, the often wretched conditions of early sugar farming in Jamaica meant that many small sugar planters, and many of the larger planters' indentured servants too, quickly fled to join the buccaneers during this period. To top matters off, slave ships – whose human contents the sugar plantations were ineffably ravenous for – were increasingly reticent to dock in Jamaica, so notorious and international was the reputation of the buccaneers (Antony, 2007, pp.8-20). Ultimately, then, the interests of the planters and their buccaneer rivals were incompatible.

If the buccaneering class were merely comprised of scattered chancers and inebriates, as is tempting to assume in retrospect, then they should not have been much of a class at all; more a conjunctural nuisance to the gradual and inevitable hegemony of the sugar planters. In fact, the impasse of the elites was prolonged some thirty years *precisely because* the Jamaican buccaneers enjoyed an ebb and flow of representation across the Atlantic in the English metropole roughly commensurate to the planters. Both sets of interests were delineated and articulated evenly enough for, at varying stages, each to claim the upper hand over the other (Sainsbury, 1889, pp.78-84; Sainsbury and Fortescue, 1896, pp.635-641; Fortescue, 1898, pp.511-518). Personalities came and went, providing patronage to one or the other faction, usually with an entrenched interest in the domain to which they appealed: The abstemious, land-owning Sir Thomas Lynch for the planters, the hedonistic privateer Sir Henry Morgan<sup>54</sup> for the buccaneers, to name but two. By the late-1680s, ill-content with appointments and policy emanating from the motherland, and disillusioned with the local agricultural challenges posed by tropical disease and climactic disaster, many (though by no means all)

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54 After whom *Captain Morgan* rum is named - a molasses-based product that, somewhere along the line, owes its existence to the pacification of Morgan's buccaneers at the hands of the sugar planters.

powerful Jamaican planters had returned to England, retaining their plantations as absentee landlords, in so doing establishing a trend that would have implications for the island's later development, as we shall see. Many small sugar farmers, too, had by now completely given up, unable to sustain the costs of production on untamed and precarious Jamaica.

The large farmers, at least, need not have fretted as it turns out, because the thirty years' impasse was finally broken, and the bicephalous elite halved, by a wholly exogenous event, namely the Glorious Revolution of 1688. With it, Stuart 'tyranny' was gradually superseded by Crown-Parliament equipoise, the landed interest in Jamaica embraced, the buccaneers ejected, and most remnants of small sugar farming assimilated into the vast complex of large plantations that would form the material basis of the colony of Jamaica for the next two centuries. In part, this critical juncture was effectively seized by the planters because they now had such a powerful lobby close to the epicentre of English power, formed of absentee landlords (Dunn, 1972, p.162; Zahedieh, 2010). Back in the colony, the Jamaica House of Assembly was fully and finally captured by the planters, and the makings of an institutionalised plantocracy established and consolidated. Heretofore vexed issues around the supply of slave labour and military provisioning, while never entirely relaxed, nonetheless eased off as the collective action dilemmas associated with dual or multiple elites were nullified. All the same, unlike in Mauritius, Jamaica's earliest development as an English colony was retarded, and partially determined afterwards, by the violent internecine strife of a bicephalous elite. Resource transfers and early state-building enterprises were insufficient in this period, meaning that capital had, for the most part, to be endogenously generated (Zahedieh, 1986), in turn creating a pattern of debtor-creditor relations that would haunt the planters and empower the merchant class over the coming centuries. Even basic provisions like food supplies and shelter were not forthcoming from the metropole (Pestana, 2017, p.182), and, perhaps most significantly of all, these paucities compelled a sizeable portion of the large sugar planters to quit Jamaica and return to England, thus seeding a widespread culture of absenteeism on the island. The latter point demands greater examination in relation to 'growth without development' and is duly expanded in the coming section.



In summary of section 6.2, three main factors account for the unruly and ambivalent manner in which formative Jamaica was regarded by the English metropole: Its status as a ‘consolation prize’ colony in the context of Cromwell’s Western Design, the persistence of Maroon rebellion culminating in the 1739 treaties with the Leeward and Westward Maroons, and the internecine power struggle between buccaneers and sugar planters, the latter finally triumphing with the advent of the Glorious Revolution in 1688. This initial elite ambivalence was more than merely discursive; it had path-dependent ramifications for early statecraft and development on the island. Necessary resource transfers and state-building enterprises were reticent or never undertaken as the late Stuarts backed different elites at different times, or otherwise looked on at the Caribbean colony through a mist of indifference. We turn now, in section 6.3, to examining how the legacies of these 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century processes conditioned later phases of Jamaican state-building and development.

### 6.3: The Sugar Barons, The Sugar Duties, and Jamaican Neglect: 1690-1961

Image 6.2:



Early colonial map of British Jamaica, 1740. Nb: Sugar estates identified via key in top righthand corner. Source: British Library.uk.

The newly-regnant Jamaican sugar planters formed an obstreperous and reasonably harmonious class, clear-sighted on their fundamental interests, and equipped with exponential wealth, power, and influence to realise them. Fabulous fortunes were amassed seemingly overnight, making a legend of West Indian sugar and the dynastical barons who owned it. As the kaleidoscopic era of Georgian England (1714-1830) progressed, several names glittered particularly brightly: In Jamaica, the Beckfords, the Taylors, and, later on, the Hibberts and the Gladstones<sup>55</sup>. In neighbouring Barbados and the Leewards, The Codringtons and the Draxes (Legacies of British Slave-ownership online database, 2020a; Parker, 2011). Popular demand for the ‘white gold’ cultivated in the tropics climbed at rates unrecorded in the history of global commodity markets, and the wrap-around-verandas and sash windows of Caribbean ‘great houses’ blossomed all over the colony of Jamaica, proclaiming not just ostentation and grandeur, but natural hierarchy and status. Sometimes only a stone’s throw away from these great houses, ever-larger numbers of slaves flooded into the fields to chop raw cane under the watchful eye (and whip) of drivers, not to mention the blistering sun. By the time the international slave trade was banned in 1807, around 2 million people had been wrenched from their homes in the African continent and brought across the heinous Middle Passage to the British West Indies where they were forced to live and die as slaves. More than half of those came to Jamaica, an island where “most white male colonists owned slaves” (Petley, 2018, p.8), and where hunger for slaves was continually replenished not solely by greed and depravity, but by the twin facts of “high mortality and low fertility” among the slave population (Reid, 2016, p.163). High mortality and low fertility though there might have been, by the era of slaveocracy’s twilight, in the 1770s, Jamaican slaves outnumbered 17,000 white colonists on the island by roughly ten-to-one (Petley, 2018, p.8).

For the absentee landlords especially, however, latent and sometimes manifest fears about the sustainability of such an order were surely assuaged by the luxury and splendour it afforded them. The episode recounted in Matthew Parker’s ‘The Sugar Barons’ is instructive on several levels:

“The story goes that George III was out riding with the Earl of Chatham, William Pitt the

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<sup>55</sup> Sir John Gladstone (1764-1851) was father of Whig Prime Minister, William Ewart Gladstone, and claimed compensation for 2,508 slaves with the passing of the Abolition Act in 1833 (Legacies of British Slave-ownership online database, 2020b).

Elder, near Weymouth when they passed a very pretentious equipage with numerous outriders in grand liveries. To the King’s fury, it made his own carriage look rather meagre. When he learnt that it belonged to a Jamaican, he exclaimed, ‘Sugar, sugar, hey? – all that sugar! How are the duties, hey, Pitt, how are the duties?’” (Parker, 2011, p.518).

For one thing, this exchange tells us something about the social space sugar planters occupied in 18<sup>th</sup> century Britain. But more importantly, the fact that the “very pretentious equipage with numerous outriders in grand liveries” was promenading the streets of Weymouth, and not, say, Kingston, is in itself of importance. George III’s question to Pitt the Elder, “how are the duties?”, while likely construed in jovial admonition, nonetheless touches on something very profound. As in Mauritius in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Jamaican economy had matured into a monoculture throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, and within that monoculture, growth was often spectacular. As early as the 1720s, Jamaica had overtaken Barbados as the largest producer of sugar in the British West Indies. By the end of the century, a paradox existed in which Jamaica was producing sometimes as much as two-thirds of the total output of all British West Indian sugar colonies combined (see Table 6.1), while at the same time desperately fending-off existential outside pressures from abolitionists emboldened by the American and French Revolutions.

**Table 6.1: Total sugar output vs. all other British West Indian producers, 1793-1805**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Jamaica</b>	<b>Other BWI Islands</b>	<b>% Jamaica</b>
1793	80,300	163,500	49
1794	89,800	163,300	55
1795	83,200	128,300	65
1796	83,400	131,200	64
1797	80,030	121,074	66
1798	83,350	150,700	55
1799	95,000	193,000	49
1800	110,300	177,830	62
1801	143,200	228,150	63
1802	144,100	261,450	55
1803	125,000	212,300	59
1804	120,000	239,000	50
1805	132,000	224,700	59

Source: Reid, 2016, p.160.

