

Bicameralism, small states style

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Abstract: In principle, one would imagine that unicameral assemblies are more streamlined and effective than bicameral ones in terms of responding to the needs of small and cohesive societies. However, around one fourth of the world's small states have introduced bicameral legislatures or have installed decentralisation or devolution measures to serve ends that are usually entrusted to the bicameral device. Moreover, a few small states operate legislatures in which representatives and Senators are seated in the same House, thus combining features of unicameralism and bicameralism alike. Interestingly, the preference of some small states for bicameralism proper or for decentralisation and devolution as bicameral substitutes may be understood as rational responses that either promote balance and moderation in a historical context of party political domination or represent autonomy policies in and for archipelagic small countries.

Keywords: bicameralism, bicameralism substitutes, decentralisation, devolution, dominance, political institutions, small states

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Introduction

Views of the roles and functions of institutions in political life may differ and may therefore bring somewhat different research questions to the fore. A behavioural point of view describes political institutions as arenas within which political behaviour occurs: institutions are epiphenomena, reflections of their environment. In this view, the state is affected by society, and political conditions are dependent on the outcomes of social and economic conditions: political institutions are, so to speak, battlefields that serve as staging grounds for trials of strength. An institutional point of view, on the other hand, gives institutions more independent roles and even suggests that institutions should be treated as political actors. Of course, this view may be questioned on the ground that institutions do not express sufficiently coherent patterns of behaviour to qualify as collective actors; however, a pragmatic answer to this remark is that the coherence of institutions varies but is sometimes substantial enough to justify viewing a collectivity as acting coherently (March and Olsen, 1989, p. 18). While different in emphasis, the two perspectives may still overlap and be regarded as approaches that complement rather than exclude each other.

Framed by such general reflections, this article examines the use of bicameralism in small states, the primary goal being to advance an understanding of the reasons why and the extent to which small states maintain and apply such a device. In principle, one would join Andrew Heywood in imaging that unicameral assemblies are more streamlined and effective than bicameral ones in terms of responding to the needs of small and relatively cohesive societies (Heywood, 1997, p. 22). Also, the focus on the bicameral device represents a contribution to a field that is yet not fully explored. In terms of number and share, unicameralism has had the better of bicameralism: according to a recent count, against 78

bicameral countries in the world are 115 unicameral countries (IPU Parline, 2018). There has, however, lately been in the world an increase in the number of bicameral chambers: one title in the literature announces “The strange revival of bicameralism” (Coakley, 2014). Still, scholarly interest has mainly been directed on first chambers; second chambers have remained “relatively little-studied institutions” (Russell, 2001, p. 442). This article, therefore, aims also to address the research gap and supplement the general literature on the bicameralism device (e.g. Heller and Branduse, 2014; Patterson and Mughan, 1999; Money and Tsebelis, 1992; Shell, 2001; Swendon, 2004; Tsebelis and Money, 1997).

Bicameralism in small states: appearances and absences

Utilising data from an earlier study (Anckar, 1998, p. 368), this paper records a list of the bicameral small states in the world at that time of writing. Another list gives similar data from new research at the now actual time of writing (2018), and a comparison of the two lists invites several comments and reflections. However, before going into analysis two short comments on matters of method must be inserted:

First, there remains the always intricate matter of operationalizing smallness: by what criteria and what thresholds? Here, small states are defined as those with a resident population of no more than one million people; also because the 1998 study mentioned above made use of the same criterion and so a valid comparison is possible. The population data that are needed for identifying micro-states in the world of today are drawn for the year 2015 from information provided by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (United Nations); data on the practice of bicameralism in the micro-states and corresponding territories of the contemporary world are from available Wikipedia data, edited November 15, 2017 (List of Legislatures).

Second, some legislatures that are typically defined as formally unicameral may in fact resemble bicameral ones (Norton, 2004). This observation carries some weight in the small states universe as well. The small island state of St Vincent and the Grenadines has a unicameral parliament, the composition of which, however, has bicameral features: there are in parliament 15 elected members and six senators, four of the senators being appointed on the advice of the Prime Minister and two on the advice of the Leader of the Opposition (Derbyshire and Derbyshire, 1999, p. 320). Dominica makes use of a similar method: its parliament consists of 21 elected members and nine senators, five appointed on the advice of the Prime Minister and four appointed on the advice of the Leader of the Opposition (Bojarra, 2007, p. 260). While certainly incorporating elements of a bicameral design, the method, however, places representatives and Senators in the same House, and this unorthodox arrangement carries the implication that there are no shuttle systems and stopping rules commonly used in bicameral systems for resolving disagreements between the two houses. It is therefore argued here, although with some hesitation, that the cases of Dominica and St Vincent and the Grenadines do not qualify for inclusion in the bicameral camp. The above reasoning excludes also the Federated States of Micronesia, the Congress of which has one member from each of the four states elected every four years and one or more members from each state apportioned accordingly to population and elected every two years. Senators and representatives sit again in the same House, and the fact that the legislative process also reflects a compromise between representation of states and of population (e.g. Burdick, 1988, pp. 265-266) adds to the complexity and non-transparency of the system: a pertinent comment is that “it remains to be seen whether the FSM has managed to avoid bicameralism only at the expense of other rigidities and complexities” (Ghai, 1988, p. 63).