But paradoxes and contradictions had always attended Jamaica's sugar monoculture, and by extension its wider development and state-building projects. Growth does not *ipso facto* produce development, least of all the kind of public goods-orientated, broad-based social and economic development that emerged from the ravages of systemic oppression in Mauritius. In this nexus, having a class of globetrotting sugar planters with little or no vested interest in, or knowledge of, Jamaica – beyond that it should produce  $x$  amount of sugar, which in turn should fetch  $y$  price on the market – was decisive<sup>56</sup> (Interviewee 3 [GC], Feb 24 2021; Hall, 1964; Ragatz, 1931). Estimates are that, at any one time, half or more of the colony's large sugar planters were absentee landlords (Long, 1774, pp.377-378; Sheridan, 1974, p.385), the constituent parts of a class who faced little collective incentive to reinvest profits in a far-flung cash cow. What about the point that reinvestment might improve productive output and therefore boost profits? After all, the Mauritian sugar planters, comparatively locally-situated though they were, anticipated their productive bottlenecks and secured input solutions from the British metropole, thus engendering development extraneously. If they were not willing to plunge their own profits and riches into making themselves even richer, were the Jamaican planters not minded to plunder the British state, appealing via their strong expatriate lobby in the metropole? The problem is that the main form of support the British state granted to the Jamaican colony and its hegemonic planters was, from very early on, in the nature of price-distorting protective tariffs and preferences, which masked or cushioned the bulk of productive inefficiencies, counselling against local investment and development, and deepening the long-term socioeconomic contradictions of the Jamaican colony in the process. In short, state-support in the form of exorbitant price distortions in sugar markets forestalled the kind of state capacity enhancing transfers witnessed in Mauritius.

Some have commented that Jamaica was the “favourite colony” of Britain “even in competition with New England”, demonstrated in that “its external trade was almost exclusively” restricted to the imperial metropole (Gordon, 1957, p.1). But the sum total of this form of favouritism was neglect; not the ‘benign neglect’ promulgated by David Cameron on his visit to Jamaica in 2015 (see section 5.2 of chapter 5), nor the ‘salutary

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<sup>56</sup> The extent and impact of landlord absenteeism varied across the British West Indies throughout the centuries' long period of colonisation (Mason, 2013), but appears to have been consistently above average in Jamaica.

neglect' of *laissez faire* colonial policy in the North American mainland, but a rigid trade regime that created neglect and underdevelopment of Jamaica's socioeconomic and political resources, while at the same time enriching a small but formidable class of sugar planters. To the extent that the Jamaican planters were aware of these developmental deficits, they were likely hard pressed to make the connection with their own immediate interests. Yet the sugar barons were inadvertently under-nourishing the very capacities that might have saved their descendants from eventual decline, marking yet another path-dependent unintended outcome of power (Knafo and Teschke, 2020, p.20) such as blighted, though inversely, the institution-building Franco-Mauritians.

The international system of preferences into which Jamaica was bound fell under the Navigation Acts, the preeminent expression of mercantilist imperial policy. The first of these laws came into being in 1647. Thus, Jamaica was born into the mercantilist era, with its chartered monopolies and tariff distortions. The original rates on sugar entering Britain were 1/5d per cwt.<sup>57</sup> on colonial raw sugar, 3/10d on foreign raw, 4/9d on colonial refined, and 7/- on foreign refined. In addition, the Acts imposed stringent freight rules, ensuring all goods exported from the colonies be transported on British ships, aimed at strengthening the Navy and expanding commercial British shipbuilding (Gordon, 1957, pp.2-3). The Molasses Act of 1733 confirmed and extended the West Indian sugar monopoly throughout the Empire, levying prohibitively high taxes on all molasses, rum, sugar, and other sugar-based spirits imported from non-British colonies (typically French or Spanish) into the British North American colonies. Nine pence on the gallon was levied against all foreign-produced rums and spirits; six pence on the gallon against non-British molasses and syrups, while five pence per gallon was applied to foreign sugar (The Statutes Project, 2021).

Snowballing rebellion, non-compliance, and bootlegging in the mainland American colonies – whose supply was pinched by the Act, driving up prices for, among other things, New England's leading rum-distilling industry – finally led to the replacement of the original Act with the Sugar Act of 1764, reducing the rates by half but beefing-up revenue collection

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<sup>57</sup> 'd' denotes a penny in pre-decimalisation (pre-1971) English and British currency. 1d = 1/240 of a pound. 'Cwt' denotes a hundredweight - an imperial unit of measurement equal to 112 pounds.

measures in return. This sop by the British state would prove unsuccessful, however, with continuing West Indian favouritism in sugar and wider trade forming a key part of the *casus belli* for the American Revolutionary War. Crucially, the duties on *refined* sugar were prohibitive in both foreign and colonial contexts (including West Indian/Jamaican sugar), shoring-up the monopoly of British refiners. Similar mercantilist trade policies gripped Britain's imperial rivals, unsurprisingly, so Jamaica's fate as a producer of *raw sugar only* was sealed; raw sugar which was then to be exported to the British metropole where it would be industrially-refined and either consumed domestically or re-exported (Curtin, 1954, pp.158-159). Thus, the primitive underdevelopment of Jamaica's economic base was congenital to the structure of trade into which it was bound. Meanwhile, obversely, British industrial development raced ahead on the raw materials fed to it by its diverse colonies. For their part, the large sugar planters – who operated and controlled the Jamaican state throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century – were perfectly sanguine with this arrangement, because it supplied them with a lucrative monopoly in raw sugar throughout the British Empire. “How are the duties?” – demanded George III. The duties made the Jamaican sugar planters rich, many of them absentee landlords, but they also aggressively stymied any hope of early economic development on the island.

Contrary to parallel (though not contemporaneous) processes in Mauritius, they also cast Jamaican state-building enterprises into perpetual lassitude, because securing artificially-high prices for the planters' monocrop commodity, as well as ensuring steady flows of slave labour, accounted for the vast bulk of the state's functions in this period. As we saw in chapter 4, Mauritian sugar started to sweeten the world's markets in the late dusk of the protectionist era, first through entrance to British colonial markets on the same terms as the West Indian producers (thus shattering their long-held monopoly), then through the gradual emergence of the so-called era of free trade, touched-off by the repeal of the Corn Laws (1846) and other such developments in the British metropole. These dynamics revealed to the hegemonic and homogenous Mauritian sugar planters three major production bottlenecks – exigencies whose solutions were seminal in accretions of state capacity. In Jamaica, however, class relations, the productive base, and the state all matured under conditions of such extraordinary protective insulation that any comparable bottlenecks either went undetected by critical actors, or were deemed insufficiently-threatening to their immediate interests to

warrant collective action<sup>58 59</sup> (O’Shaughnessy, 1997, p.76). The absentee and local planters, while living extravagantly, did so increasingly on credit provided to them by local merchants and, later, by industrialists. ‘Anticipated earnings’ sustained the whole movement from creditor to debtor, costs of production were duly footed, and inefficiencies obscured (Gordon, 1957, p.10; Beckford and Witter, 1982, p.16). But this halcyon arrangement could not last forever, and the storm clouds posed by the abolitionist and free trade movements were gathering on the planters’ horizon.

For the time being, however, investment in anything other than the raw sugar monoculture in Jamaica would have been virtually incomprehensible, given the indomitable structure and balance of tariff advantage on the island that lasted throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. This, though, can be little more than an intermediate consideration in her later, postcolonial development, because we know that Mauritius was also a sugar monoculture. The key difference lies in the path-dependent impact that protection *nonpareil* had on Jamaica’s institutional development, particularly her state-institutional apparatus and capacity (Lodge et al., 2015). Unlike in Mauritius, technological backwardness was allowed to persist in production (Curtin, 1954, p.164), while professionalised, bureaucratic, and administrative faculties lay mostly in abeyance where a centrifugal, colonial state might have otherwise developed. Such features were surplus to the collective imperatives of the absentee and local planter class so long as an iron curtain protected their markets and prices. Growth, often prodigious growth, had been occurring in Jamaican sugar since before the Glorious Revolution and the vanquishing of the buccaneers. Development, on the other hand, was more elusive.

Elusive or absent, because development was, after all, occurring: In the British metropole, in London, and in the great, burgeoning industrial hubs of the North and the Midlands.

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58 With the exception of a constant, disciplined, and powerless labour supply, which was deemed an essential pre-requisite to plantation production by the planters and their state representatives from the very beginning, and which was secured through the systemic importation of slaves with much assistance from the metropole.

59 The most comprehensive record of planters’ demands and the laws they produced is contained in The Journals of the Assembly of Jamaica, kept from 1663-1826.

Liverpool and Bristol became international centres of shipping and shipbuilding, driven by the dual impetus of sugar and slaves. London had “by the end of the eighteenth century” become “pivotal in the financial and commercial organization of the colonial system... the City provided the banking system for the West Indies, and the system of slave-factoring in Jamaica was organized and funded from London” (Draper, 2008, p.433). Barclays, which started life as a Quaker bank, had direct interests in Jamaican plantations, as well as in the wider British West Indies. Lloyd’s of London, from inauspicious origins as a coffee house in Monument, rose rapidly to dominate the insurance of ships crossing the Middle Passage, finally obtaining a legal monopoly that lasted until abolition (Walsh, 2004). George Hibbert (1757-1837), who owned over 3,000 slaves on 19 Jamaican plantations at the time of abolition<sup>60</sup>, was justifiably feted as a philanthropic builder of British infrastructure. Along with fellow Jamaican sugar-planter and slave-owner Robert Milligan, he financed the construction of the West India Docks, completed in 1802 to combat the “intolerable strain” that the eighteenth century’s vast “increase in shipping” had placed on England’s docks (Williams, 1994, p.60). The project paved the way for the construction of seven further docks in the following decades. Together, these comprised the London Docklands so crucial to British trade and commerce in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Following the port industry’s decline in the latter 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, the West India Docks were regenerated as Britain’s second financial hub – Canary Wharf. In the heart of the district, ‘Hibbert Gate’ still stands as a memorial to the man whose vision and vast Jamaican fortune originally transformed it. Likewise, during the rapid industrialisation and urbanisation of Britain in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, John Gladstone (1764-1851) gained a reputation as something of a railway enthusiast, investing considerable sums of his plundered Jamaican wealth into expanding Britain’s critical transportation infrastructure: The Direct London and Manchester railways, the Caledonian Northern Direct, the Edinburgh Northern Junction, and the Birmingham and Oxford Junction all owe (or owed) direct debts of gratitude to Gladstone; and to the slaves who made him rich enough that he should discover his largesse.

Through this complex, multiscalar, and diachronic process, resources from Jamaica were systematically siphoned-off and used to generate development – institutional, infrastructural,

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<sup>60</sup> Hibbert and his family were awarded £103,000 in compensation by the British State following abolition, approximately £80 million in 2015.



and technological – across the Atlantic in the British metropole before they had had the opportunity to initiate transformation or change in their place of origin. The same cannot be said for the colony of Mauritius, and both the structure of preferences discussed, and the comparatively high instance of Jamaican absenteeism, were decisive. That the Jamaican sugar planters also constituted the Jamaican political class, with the institutional levers of state power at their disposal, could seldom have been doubted or denied for at least the first one hundred and fifty years of the colony’s existence under English and British rule (Interviewee 3 [GC], Feb 24 2021). The Jamaica House of Assembly was the only legislature in the colony, and almost all of its 43 seats were near-permanently occupied by large sugar planters. Even in the tenacious milieu of British West Indian parliaments, the Jamaica Assembly was “renowned for its exhibitions of ‘determined constitutional assertiveness’” (Petley, 2018, pp.7-9). In addition, the Jamaican planters helped establish, and were key components of, the London West Indian lobby – influential crucible and bully pulpit of the absentee landlords in the metropole, where much of the protective policy that would enrich the planters but ultimately impair broader socioeconomic development was deliberated and devised (Ibid., p.8). “Few of the leading planter families of Jamaica were without representatives in (the British) Parliament in the century prior to slave emancipation.” Between 1730 and 1775, no fewer than seventy British Parliamentarians were West Indians, of which twenty were merchants and fifty were absentee sugar proprietors: Twenty-seven linked with Jamaica, eleven with St. Christopher, ten with Antigua, ten with Barbados, four with Nevis, three with Monserrat, two with Grenada, and one each with Dominica, St. Vincent, and Tobago (Sheridan, 1974, p.60).

Whether they quite realised it or not, however, the Jamaican sugar planters were living on borrowed time. At the outset of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they could hardly have guessed how abysmally the coming century was going to treat them; how totally history was lining-up against them. First, the banning of the international slave trade in 1807 constricted the seemingly endless supply of slave labour on which they thrived. Second, the West Indian sugar monopoly was diluted when Mauritius was admitted to the market on the same terms in 1825, followed by the East Indies in 1835. Third, the abolition of slavery throughout the British Empire in 1833 terminated, once and for all, the brutal labour practice on which two centuries of Jamaican plantation-based accumulation had been built. Fourth, the Sugar Duties Act of 1846 finally removed the protective carapace of tariffs and duties that had incubated

the Jamaican planters' dazzling wealth and power, exposing West Indian sugar to world market prices in a landmark year for advocates of free trade that also saw the passing of the Corn Laws. Fifth and finally, European sugar beet production emerged in the 1860s and, by the end of the century, had become the new kid on the block, expanding manyfold the supply of sugar to the global economy. Scholarly and popular debates have raged on the causes and effects of all these ruptures, and indeed rage on. Abolition was borne out of economic and productive logic (Williams, 1944; Ragatz, 1963); on the contrary, plantation production was in rude health just prior to abolition, so abolitionism had a norm-inducing causality of its own (Drescher, 1977; Reid, 2016); the French and Haitian revolutions brought to bear more instrumentally on the British abolitionist movement than did the American Revolution (Petley, 2018); free trade merely disrupted the Jamaican sugar industry, it was sugar beet competition that ultimately maimed it (Curtin, 1954).

For our purposes, these debates might go either way. What is of central concern is that each of these ruptures represents a critical juncture, whereby the hegemonic Jamaican planter class was, on the whole, unable to surmount or use to its advantage the fundamental shift in socioeconomic and political conditions, in part because of the weak but matured (that is to say, path-dependent) state it had constructed, seduced and guided by the illusion of metropolitan protection *ad infinitum*. In effect, then, where in Mauritius production bottlenecks germinated metro-periphery resource transfers, enabling the planter class and the state to better navigate critical junctures up to independence and beyond, the nature of early trade-based supports in Jamaica foreclosed the need for alternative, resource-based transfers conducive to state-building and broad-based development. Much work has looked at, and disagreed over, the impact that Jamaican and wider absenteeism had on various aspects of growth, plantation production, and colonial consciousness in the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Mason, 2013, p.79), but comparatively few have drawn its relation, conceptually or empirically, to the phenomenon of the modern state; its extrinsic qualities and immanent capacities. In this sense, a significant elision has obscured an important piece of the puzzle regarding Jamaica's early, middle, and later colonial and postcolonial (under)development. Again, absenteeism alone is not sufficient in this connection, neither is mercantilist

protectionism<sup>61</sup>. Some combination of high-frequency (but dynamic) absenteeism, mercantilist protectionism, and monocrop economy – as well as the ambivalent attitude and exertions of English statecraft towards the nascent Jamaican colony shown in section 6.2 – created a perfect storm that would prove decisive.

With the rug of artificial markets and prices pulled catastrophically from beneath them, the Jamaican planters found the cycles of credit and debt that had come to define their relations with the local merchants completely unsustainable. This process did not result in the eradication of the Jamaican plantations, however. It merely meant that increasing numbers of indebted estates were absorbed as collateral by merchants and other economic actors (Sheridan, 1989, pp.78-85). Sugar production in Jamaica continued as a vital part of the colony's economic base, and new preferential trade deals were sought in the 19<sup>th</sup> and pre-War 20<sup>th</sup> century with Canada and the United States (Gordon, 1957), although nothing came remotely close to recapturing the privileges and riches of the pre-Sugar Act regime. Gradually, with the raw sugar interest eviscerated, the structure of Jamaican investment and production diversified, reaching a sectorial picture akin to the one illustrated in chapter 5, section 5.2 (particularly Tables 5.1 and 5.2) in the 1950s and '60s. But the deficiencies of the monoculture period imparted two grave, interrelated, and lasting path-dependent processes to Jamaican development. First, the comparatively weak colonial state, with a poorly skilled and poorly paid civil service, an inadequate local and regional government presence, and a lack of central authority and legitimacy, all of which lasted long into the post-independence period, all the way to the present in some cases (Interviewee 3 [GC], Feb 24 2021; Lodge et al., 2015; Hughes and Whyte-Givans, 2008). Indeed, a 2018 report by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) attributed a state capacity and civil service development score of

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61 This is not, after all, a simple free trade = development argument; Mauritian sugar markets were not 'free', per se, and Mauritian public goods were mostly operationalised by the state. Similarly, in the post-independence period, the EC/EU-ACP Sugar Protocol was a highly protective regime that aided in Mauritian development but had less success in Jamaica. Rather, this argument pertains to capitalist and state-development in specific, historically-grounded contexts. Some element of competition made apparent bottlenecks in Mauritius, following which the metropolitan and colonial state acted. Other bottlenecks and problems, we can assume, went undetected, or exceeded in their solutions the collective action of Mauritian actors and/or the state capacity at their command. Near-total, centuries' long, blanket protection of a narrow stratum of all-powerful sugar producers in Jamaica, on the other hand, ambiguated and/or nullified parallel bottlenecks (with the exception of labour shortages), deferring in effect the contradictions that underpinned them. Because Jamaica was a monoculture for the first two hundred years of its (under)development, these contradictions were naturally projected onto, and indivisible from, the society at large.

54 out of 100 to Jamaica, noting “significant room for improvement” (Underwood, 2018, p.xvi). While originally conceived for the benefit and advancement of a narrow and avaricious elite, at the cost of much human suffering – the resource transfers and supports provided by the British metropole to the Mauritian colonial state nonetheless functioned, eventually, as public goods, constituting and catalysing a process of state-building and state-corporate coherence within which the conduits of popular-elite discourse and mass representation and suffrage lay (Interviewee 4 [SS], Mar 24 2021; Saylor, 2012; 2014). To reiterate a point made in section 6.1, some state- and public goods-building, and state-corporate coherence, did of course exist in British colonial Jamaica. The Jamaican state’s sprawl and presence was certainly visible, for example, in its brutal ‘regulation’ of the labour market in the post-Emancipation period (Beckford and Witter, 1982, p.40), analogous with processes in Mauritius. But generally, for reasons discussed, such enterprises were of a different order than those which developed in Mauritius.

Second, the highly oligopolistic structure of plantation ownership in protectionist Jamaica was reproduced down the ages, so too was the absentee/foreign-owned nexus, as European and American capital flooded-in to buy-up the behemoth sugar plantations of bygone glory and horror (Burrell, 2016; Henry Fe, 1984). In Mauritius, *petit morcellement* – the subdivision of large sugar estates into smaller patches owned, predominantly, by formerly-indentured Indian smallholders – began in earnest in the 1860s and ‘70s. While a small peasantry did gradually emerge in post-Emancipation Jamaica too, it failed to attain the social force of the Mauritian smallholders, hemmed-in by spatial, geographic, and ownership legacies of largescale, monopolistic plantation production. Where once slaves toiled in the Jamaican cane fields, now armies of hired labourers worked long hours for low pay with few rights. Where once the Hibberts, the Gladstones, and the Taylors perused their grand estates on horseback, now the functionaries of Tate & Lyle and United Fruit surveyed their factories and fields by motorcar.