This being said, the information from the lists of small bicameral states may be summarised as follows:

First, any revival, strange or not, of bicameralism does not appear in the small states group. The mapping from the late 1990s suggests that there were at that time 43 microstates in the world, ten of which maintained a bicameral legislature. These ten states were: Antigua-Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Comoros, Fiji, Grenada, Palau, St Lucia, and Swaziland. The corresponding mapping from the present time of writing finds out that there are now 40 microstates, Bahrain, Cyprus, Qatar and Swaziland having disappeared from the set in consequence of population growth, and Montenegro being a microstate newcomer. Eight of the remaining 40 small states now have bicameral legislatures: Antigua-Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bhutan, Grenada, Palau, and St Lucia. The proportions, then, are fairly similar; at both points of time, about one fifth of the parliaments in question express bicameralism.

Let it be added that the proportion remains even smaller when and if the analysis is extended to cover small non-sovereign countries, dependencies and other territories – of in all 47 such non-sovereign countries and territories, *only five* have installed a bicameral legislature (List of Legislatures): American Samoa, Bermuda, Isle of Man, Northern Mariana Islands and Puerto Rico. Of these, Puerto Rico, at over 3 million population, is oversized in terms of the criteria used here. Featuring in a manner of speaking three houses, the Parliament of the Isle of Man represents a very special kind of bicameralism (King, 2013; Ahlbom, 2014). And to add still one observation: of a dozen of legislatures of non-UN states, including unrecognized and disputed territories, only one, namely the legislature of clearly oversized Somaliland, a forgotten country which probably has a more democratic mode of governance than other parts of the Horn of Africa (Kaplan, 2008), practises bicameralism (List of Legislatures). In sum, then, as expected, small size is not conducive to bicameralism.

Furthermore, the small states group does not to any noteworthy degree stand for change and mobility. Bicameral reforms do not occur frequently. Rather the opposite is true: more or less the same constellation of countries make up the collection of small bicameral states at both points of time: bicameral legislatures were to be found in the late 1990s as well as some twenty years later in Antigua-Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Palau and St Lucia. There are in fact between the two points of observation only three changes to be entered in the books: two countries, Comoros and Fiji, have switched from bicameralism to unicameralism, and one country, namely Bhutan, has switched from unicameralism to bicameralism. Interestingly, the switches, while dissimilar in direction, still appear to relate positively to an advancement of an orderly and democratic political life. The introduction in Fiji in 2013 of a new constitution which vests legislative authority in a single-chamber Parliament has for the time being at least put an end to earlier and fatal developments characterized as “Fiji’s constitutional conundrum” (Lal, 2003). Whereas in Bhutan, the bicameral device was introduced in the 2005 draft constitution (Hutt, 2006, pp. 120-124), later to be inscribed into the 2008 Constitution and became part of a reform that established a two-party democracy and much reduced the power of the King. Looking further at the above listings, a small handful of countries that were classified in 1998 have later become oversized and thereby disappeared from the size frame of this investigation. However, the only case of these that involves bicameralism is Swaziland, bicameral at both points of time and applying a version of bicameralism that does not really count for much: *Libandla*, the parliament, is weak and its functions are limited to debating and advising the King. *Libandla* has been characterised as a “compromised hybrid”, distinguished by a “superimposition of

authoritarian monarchism on to a template of modern representative democracy” (Booyesen, 2013, p. 81).

Why, then, have the few cases of bicameralism in small states opted for this unwieldy and inconvenient method of organising parliamentary life? What considerations have been decisive, and is there a pattern?

Several reasons may be identified for the creation of bicameralism (e.g. Riker, 1992, pp. 101-115; Lijphart, 1999, pp. 203-211; Baldwin, 2001, pp. 172-175). Yet, the many distinctions boil down to two main considerations. One is about interest representation and the resolving of conflicts emanating from regional and other distinct interests, whereas the second is rather about review and delay and thereby about legislative quality assurance: “the Senate is meant to provide a sober second look at legislation”, it is said in an exposé of Bermuda’s legislature (Brown, 2013, p. 100).