This great influx of foreign capital, often through the vector of multinational corporations (MNCs), served to reorganise, modernise, and grow the plantation production sector in 20<sup>th</sup> century and late-colonial Jamaica, and reproduced itself across other key and emerging industries like bauxite mining and banana production. But it also enhanced foreign

exploitation of domestic workforces, and – perhaps most familiar of all – it engendered “superficial growth” only, because it masked grave internal contradictions: Technological, productive, and efficiency contradictions; domestic social and class antagonisms; and conflicts between foreign and national-interest (Ibid., p.1). The 1951 Commonwealth Sugar Agreement (CSA) reprised the role of preferential market guarantor to the MNC-dominated Jamaican producers, numbing the imperative for technological improvement. Foreign and metropolitan inputs, such as fertiliser, were favoured over domestic supply chains, and racial and class hierarchy was maintained and inflamed and by a racially-exclusive, managerial elite based, largely, in Europe and the United States. Profits in sugar and other key industries grew from the 1940s up to and beyond independence in the 1960s (as shown in chapter 5, section 5.2), but this was scarcely repaid with largescale domestic re-investment (Ibid.). In short, this was a continuation of growth without development, a process whereby profits are generated peripherally before being extracted to the metropole and/or other locations, either to generate development or accrue value remotely. The relatively weak Jamaican state was, comparative with Mauritius and for reasons examined in this chapter, less equipped to manage this process successfully, as it was the entire transition to sovereign independence and the development conundrums contained in postcolonial, capitalist integration.

In view of the latter point, we can bring our foregoing comparative analysis decidedly into the postcolonial era while simultaneously making good on our conceptual framework’s commitment to examine both the agency of situated actors *and* the causal significance of unintended outcomes. We can consider it according to the latitude and scope available to two critical, individual actors in managing and implementing development policy immediately following decolonisation - ‘father of the Mauritian nation’ Seewoosagur Ramgoolam (1968-1982), and Jamaica’s popular reforming Prime Minister, Michael Manley (1972-1980). As seen in chapter 3, Ramgoolam was able to establish a highly successful Economic Processing Zone in Mauritius, via the EPZ Act of 1970. Mauritius’ EPZ amounted to a bespoke system of export openness, on the one hand, and relative closedness in the rest of the economy, on the other. Duty-free access was granted to all inputs imported for EPZ production, a suite of tax incentives was offered to firms and actors operating within the EPZ, and labour market segmentation ensured that the rules and conditions governing workers and employers in the EPZ were distinct from rules in the rest of the economy. Rodrik (1997) argues that this dual system, or ‘heterodox opening’ to trade, was a significant factor in the so-called Mauritian

Miracle. Certainly, it was a factor, and, viewed on its own terms, was a policy of great national importance. When Ramgoolam's Prime Ministerial successor, Anerood Jugnauth, led rival centre-left parties to power in 1982, the bulk of his predecessor's regime was retained. Outside programmatic interference, at the hands of the IMF and its like, was virtually non-existent.

By contrast, Jamaica's popular reforming Prime Minister, Michael Manley (1972-1980), was hamstrung in his parallel and contemporaneous efforts at national, economic self-determination. Manley was swept to power as leader of the People's National Party (PNP), winning 37 out of a possible 53 seats in the Jamaican Parliament. As part of his mandate, Manley implemented 'Operation GROW' ('Growing and Reaping Our Wealth') in 1973, designed primarily to assist small farmers acquire land through extendable leases, access to credit, R&D, rural infrastructure, and the opening of training cooperatives aimed particularly at unemployed youth (Weis, 2004, pp.464-465). But GROW's initial, modest success was short-lived. The 1973 oil shock clattered Jamaica's balance of payments, ushering in IMF loans and accompanying conditionalities that targeted public expenditure. Further loans and structural adjustments followed in the late 1970s and early 1980s, issued by both the IMF and the World Bank, deepening a programme of "state budget austerity, the liberalization of trade and interest and exchange rates, investment deregulation" and reductions of real wage levels (Ibid., p.466). The Manley government lost power in 1980 to the Jamaica Labour Party's Edward Seaga, a self-professed proponent of the emerging Reagan-Thatcherite consensus.

The common denominator in Ramgoolam and Manley's efforts was a desire to devise a domestic development policy that reflected the needs of domestic economic and social forces. The complex morphology of such needs and forces was shaped by social, economic, and political developments that occurred deep in Mauritius and Jamaica's respective histories, from primitive accumulation onwards. Crucially, however, this complex and ornate morphology also co-determined and prefigured the leaders' capacity to devise such effective and bespoke development policies. For reasons outlined in chapter 4, Ramgoolam found relatively sufficient political and institutional resources at his government's disposal in the early epoch of independence. The Jamaican Manley administration, on the other hand,

struggled in the same period to overcome domestic development hurdles raised higher by the 1973 OAPEC oil crisis, ushering in greater external involvement in the Jamaican economy by the early-1980s. Should Michael Manley have been a political pygmy – lacking in political capital and in requisite strategic and leadership nous – then we might apportion a sizeable share of the blame to his personal ledger. But Manley was a political weathermaker – one of the most formidable and popular leaders in Jamaican history, a popularity that endures to the present day (The Jamaica Gleaner, 2012). The divergence of Ramgoolam and Manley’s success lies ultimately, then, in the disparity of political and institutional resources under their command, prefigured by vast path-dependent colonial-era developments outlined in this thesis.

## 6.4: Conclusion

Picking-up where chapter 5 departed, this chapter has sought to finalise our comparative development ‘puzzle’, in which Mauritius and Jamaica experienced divergent and, to some extent, counterintuitive fortunes as they grappled with postcolonial capitalist development in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. As we saw in chapter 5, scholarly interpretations of Jamaica’s mixed developmental success generate some important insights, but are in the main limited by the nature of their focus. Likewise, while making critical strides in reversing the historiophobia, insufficient institutionalism, and material exclusivity of their scholarly counterparts, influential interpretations arising from the Plantation and CDT schools have, at times, overdetermined the outcomes of colonial capitalist accumulation, resulting in an underemphasis on the state and developmental variation. To remedy this, this chapter sought “the concrete conditions of class formation” (Munroe, 1990) in Jamaica in order to demonstrate the historical evolution of a weak, contested, and contradictory state by the time of Jamaican independence in 1962.

In section 6.2, the argument begins with primitive accumulation, contending that Spanish genocide against the island’s aboriginal population, the Arawak Amerindians, was so abject that virtually the same *tabula rasa* social effect was achieved as occurred naturally in the previously-uninhabited Mauritius. Nonetheless, a ‘two-headed’, or bicephalous, elite

emerged on the island following English colonisation in 1655: A class of sugar planters, and a class of buccaneers. The ensuing internecine strife, a persistent strain of rebellion in the colony (particularly later Maroon rebellion), and the fact that it was initially absorbed into Cromwell's Empire as a 'consolation prize', all combined to temper an ambivalent metropolitan attitude to early resource-transfer and state building. The Glorious Revolution of 1688 finally settled the class question in favour of the sugar planters and their landed interest, and an extended period of elite stability continued throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with the sugar planters crowned the undisputed hegemony of Jamaica.

But this period, the ambivalent metro-periphery relations, insufficient resource-transfers, and prevalent day-to-day hardship it fostered, had seeded three, key path-dependent processes: The collapse of the small peasantry, causing an oligopolistic structure of plantation ownership; the chronic need for endogenous capital, resulting much later in unsustainable planter indebtedness; and, most instrumentally of all, an absentee landlord class with powerful proximity to, and connections and overlap with, the British political elites in charge of imperial statecraft. As global demand for sugar skyrocketed, the lobbying power of the Jamaican absentee landlords became near-sacrosanct. This phenomenal bargaining power created longstanding growth without development in colonial Jamaica, as the island's economic monoculture was effectively enclosed in a carapace of distorting tariff preferences and protections that spectacularly enriched the narrow sugar elite but masked or cushioned the kinds of productive bottlenecks that had, in colonial Mauritius, generated state capacity, as well as later socioeconomic problems and solutions. The Jamaican state was, therefore, comparatively weak in the face of the upheavals of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries up to, and beyond, independence. Relative broad-based development, too, was consequently lacking, as partially demonstrated in the frustrated efforts of Prime Minister and political weathermaker, Michael Manley, as he attempted to implement domestic reforms and ambitious development programmes.



## **Chapter 7: Conclusion**

*'If it no go so, it go near so.'* – Jamaican proverb.

### **7.1: Introduction**

The central concern of this research has been to explain why post-independence Mauritius grappled with development and integration into a capitalist world economy with more success than post-independence Jamaica, despite similar or inverse economic inheritances, and other decisive variables in common. The golden thread tying these two cases together is sugar – a commodity that has had more impact on the economic configuration of the modern world than any other, with the possible exception of oil. Mauritius and Jamaica's histories are fatally entangled with the meteoric rise of the 'white gold' that helped finance the industrial revolution, propelled the transatlantic slave trade, made human populations wealthy, poor, fat, and fast. Local and domestic forces were, as we have seen, partly shaped by overarching trends in the global sugar economy, but they also fine-tuned those same trends in their immediate environments, and at certain junctures influenced them externally.