Obviously, operational methods for deciding classification in one or the other of these two categories shall preferably focus on recruitment: if and when second chambers are created for the purpose of accommodating regional and particular interests, it follows that such chambers must come about by methods that restrict an overall representative basis and put an emphasis, instead, on a regional or otherwise specific basis. On the other hand, moderation chambers are typically formed by methods that give priority to an overall representative basis. One typical example from the moderation genre is the case of St Lucia, where the Senate has 11 members, six being appointed on the advice of the Prime Minister, three being appointed on the advice of the Leader of the Opposition, and two being appointed after consultation with religious, economic, and social groups. More or less the same model applies to Antigua-Barbuda, Bahamas, Belize, and Grenada: for instance, in Belize the Senate has eight members, five appointed on the advice of the Prime Minister, two on the advice of the Leader of the Opposition, and one after consultation with the Belize Advisory Council (Fernandez, 1989, p. 50).

Thus, similar methods are used by several cases, which are moreover predominantly former British colonies. This may suggest that small states bicameralism is nothing more than downright diffusion, the taking over by small recipients of institutional traits from a colonial power. However, while there is certainly a good deal of truth to the diffusion hypothesis, it is not universal: there are former small British colonies, like Dominica, Fiji, Guyana, Kiribati, Tuvalu, and others which have not imported the bicameral device proper. Other considerations are relevant and apply; these deal with rationality and calculation. In one instructive example, Laundry notes that one opposition member was returned in 1984 at the first general election to take place in Grenada following the restoration of parliamentary government in that country, and he maintains that this one member as Leader of the Opposition was entitled to nominate three members to the Senate, thus improving the equilibrium in the balance of representation (Laundry, 1989, p. 10). One idea that follows naturally from the Laundry line of reasoning and is also open to empirical investigation, is that a moderating and balancing bicameralism applies in countries which, at the dawn of independence and constitution-making, had experienced party systems with political parties that had dominated the domestic political scene, to the serious disadvantage of other political groups. In such countries, so the reasoning goes, the search will be for institutional and constitutional means to balance the future distribution of power.

Bicameral Antigua-Barbuda, independent in 1981, is a case in point: the Antigua Labour Party has held power since 1946 (except for 1971-1976). For another example, take the case of bicameral Belize, independent in 1981, where in the 1965 elections the People's United Party won 16 seats out of 18, the share increasing to 17 seats in 1969 (Anckar, 1998, pp. 373-375).

A dominating party pattern is in fact a valid basis for explanation: of the then such cases of party dominance almost all displayed bicameralism, and, on the other hand, of the bicameral cases almost all exhibited a history of specific political party dominance (Anckar, 1998, pp. 374-375). A causal link can thus be suggested between such party dominance and dual legislature; because the composition of the contemporary bicameral small states group is still very much the same as it was at the earlier occasion, the lead conclusion should also remain much the same.

Still, in the group of bicameral small countries are two members that do not fit the above explanatory pattern as the upper chambers of these two countries are as a whole or in the main elected by the people. In Bhutan, The National Council has 25 members, one directly elected from each of 20 districts and five appointed by the King, and in Palau all members of the Senate are elected by the people, the number of members being determined at each election by the Congressional Reapportionment Commission. While these arrangements may be looked upon as manifestations of a majority rule, they are in effect in rather poor conformity with prevailing cultural and ideological dispositions. In Bhutan, a tradition of mediation is still prevalent and confrontation is abhorred and shunned as a solution to conflicts; a system therefore prevails where consensus is the prevailing mode of government (Mathou, 2009, pp. 232-233). In Palau, as evident from research, the introduction of Western institutions has not supplanted Palauan culture and traditions (Veenendaal, 2014, pp. 201-202).

In sum, designing bicameralism in the world of small states has been tantamount to creating to some extent an arena for balancing political power relations. It is more doubtful if and to what extent this arena has been given full actor capacities – the appointments of senators in the above countries can be revoked at any time, and all senatorial positions automatically become vacant at a dissolution of parliament (Ghany, 2013, p. 25).