This concluding chapter brings the thesis and its coverage to a close, restating, synthesising, and contextualising the 'problem', the arguments as they exist, and the overarching and contributing research contained in these pages. Part of this contextualisation involves situating the thesis in a wider milieu of existing or potential research, as well as outlining areas that are incomplete and/or generative of potential issues. Chapter 7 is organised as follows: In section 7.2, we conduct an overview of the problematic at the heart of our thesis. In section 7.3, the same rehearsal and synthesis is applied to the surveyed literature on the question, briefly restating its strengths and shortcomings. In section 7.4, a distillation of our thesis is laid-out, showing the class and historical origins of the modern-day Mauritian and Jamaican 'puzzle'. Finally, in section 7.5, some general closing observations and future

questions are ventured, focusing particularly on the potential fruitfulness of further postcolonial political economy using a conjoined class-centred historical materialist and Historical Institutional method, but also on the limitation of some of the assumptions around development and attendant ‘puzzles’. Throughout these upcoming sections, care is taken to ensure counterpoint and comparison are readily reflected in the structure.

## 7.2: Overview of Problematic

As we saw in chapter 3, the advent of decolonisation and independence drew upon the small island state of Mauritius amid an ambience of low expectation and trepidation hailing from the Global North. Nobel Prize-winning economist, James Meade, anticipated that population pressure, sugar monoculture, and precarious interethnic relations rendered the outlook for peaceful development on the island ‘poor’ (Meade, 1961). V.S. Naipaul described the country as no less than an ‘overcrowded barracoon’, and warned of paralysis and penury (Naipaul, 1972). Upon its independence in 1968, it is undeniable that Mauritius’ economic inheritance, or material endowments, boded poorly for longer-term, broad-based socioeconomic development, if assessed on the basis of standard indicators. Sugar accounted for a staggering 96 per cent of the country’s exports, 45.3 per cent of its total employment, and contributed 27.6 per cent to its GDP (Laaksonen et al., 2006, p.18; Woldekidan, 1992, p.1), exposing it to particularly high risks of price volatility, weak or unstable terms of trade, so-called ‘Dutch disease’, and rent seeking, resource capture, and corruption (Harvey et al., 2010; UNCTAD, 2017, pp.7-8; Subramanian and Roy, 2001, p.10). Beyond this, Mauritius’ distance from the world economy’s ‘centre(s) of gravity’, the proportion of the country in a tropical climate, and degrees of ethnolinguistic fractionalisation within and across the population all seemed to further call into question its prospects of credible postcolonial ‘success’ in a competitive and uneven capitalist world economy.

In Jamaica, by contrast, the instances of Meades or Naipauls predicting rank socio-economic implosion were fewer and less evangelical. Jamaica’s economic inheritance was broadly

favourable compared with Mauritius'. For one thing, the world's largest economy, the United States, sat just several hundred miles to its north at a time when the U.S. accounted for roughly 40% of global GDP, meaning that Jamaica was far closer to the economic 'centre of gravity' than Mauritius. Jamaica also enjoyed a far less circuitous route to that other, re-emerging pole of economic prowess – Europe. Second, in line with the assumption that high levels of ethnolinguistic fractionalisation have an adverse impact on economic growth (Sachs and Warner, 1997), Jamaica fares better than Mauritius, and has done for all of its post-independence history. Third, Jamaica's economy began life as a sugar monoculture, but by the 1950s and 60s was already considerably more diversified than Mauritius' economy – and more diversified than many other postcolonial economies, too. Fourth, despite being battered by the Great Depression in the 1930s and 40s, the colonial economy of Jamaica was buoyed by rapid growth and largescale foreign investment in the 1950s and 60s (Beckford and Witter, 1982, pp.72-73). GDP grew at an average rate of 7 percent per annum throughout those two decades, peaking for five years between 1950 and 1955 at around 10 percent annually (Kirton and Ferguson, 1992, p.14). Fifth and finally, Jamaica, like Mauritius, was adorned with preferential trade deals before, during, and after its inception as an independent, self-governing country in 1962. Jamaica received the fourth largest ACP-EC/EU Sugar Protocol quota, at 118 696 tonnes per annum, ensuring steady and stable demand for Jamaican sugar from 1975-2000 at prices that far exceeded those attained on the world market, regardless of the efficiency or competitiveness of domestic producers.

Yet, it was Mauritius, and not Jamaica, that straddled and surmounted its developmental 'mountain', eliciting an outpouring of praise from its onetime detractors in the process. Four decades after Meade and Naipaul's initial prognostications on the small Indian Ocean island state, the 'Mauritian Miracle' dominates as the descriptive watchword in both scholarly and policy circles (Subramanian and Roy, 2001; Darga, 1996; Bunwaree, 2001). Revenues from Mauritian sugar were harnessed so effectively that the commodity almost singlehandedly acted as a flywheel for other, more advanced and higher value industry, for rapidly improving living standards, and, ultimately, for one of the greatest democratic development success stories of the postcolonial era (Interviewee 4 [SS], Mar 24 2021). By the year 2000, the share of exports to which sugar lay claim had dropped to just 14.9 per cent, the proportion of the workforce engaged in its production had declined to 9.5 per cent, and its contribution to GDP

stood at 4.4 per cent (Laaksonen et al., 2006, p.18). Concurrently, between 1977 and 2006, real GDP in Mauritius rose on average by 5.2 per cent annually, while the corresponding figure in the rest of sub-Saharan Africa was 3.3 per cent. Reframed in per capita terms, the average income of a Mauritian trebled over this period, while the average income of a sub-Saharan African grew by only 32 per cent (Subramanian, 2009, p.2). Mauritius boasts the best GDP adjusted for Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) in Africa – ranked eighty-sixth globally (CIA World Factbook, 2017). Perhaps most impressively of all, however, Mauritius achieved “a degree of equity, a remarkable welfare state, and a consolidated democracy” (Sandbrook, 2005, p.550) inside of a single generation. Where once sugar was king, textile manufactures, tourism, and financial services have come to redefine the country’s economic base.

In Jamaica, on the other hand, development since independence has been chequered, despite early indicators to the contrary. Between 1975 and 2003, per capita growth in the country averaged a sluggish 0.4 per cent per annum (Laaksonen et al., 2006, p.23), hindered in part by severe contractions in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. From 1997-2017, annual GDP growth (total output) averaged 0.47 per cent, making Jamaica “one of the slowest growing developing countries in the world”<sup>62</sup>. Trade deficits and high levels of public debt bedevilled the Jamaican economy over the same period, too. Between 1980 and 1990, Jamaica’s trade deficit nearly quadrupled, growing from \$216m to \$785m. Between 1990 and 2003, it nearly trebled again, with exports now equal to roughly two-fifths of imports (Weis, 2004, p.474). Not only did these imbalances reduce public revenues in Jamaica, they also fed a cycle of borrowing that rendered the country one of the most indebted in the world by the 2010s; peaking in 2013 with a debt-to-GDP ratio of 147% (IMF, 2019). The United Nations’ Human Development Index (HDI) has consistently found Jamaica’s human development poor in comparison to its Caribbean neighbours. To put these outcomes in more qualitative and quotidian terms, Jamaican institutions struggle to effectively disseminate and enforce the rule of law (Dawson, 2013), electoral fraud and manipulation are rife in the country’s political system, and have been for decades (Figueroa and Sives, 2002), patron-client relations

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62 Source: data.worldbank.org <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/jamaica/overview>  
<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/VC.IHR.PSRC.P5?locations=JM-1W-BB>

dominate national power structures, and organised crime, inter-gang street violence, and homicide rates have all increased since the 1980s (Munroe and Blake, 2016).

Sugar's role in the Jamaican economy has ebbed over the past half-century (Interviewee 3 [GC], Feb 24 2021). Unlike in Mauritius, however, this decline was not necessarily a salutary or linear complement to the 'modernising' transition from a primary to a secondary and/or tertiary industrial base. Despite its plethora of preferential trade deals, Jamaican sugar production flagged and declined: from 523,000 tonnes in 1965, to 217,000 tonnes in 2000, to 83,000 tonnes in 2016, with projections of a sharp reduction to 60,000 tonnes in 2020 (Laaksonen et al., 2006, p.25; USDA Report, 2017; 2019). Likewise, long-term export figures chart a downward spiral: From an annual average of 400,000 tonnes in the early 1960s, to 150,000 tonnes in 1980, to little more than 50,000 tonnes in 2017 (Laaksonen et al., 2006, p.26; USDA Report, 2017). "Without urgent and significant diversification", commentators have argued, Jamaican sugar faces "very little hope of survival", with small farmers most deleteriously and directly impacted (Burrell, 2016, p.103). And yet, for many small farmers and hired labourers, sugar remains the only – or at least the most dependable – game in town, reflecting wider regional and rural developmental unevenness and imbalance in the modern Jamaican economy (Interviewee 3 [GC], Feb 24 2021). 42,000 Jamaicans were employed directly in sugar in 2005. By 2016, despite sugar's quantitative etiolation, some 36,000 people still relied on the commodity directly for their livelihoods, including some 15,000 small farmers and 2,200 factory workers. In addition, 100,000 Jamaicans owe indirect employment to sugar, in allied industries like rum, molasses and ethanol (Burrell, 2016, p.111). Consequently, sugar remains, by some reckoning, the single largest employer in Jamaica (Reid, 2014, p.161).