Bicameral substitutes

One approach that follows from an institutional perspective maintains that institutional choices may be explained by the overall institutional design of the country in question, this meaning that constitutional choices are dependent on each other, the choice of one device following naturally from the choice of another (Lundell, 2005, pp. 111-115). For instance, most federal systems are characterized by a bicameral chamber structure (Hague and Harrop, 2004, p. 229). This idea shall now be turned on its head, stating that an avoidance of some particular device may result from the preference of countries for some other device which serves the same purpose and may therefore replace the device in question. The rather abstracted and moderation-driven interest vested by microstates and small territories in the bicameral device proper suggests that matters of regional representation and visibility play a subordinate role only in the constitutional and political programmes and aspirations of small states. This, however, is not necessarily the case. Indeed, other methods than bicameralism are available: the most obvious of these deal with decentralisation and devolution, meaning that governments grant a certain amount of decision-making autonomy to lower levels. In other words, what follows is an attempt to find out to what extent small

states have substituted decentralisation and devolution for bicameralism in the face of territorial and other representation disputes.

Admittedly, this point of departure may seem far-fetched and artificial. Explanations why some states and not others have accepted and installed an autonomy-recognizing territorial principle operate from an abundance of factors, and while some of these relate to characteristics of the state in question, other relate rather to characteristics of autonomous regions. Examples of explanations of this second type involve assumptions that territories gain in autonomy if they are at distance from their motherlands, have certain-sized populations, represent ethnic or religious peculiarities, are of a particular strategic importance, have the use of specific natural assets, and so on (Olausson, 2007, pp. 63-66). Evidently, the size of states may be thought of as a catch-all factor for many types of explanations. As a state gets larger, it must probably deal increasingly with varieties in terms of geography, history, population and economy that necessitate or at least strongly motivate that some part or parts of its territory receive special treatment and are awarded autonomy. On the other hand, if states are small-sized, the expectation would be that autonomy prerequisites are restricted, and if the state is very small, decentralisation measures appear superfluous and uncalled for. Indeed, a decentralised diminutive state appears almost a self-contradiction and the ambition to seek in this realm for bicameral substitutes may be expected to prove a failure.

Table 1: Patterns of bicameralism and devolution among small states.

		Devolution?	
		Yes	No
Bicameralism?	Yes	Palau	Antigua-Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bhutan, Grenada, St Lucia
	No	Comoros, Kiribati, Micronesia, St Kitts-Nevis, San Marino, São Tomé and Príncipe, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu	Andorra, Brunei, Cape Verde, Djibouti, Dominica, Equatorial Guinea, Fiji, Guyana, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Monaco, Montenegro, Nauru, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Seychelles, Suriname, Tonga, Vatican City

And yet, research suggests otherwise. Table 1 classifies the 40 microstates of the world today in a four-fold presentation that combines two dichotomously formed dimensions: small states have adopted the bicameral device or they have not; small states have adopted the devolution method or they have not. Data concerning the use of bicameralism have been inserted above in this presentation, and data on the use of the devolution device are from an available and fairly recent study (Anckar, 2009). As is evident from Table 1, most of today's small states of today, 23 out of 40, do not engage at all in regional representation devices, be they about bicameralism or devolution. To repeat, then, it appears, unsurprisingly, that smallness as a rule discourages decentralisation. However, ten small countries have installed

institutional means to advance regional autonomy, and so there are several interesting exceptions to the rule. The countries can be divided into four sub-groups.

One distinct sub-group is formed by several countries which are bicameral but do not apply other explicit devolution devices. In these countries upper house members of parliament are appointed in varying proportions on the advice of the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, and occasionally at the Governor-General's discretion (Elkins and Ginsburg, 2011, p. 8; Ghany, 2013, p. 25). This group consists of predominantly Westminster-inspired small Caribbean states plus Bhutan; the states have, quite in the spirit of Westminster, abstained from introducing autonomy arrangements of any kind.

A second set is formed by a handful of federal and semi-federal small states; here we find the federal cases of Palau, Comoros, Micronesia and St Kitts-Nevis (Anckar, 2003). This combination of federal government and small state status is astonishing and strange and the countries concerned seriously challenge the view that federal states are as a rule big states. Furthermore, the countries also challenge the common view of linking federalism to bicameralism. Only one of the countries, namely Palau, subscribes not only to the principle of devolution, but also to the principle of bicameralism proper, forming its own sub-group. In contrast, the other small federations have relinquished the institutional bicameralism device. Smallness notwithstanding the countries represent a spreading all over the field of federalism types - in fact, the categories of a "coming-together", a "holding-together" and a "putting-together" federalism which represent different historical and political logics (Stepan, 1999), are all represented in this somewhat peculiar small states group.