### 7.3: Why Mauritius 'Succeeded' and Jamaica 'Failed': Overview of Literature

What, then, went right in Mauritius, and what went wrong in Jamaica? Our thesis is that the bulk of existing explanations, while revealing of important dynamics, cannot adequately

capture the historically-situated, multi-layered, and often complex process of class, state, and society-formation that unfolded to set Mauritius and Jamaica on their particular paths of capitalist development. In chapter 3, some of these explanations as pertain to Mauritius were outlined, and their shortcomings assessed. One body of literature coalesced around the notion that diverse strategies of economic openness had propelled Mauritius' 'miraculous' development over the past fifty years. Some scholars conceptualised this as a simple spectrum of 'more vs. less open' in matters of trade, and argued that Mauritius was one of a handful of 'pro-market reformers' in postcolonial Africa. As such, it was able to capture the dynamic benefits that accrue with trade openness, while many of its more 'closed' continental counterparts succumbed to stasis and chronic underdevelopment (Sachs and Warner, 1997). This view was, itself, found to be chronically lacking by our research, for no reason more elaborate than that it is widely contradicted by available and reputable data which shows that Mauritius in fact maintained a highly restrictive trade regime throughout its formative development as an independent state in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s (Subramanian et al., 2000, p.7). A more nuanced and reflective 'openness' thesis posited that Mauritius pursued a cautious 'heterodox opening' of its trade and economy in the years following independence. In this interpretation, a national Export Processing Zone (EPZ) was created, effectively segmenting the export and import competing sectors of the Mauritian economy; lighting the blue touchpaper under a domestic exports boom while simultaneously preserving and enhancing *most* of the protections enjoyed by domestic producers (Rodrik, 1999; Subramanian and Roy, 2001, p.15-19).

Our research found that, while Mauritius' heterodox opening embodied in its EPZ is undoubtedly part of its development story, it cannot be the load bearer for singular or primary causality. For one thing, a simple method of differences demonstrates a quixotic pattern of success and failure pertaining to EPZs in developing states throughout the same period. The inference, therefore, is that a successful national EPZ in a postcolonial setting is presupposed by an intervening, all-too-often absent variable: the administrative capacity to guide, manage, and adjust activity inside the EPZ and beyond. Another shortcoming of the heterodox opening thesis was found to be that it underplayed the significance of preferential trade deals between Mauritius and powerful states in the Global North. A third and final variant of 'openness' claimed that foreign investors were crucial to the success of the Mauritian EPZ

and economy at large, not chiefly because of the financial resources they brought to the island, but rather because of the knowledge they possessed and imparted (Romer, 1993). The problem with explaining Mauritius' prodigious development according to this logic, it was argued, is that the actual pattern of ownership in Mauritius' EPZ was disproportionately local compared with other developing states' EPZs. While it is true that the Mauritian government did not place any arbitrary restrictions on foreign involvement, it is equally true that domestic firms and capital consistently maintained a substantial or majority presence in the national EPZ throughout the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. Thus, attributing Mauritius' success to enlightened outsiders seems like a doubtful and even slightly disparaging enterprise.

Two further key theories of Mauritius' post-independence 'miracle' were probed. One located its origins in preferential trade deals – foremost, the ACP-EC/EU Lomé Sugar Protocol (1975-2000), and the GATT's Multifibre Agreement (MFA) (1974-1994). Mauritius was the single largest recipient of the Sugar Protocol's quota and guaranteed price system, and the argument goes that both Mauritian producers and the Mauritian state were able to capture these high rents before successfully pouring them into other, more advanced industry (Laaksonen et al., 2006; Subramanian, 2009). By 2009, the year in which all semblance of the Protocol regime finally disappeared, diversification had occurred so effectively out of and away from sugar monoculture, that the country was able to withstand and even make a success of the transition to a more open, market-oriented regime. Again, chapter 3 made the case that, while preferential trade deals help us to better understand Mauritius' trajectory within and around its EPZ regime, both are underhung by commensurate institutional and administrative capacity. There were eighteen other signatories to the Sugar Protocol, and while Mauritius was the single largest quota recipient under the terms of the agreement, the rents generated from it accounted for a larger share of GDP in several other participant countries. Variables pertaining to socio-economic growth, stability, and diversification are erratic across the sample throughout the Protocol years (1975-2009)<sup>63</sup>, and no one state experienced a multifaceted 'miracle' of the magnitude seen in Mauritius. Jamaica, which we shall come to shortly, was selected as our comparative case study in this thesis partly because it was also a Sugar Protocol recipient, yet fared less well under its terms across the same indicators.

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63 Source: data.worldbank.org <https://data.worldbank.org>

Finally, an assessment based on associational ties and social embeddedness marked a more historicist and institutionalist turn in the Mauritian literature. Here, the improbable Mauritian Miracle issued from a programme of broad-based development made possible by an earlier conjunction of two processes: One, the organic emergence of dense associational ties forged in villages and communities across the island, and two, the development and expansion of the theretofore narrow bureaucratic colonial state. Diaspora, immigration, ethnic ties, and cultural tradition figured prominently in the case of the former, in ways discussed. The conjunction that forced these two parallel processes onto a single, consolidated path was, according to this interpretation, a series of labour disturbances that occurred in Mauritius in the middle of the twentieth century (Lange, 2003). While Lange's framework was commended in our analysis for initiating a greatly welcome and long overdue foray into the twinned historical development of Mauritian civil society and the Mauritian state, it was critiqued for failing to delve properly into the emergence of the state as a function of domestic class relations, and the external relationship of the early Mauritian sugar planters to the British imperial metropole. Consequently, the order of causality was, it was felt, upended in this account: The 'embedding' effects of Mauritian civil society, important though they were, were *tertium quid* products of highly path-dependent forerunning processes; processes in whose ambit the sources of the so-called Mauritian Miracle are ultimately recoverable. In fact, coverage in chapter 3 closed by observing that all of its evaluations, while often insightful, nonetheless suffer from chronofetishism – an analytic limitation whereby the present is effectively sealed-off from the past, obscuring historical contexts and making synchronic phenomena appear static, self-constituting, and autonomous (Hobson, 2002, pp.6-7). References to 'strong' or 'good' institutions and governance as prerequisite to later Mauritian development are, in the main, conceived immaculately; little effort is made to adequately explain the provenance of those same institutions, state or otherwise.

Meanwhile, chapter 5 examined and assessed the existing literature on Jamaica and, as with Mauritius, found it to be compelling, intermittently illuminating, but ultimately unsatisfactory. Our thesis is that Jamaica's later developmental outcomes can only be meaningfully understood with reference to path-dependent processes that unfolded in its colonial past, sown in dynamics of class and state-formation. Explanations in chapter 5, on



the other hand, largely privileged synchronic, post-independence causal phenomena. One set of arguments focused on late-twentieth century neoliberal restructuring, arguing that Washington-directed policies – instigated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, and arbitrated by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) – gradually compelled successive Jamaican governments to abandon their domestic agricultural sector, or served, at any rate, to seriously undermine it (Burrell, 2016; Richardson-Ngwenya, 2010; Richardson, 2009; Harrison, 2001; Weis, 2004). This, in turn, caused the sector’s virtual collapse, sending a series of near-catastrophic social and economic reverberations across Jamaica as a whole (Ibid., 2004). Specifically, this framework holds that Washington’s policy programme exerted three, key real-terms effects on Jamaica: First, it rolled-back the frontiers of the Jamaican state, as domestic development programmes were retrenched and external forces were left to run the economy. Agricultural budgets declined as a share of government expenditure, with detrimental consequences for output and employment. Two, privatisation of sugar production, as well as further trade liberalisation following the birth of the WTO and the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) in 1995, greatly compromised Jamaica’s food security, cementing its transition as a net-importer of agricultural commodities. Three, because of agriculture’s, and particularly sugar’s, persistent and disproportionate importance to Jamaican political economy, its woes have caused dynamic spillover effects on other areas of economy and society.

Our analysis found that, while capturing important elements of rupture and transition in Jamaican agriculture and political economy over the past forty years, this body of literature contains flaws. For one thing, it tends towards something of a catch-22 conclusion, inasmuch as it assumes the Jamaican state’s substantive capacity to effectuate policy has been significantly reduced in the neoliberal period, yet generally concludes by advocating a raft of state-based solutions all geared towards reclaiming sovereignty as “a social, economic and environmental imperative” (Ibid., p.484). For another thing, our analysis asks: If some postcolonial states in the global south are manifestly more able to resist procrustean external neoliberal reforms and persist with a bespoke mixture of openness and protection – as in Mauritius – then why are others, such as Jamaica, less able to? Strikingly, Jamaica, like Mauritius, implemented its own EPZ system. Only in Jamaica, the EPZ is read as either a negligible force or a facilitator of greater neoliberalism, while in Mauritius it is read as a key

pillar of bespoke economic policy and development. The implication of our coverage is that, as per chapter 6, the underlying causal explanation for variance lies before the dawn of neoliberalism, in the balance of class and institutional forces that might latently accept or oppose it.

Elsewhere, but closely linked, an argument is made to the effect that state-building in the Anglo-Caribbean bears an instrumental relation to economic development. In Jamaica – so this thesis claims – state capacity has consistently declined since independence, from a high to a low-level, with predictable ramifications for socio-economic development. The main forces behind these shifts in centralised capacity arose from an interaction of neoliberal globalisation and precarious informal corporatist arrangements between the Jamaican state and community strongmen (Warmington-Granston and Blake, 2020). On the contrary, our research finds that Jamaica already had a relatively weak or compromised state at independence, hobbling its ability to manage or resist external forces and interests. It is claimed by Warmington-Granston and Blake that impressive growth figures in Jamaican GDP in the 1950s and 60s owed principally to the wherewithal of the late-colonial and early-postcolonial Jamaican state, and the developmental interventionism it orchestrated (Ibid.). In reality, this growth is more accurately characterised as ‘growth without development’, a persistent phenomenon in earlier colonial Jamaican history; the tip of an iceberg whose bulk was exposed in chapter 6, and recapitulated in section 7.2. Rapid Jamaican growth in the 1950s and 60s was actually borne by post-World War II influxes of FDI, predominantly into oligopolistic industries owned and controlled by foreign capital, where profits were siphoned off before they could generate significant local benefits (Henry Fe, 1984).

Two further explanations of Jamaica’s postcolonial development were reviewed and critiqued. Linked, again, to the two frameworks outlined above, a rich and persuasive literature exists on the removal of preferences that befell, and continues to befall, Jamaica, as well as many other economies in the Global South (Richardson, 2009; Richardson-Ngwenya, 2010; Laaksonen et al., 2006). Of central concern was the staggered demise of the Lomé Sugar Protocol, owing in part to sugar’s continuing structural significance to the Jamaican economy. The sudden cessation of guaranteed and generous EU sugar rents thus hit

Jamaica's sugarcane farmers and producers very hard indeed, and the opportunities in the rest of the economy that typically accrue from effective diversification and development have been insufficient to fully absorb the shock. However, while studying the removal of Jamaican preferences is hugely important for understanding the material predicament that prevails upon the country's sugar farmers and other key agricultural workers, it cannot, by its nature, take us any further back than the 1990s in its exposition of Jamaica's schisms. In Mauritius, our analysis made the point that the 'broad shoulders' of the economy were indeed broad enough to absorb any shock generated by the twilight of EU-ACP preferences. Endogenous to sugar, there was enough efficiency and domestic support to survive. Across the economy as a whole, diversification had taken place, ensuring opportunities for resource re-allocation. Therefore, the question becomes: Why had a similar process not taken root in Jamaica, contemporaneous with a period when rents and demand for its major historical commodity had been so reliably high? The removal of preferences framework is intrinsically incapable of answering this prefiguring question.

Finally, a fourth assessment of postcolonial Jamaica's relative capitalist 'failure', rooted in the critical scholarly tradition of Caribbean Dependency Theory (CDT), made strides towards addressing the issues of blocking presentism and chronofetishism that limited previous approaches, just as they had limited the core of Mauritian analyses in chapter 3. While not singular in perspective, CDT and the Plantation paradigm fundamentally holds that Jamaica was integrated into the world economy after 1962 haunted by several historical, structural impediments that were, and remain, region-specific. First among these was the plantation system of productive and social organisation, which generated a unique and consequential form of racial stratification, as well as foreign-owned, primary export-oriented economic dependence (Beckford and Witter, 1982; Girvan, 2006). In addition to engaging in a more historical and institutional mode of analysis, chapter 5 commended CDT for attempting a depth of understanding of the intersubjective, epistemic, and psychological deficits impressed by highly-racialised colonial rule, and emphasised that this thesis owes an intellectual debt to its forerunning research. Nevertheless, some of its central tenets were found to generate friction with aspects of both the *prima facie* and confirmed findings of this thesis, in ways outlined.

## 7.4: Why Mauritius ‘Succeeded’ and Jamaica ‘Failed’: Overview of Thesis

If the past holds the key to unlocking Mauritius and Jamaica’s divergent postcolonial trajectories, what were those respective pasts? In chapter 2, we took care to foreground these empirical questions with a robust, holistic conception of development rooted in Political Marxist and Historical Institutionalism frameworks. Political Marxism, we saw, privileges a strong historicist perspective and a conception of social relations that emphasises the centrality of power and social conflict to the analysis of history. It draws on specific, sometimes counterintuitive, historical trajectories of development, as well as the concrete role of social agents in shaping capitalist history. Evolving class relations and differing balances of class power are key determinants. Historically successful social classes and the agents that comprise them typically reproduce their power via a diverse and complex repertoire of institutionalisation, often through state-building that deepens, broadens, and perpetuates capitalist development for both ruling and labouring classes, however asymmetric. Specific (situated) actors, counterintuitive innovations, and unintended outcomes are all emphasised (Brenner, 1977; 1982; Knafo and Teschke, 2020). Historical Institutionalism, meanwhile, furnished our framework with a systematic understanding of how diachronic and synchronic units of analysis interact to generate developmental outcomes. Path dependence, it was argued, is implicit in the class-centred and historicist methodology of Political Marxism in Brenner and beyond, because the balances of class power and the processes of institutionalisation that these configurations produce are partially determined by the timing and sequence of prior events, as well as reinforced and reproduced through positive feedback dynamics. Alongside this, HI’s conception of critical junctures facilitates an understanding of how large shifts occur to reinforced pathways and processes (Falletti et al., 2016; Pierson, 2004; Fioretos, 2011).

With our hybrid framework in place, we advanced an answer to the question at the core of our thesis in chapters 4 and 6, building on and departing from existing scholarly works on Mauritius and Jamaica’s colonial histories and development. Mauritius was discovered and settled briefly by the Portuguese and Dutch in the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, before

the French claimed it as part of their empire, only to cede it to the British in 1814 following the defeat of Napoleon. The absence of an indigenous population in Mauritius meant the absence of existing social structures prior to colonisation. Once colonists properly settled the tropical island, this lack of endogenous power contestation allowed, in part, for the emergence and consolidation of a uniquely cohesive and homogenous class of sugar planters. Another crucial factor came as a consequence of the imperial realpolitik referenced above, whose distant fibrillations conspired to forestall the embedding of one or multiple productive sectors in Mauritius – or Isle de France – during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Into this *tabula rasa* social mix, proto-capitalists and slaves engaged in a heterodox mode of primitive accumulation (Marx, 1990). That sugar should have become the commodity to seize both parties, ossify their relations, and colour their destinies was by no means pre-determined. It resulted, rather, from a boom in the commodity that started in 1825, with the repeal of a preferential tariff on West Indian sugar, and continued long into the middle of the century with a rise in global demand, and the lifting of a maritime ban on foreign ships in British ports. As the sugar boom progressed, making the predominantly Franco-Mauritian sugar planters wealthy and powerful, three problems or economic ‘bottlenecks’ became legible. First, a labour shortage was exacerbated by the British Empire’s abolition of slavery in 1833 (effective 1835). Second, Mauritius’ transportation infrastructure was highly inferior in the face of dramatically expanding production. Third, it suffered from a malaise of undiversified cane stock, making it vulnerable to pests and pathogens (Saylor, 2012; 2014).

Unlike elites in colonial environments with a more heterogeneous social inheritance, the Mauritian sugar planters were able to overcome dilemmas of collective action owing to their unique cohesion and homogeneity, and in turn appeal to the Mauritian state for assistance in solving their bottleneck problems. The resulting process of widespread labour regulation and public goods investment was, in the case of the former at least, brutal. But it was also highly symbiotic, in that it fixed the planters’ problems *and* spawned and enhanced Mauritian state capacity manifold (Ibid.). Because Mauritius was both a marginal part of the British Empire but also an important supplier of sugar, its administrators were granted both discretion and support by the metropole. But in-keeping with our conceptual framework’s sensitivity to, and emphasis on, unintended longer-term consequences arising from hegemony and power (Knafo and Teschke, 2020, pp.20-21), the resource transfers that solved the sugar planters’ bottlenecks and generated state and institutional capacity also sowed the seeds of their

downfall. State capacity, bureaucratisation, and institutionalisation established deep in the shoals of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to facilitate capital accumulation off the back of a commodity boom in sugar, finally provided the conduits for popular-elite intercourse and, later, mass representation and suffrage. Shifting into the early and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century – though still possessing of residual and dwindling influence and power – the Franco-Mauritian sugar planting elite lost its *force majeure* to the Indo-Mauritian majority it initially brought to the island as indentured servants (Interviewee 4 [SS], Mar 24 2021).

Thus, as we arrive at the moment of Mauritius' independence in 1968 and re-join the many analyses and authors of chapter 3, we see that Mauritius' anomalously 'strong institutions' of the postcolonial era did not fall from the sky, nor were they immaculately conceived. They were, in fact, the shadow cast initially by the collective agency and interests of the sugar planter class, a shadow that become reproduced in ever more complex, extensive, and cemented forms over time. In its complexity, however, its oligarchic and patrimonial intent became gradually subsumed and usurped by greater degrees of universalism. All of the synchronic causes for the so-called Mauritian Miracle advanced in chapter 3 are prefigured by these path-dependent historical developments.

In Jamaica, as in Mauritius, we began with primitive accumulation, contending in chapter 6 that the Spanish genocide against the island's aboriginal population, the Arawak Amerindians, was so abject that virtually the same *tabula rasa* social effect was achieved as occurred naturally in the previously-uninhabited Mauritius. Nonetheless, a 'two-headed', or bicephalous, elite emerged on Jamaica following English colonisation in 1655: A class of sugar planters, and a class of buccaneers. The ensuing internecine strife, a persistent strain of rebellion in the colony (particularly later Maroon rebellion), and the fact that it was initially absorbed into Cromwell's Empire as a consolation prize, all combined to temper an ambivalent metropolitan attitude to early resource-transfer and state building. The Glorious Revolution of 1688 finally settled the class question in favour of the sugar planters and their landed interest, and an extended period of elite stability continued throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with the sugar planters crowned the undisputed hegemony of Jamaica. But this period, the ambivalent metro-periphery relations, insufficient resource-transfers, and prevalent day-to-day hardship it fostered, seeded three, key path-dependent processes: The

collapse of the small peasantry, causing an oligopolistic structure of plantation ownership; the chronic need for endogenous capital, resulting much later in unsustainable planter indebtedness; and, most instrumentally of all, an absentee landlord class with powerful proximity to, and connections and overlap with, the British political elites in charge of imperial statecraft.

As global demand for sugar skyrocketed, the lobbying power of the Jamaican absentee landlords became near-unimpeachable. This phenomenal bargaining power created longstanding growth without development in colonial Jamaica, as the island's economic monoculture was effectively enclosed in a chrysalis of distorting tariff preferences and protections that spectacularly enriched the narrow sugar elite but masked or cushioned the kinds of productive bottlenecks that had, in colonial Mauritius, generated state capacity, as well as later socioeconomic problems and solutions. The Jamaican state was, therefore, comparatively weak in the face of the upheavals of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries up to, and beyond, independence. Relative broad-based development, too, was consequently lacking. Some state- and public goods-building, and state-corporate coherence, did of course exist in British colonial Jamaica. The Jamaican state's sprawl and presence was certainly visible, for example, in its brutal 'regulation' of the labour market in the post-Emancipation period (Beckford and Witter, 1982, p.40), analogous with processes in Mauritius. But generally, such enterprises were of a different order than those which developed in Mauritius (Interviewee 3 [GC], Feb 24 2021). Likewise, just as the creation of state capacity, bureaucratisation, and institutionalisation in Mauritius was at the behest of the Franco-Mauritian planter class, making them rich but simultaneously sowing the seeds of their longer-term decline, the mercantilist privileges enjoyed by the Jamaican sugar barons made them fatally vulnerable to the 'winds of change' coming from free trade and abolitionist movements. In the case of the former, it was Mauritius that diluted Jamaica's monopoly, with its accession to British sugar markets on equal terms in 1825. Two histories entwining; one young, one considerably older. A single critical juncture enveloping two colonial spaces, generating diverse, even antithetical, outcomes.

This comparative developmental trajectory can be honed down to the individual or critical-actor level, and considered according to the latitude or scope available to said actors in

managing and implementing development policy immediately following decolonisation. As seen in chapter 3 and referenced previously in this conclusion, Mauritian Prime Minister (1968-1982) and ‘father of the nation’, Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, was able to establish a highly successful Economic Processing Zone in Mauritius, via the EPZ Act of 1970. Rodrik (1997) argues that the dual system, or ‘heterodox opening’ to trade, represented by the EPZ was a significant factor in the so-called Mauritian Miracle. Certainly, it was a factor, and, viewed on its own terms, was a policy of great national importance. When Ramgoolam’s Prime Ministerial successor, Anerood Jugnauth, led rival centre-left parties to power in 1982, the bulk of his predecessor’s regime was retained. Outside programmatic interference, at the hands of the IMF and its like, was virtually non-existent.

By contrast, Jamaica’s popular reforming Prime Minister, Michael Manley (1972-1980), was hamstrung in his contemporaneous efforts at national, economic self-determination. Manley was swept to power as leader of the People’s National Party (PNP), winning 37 out of a possible 53 seats in the Jamaican Parliament. As part of his mandate, Manley implemented ‘Operation GROW’ (‘Growing and Reaping Our Wealth’) in 1973, designed primarily to assist small farmers acquire land through extendable leases, access to credit, R&D, rural infrastructure, and the opening of training cooperatives aimed particularly at unemployed youth (Weis, 2004, pp.464-465). But GROW’s initial, modest success was short-lived. The 1973 oil shock clattered Jamaica’s balance of payments, ushering in IMF loans and accompanying conditionalities that targeted public expenditure. Further loans and structural adjustments followed in the late 1970s and early 1980s, issued by both the IMF and the World Bank, deepening a programme of “state budget austerity, the liberalization of trade and interest and exchange rates, investment deregulation” and reductions of real wage levels (Ibid., p.466). The Manley government lost power in 1980 to the Jamaica Labour Party’s Edward Seaga, a self-professed proponent of the emerging Reagan-Thatcherite consensus.

The common denominator in Ramgoolam and Manley’s efforts was a desire to devise a domestic development policy that suited the needs of domestic economic and social forces. The divergence of their success lies in the disparity of the political and institutional resources at their disposal, prefigured by colonial-era developments shown in this thesis.



## 7.5: One-size-does-not-fit-all; Closing Observations and Future Questions

‘Development’ is a highly contested concept, and the turf on which it is contested extends to the present day. The notion of linear, stadial, or functional ‘development’, once popular across the scholarly and intellectual landscape, has been interrogated by a half century or more of mass decolonisation. The deductive heart of liberal or Marxist axioms on the question might have been retained, but a commitment to examining the complexity of late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century capitalism – across locales with disparate and distinct, yet interlocking and interdependent, histories and geographies – has been increasingly honoured.

This thesis, in peroration, does not claim for itself a unique methodological contribution therefore, nor a grand epiphany to the effect that capitalism simultaneously generates dynamic difference *and* uniformity. Such epiphanies have been had. Rather, this research labours at the intersection of said epiphanies and further insights on the systematic role of time in the development of politics and human societies. It is an attempt to make good on the acknowledgment of complex difference and uniformity by delving headfirst into two instances of it, filling-out contemporary or synchronic ‘puzzles of divergence’ with deep, or ‘thick’, readings of history. In so doing, two things become apparent. One: That our particular puzzle, isolated from a great number of potential cases, is, itself, just a single piece of a wider puzzle on postcolonial capitalist development. This latter puzzle will probably always be, to one extent or another, in a state of perpetual incompleteness, but it is our contention that similar, historically-inflected, detailed idiographic studies of environments trans- and disfigured by European colonialism might serve in advancing such endeavours. Only by de-pixelating the more granular aspects of Mauritius and Jamaica’s respective historical developments – chiefly, the balance of domestic class forces and resources, and the processes of institution-building that these entailed – were we able to cast a discerning light on the larger, though not inaccurate, predicates; ‘sugar monoculture’, ‘postcolonial capitalist economy’, and so on. Such a diachronic, multiscalar lens need not try and do too much to do

a great deal, if it is trained on a tightly selected, richly-drawn case, or small number of cases. By replicating this method across an expansive pool, something akin to ‘order’ or ‘patterns within difference’ might become legible, just as radiant symmetries and antinomies appeared as we carefully unravelled our cases side-by-side.

Two: Framing this whole question as a ‘puzzle’ is, in itself, a function of a particular way of thinking, which in all likelihood operates in a ‘cart before horse’ manner. Why should we assume that Mauritius and Jamaica should ‘develop’ along similar lines in the first place, simply because they share a handful of structural features? They were both once British colonies, their stunning natural beauty became, in a terrible paradox, the canvas against which inhuman systems of chattel and plantation slavery played-out, they were both economically subservient to the avaricious motions and rhythms of global sugar production and demand, in the same global capitalist marketplace. But human beings share many of the same physical features, and we do not necessarily *assume* or *expect* human beings to behave in an identical or similar fashion under identical or similar conditions. Just as states and economies should not be anthropomorphised, nor should they be reified. Social institutions are, after all, institutions by and for human beings, of whom difference in behaviour is accepted, at least in part, as a by-product of distinct experiential and environmental factors. Put simply, ‘development puzzles’ such as ours are analytically important partly and precisely *because* they allow us to question the assumptions and expectations of uniformity that launch them. Insofar as remnants of Eurocentrism and the colonial gaze inform these assumptions, comparative analysis allows us to meet and expose these qualities *on their own terms*. For, once one has inductively, qualitatively prised-open the material histories of Mauritius and Jamaica – carrying with them only a few methodological tools borrowed from class, the institutionalisation and reproduction of power, and the limiting and enabling properties of time – the question one is left asking is: “Why did anyone expect these countries to come out of the wash in the same colours?” There are exceptions, and there are nuances along the way, but the logic of many or most development programmes, and the thrust of institutional practice, has tended in the direction of isomorphic or nomothetic development, visible across Mauritius and Jamaica in ways discussed. This is before we even arrive at questions of good or bad faith in the design of said programmes, or how or whether to ameliorate deficits in state capacity or other variables that might address underlying developmental contradictions. Along lines argued by Pierson in *‘Politics in Time’* (2004)

(see: Chapter 2), this is not a determinist set of claims or conclusions, but a caution to take particular histories seriously, quite away from the all-too-often vacuous incantation that ‘history matters’.

Another similarity that joins Mauritius with Jamaica, and one whose discussion and celebration has been largely precluded or truncated by the nature and focus of our problematic, is that they were both countries remade in their cultures and identities by people who, in almost all cases, originated elsewhere. That ‘elsewhere’ was, for the most part, obscured in the process and legacy of their forced displacement. Yet, as they fought for, and attained, greater degrees of freedom, what it meant to be ‘Mauritian’, what it meant to be ‘Jamaican’, became collectively if amorphously embraced, transcending the ultimate tragedy of its conception. In this lies as great a pean to triumph-over-adversity as the human story has produced, regardless of the respective trajectories the countries took. Diaspora, indelible creativity, shared suffering, shared joy, collective memory – they make a moveable feast.

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## **List of Interviews**

**Interview 1** - Conducted in Brussels, Jan 16 2020 - European Association of Sugar Manufacturers (CEFS).

**Interview 2** - Conducted in Brussels, Jan 16 2020 - Independent sugar trader.

**Interview 3** - Conducted in London (via Zoom) - Feb 24 2020 - Permanent Secretary, Jamaican Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

**Interview 4** - Conducted in London (via Zoom) - March 24 2020 - Director, Mauritius Sugarcane Industry Research Institute.

**All** interviews conducted by Kieran Andrieu.

(Interviewee 1 [FD], Jan 16 2020)

(Interviewee 2 [WD], Jan 16 2020)

(Interviewee 3 [GC], Feb 24 2021)

(Interviewee 4 [SS], March 24 2021)