Classifications of the Comoros can be equivocal in the literature, but the country constitutes a federal case (Sanaty, 2007, p. 213). According to the 2001 constitution, the Union of the Comoros is a republic that consists of four autonomous islands (Article 1); also, while respecting the Constitution of the Union, each island shall administer and manage its affairs freely and shall freely establish its status law (Article 7). Principles of federalism reflect also in the composition of the national legislature, as the unicameral Assembly of the Union consists of 24 representatives elected in single-member constituencies as well as of representatives of the autonomous islands appointed by the island councils from their ranks at the number of three for each island. Close to the group of federal states is also the African two-island state São Tomé and Príncipe, independent in 1975 from Portuguese rule. The country has two provinces, namely the islands of São Tomé and Príncipe, Sao Tomé being divided into six districts, whereas Príncipe has one district only. Importantly, Príncipe enjoys since 1995 an extended autonomy. Namely, the island has a popularly elected parliament in which are vested considerable legislative powers. Furthermore, the island authorities also commands executive powers. Evidently, the government represents unmistakable features of federalism, and it is also the case that the somewhat privileged position of Príncipe is to some extent federal in nature as the status may be seen as an attempt to cope with internal problems and a manifestation of a desire to keep the nation together (Hodges & Newitt, 1988, p. 110).

In a fourth and final, somewhat disparate, sub-group are almost two dozen small countries which complete the cases of devolution. In Kiribati, a small Pacific island state, as reported in research, a gradual devolution of power has implemented through a system of island councils a policy of engaging and empowering people at the local level (Hassall and Tipu, 2008, p. 17). In Tuvalu, another small Pacific island state, likewise relying on participatory methods, the Falekaupule Act of 1997 has created an important autonomy mechanism to help build capacity for outer island development (Bell, 2008): the Act, in a

manner of speaking, operationalises the principle laid down already in the early Tuvaluan independence constitution that Parliament shall not proceed upon a Bill upon the next following session of Parliament so as to permit consideration of the Bill by Island Councils (Qalo, 1985, p. 206). Two Melanesian small island states, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, operate politico-administrative divisions based on provinces: Solomon Islands is divided into nine provinces and Vanuatu has since 1994 been divided into six provinces. These provinces enjoy constitutional and legal autonomy as well as satisfy indicators of formal autonomy to an extent that well justifies classifying Solomon Islands and Vanuatu among decentralisation cases. Also, in regards to Vanuatu, the task of preserving the role and functions of customs and custom chiefs is imposed on the provinces (e.g. Hassall, 2007, pp. 231-232). There is more doubt about the inclusion of San Marino, an enclave in Italy and the smallest republic in the world, among the set-up of decentralisation cases. The small territory of the country is divided into nine communes, called *Giunte di Castello*, which administer their own budgets, take care of local services and also have the right to interpellate the State Congress, the power of initiative and can propose referenda (Duursma, 1994, pp. 221-222). One relevant assessment is that the communes are “partially self-governing” (Derbyshire and Derbyshire, 1999, p. 23).

Why, then, have the countries that have been reviewed above opted for devolution and decentralisation? Again, is there a pattern? The answer takes its point of departure from a set of three assertions that while focusing on geography assume that territorial non-contiguity stands out as a decisive factor: since almost all countries concerned are islands, non-contiguity in practice implies an archipelagic geography. First, the condition of islandness probably promotes nationalism, in which case decentralisation becomes a means to manage the mental distances that follow in the heels of nationalism. Second, nationalism most likely promotes the wish to preserve and nurse traditions and identities in island populations: if so, decentralisation becomes a device that contributes to this goal. Thirdly, divided and distant geographies most likely render difficult a centralized management of governance and public administration; practical and organisational considerations therefore accentuate a need for decentralisation. Summing up: not only do physical features oblige rulers to treat territories as distinct administrative units, but islanders also tend to see themselves as distinct island communities (Baldacchino, 2000, p. 72; Royle and Dodds, 2003). The resulting hypothesis is that while small size stands out as a factor that render unnecessary attempts at decentralisation, this is not true with regards to small archipelagic geographies, which on the contrary encourage and in many cases even oblige decentralisation policies and remedies.

Findings indeed suggest that geography makes a difference. True, about half of the small states in the world are archipelagos, and many of these states, such as Cape Verde, Marshall Islands, Seychelles and Tonga, have refrained from introducing decentralisations and devolutions. But, on the other hand, almost all decentralising small states have an archipelagic geography: the only exception is San Marino, although it is not hard to consider each of its hill-based communes as islands of sort. In conclusion, therefore: while all archipelagos do not resort to decentralisations, when and if such measures are taken, archipelagos are almost always involved. In other words: an archipelagic geography is not a sufficient condition to explain microstate decentralisation, but it comes very close to being a necessary condition. Of course, alternative explanatory factors need to be considered as they may distort the picture: small states perhaps introduce decentralisations rather in consequence of diffusion factors, like colonisation, or in consequence of politico-institutional factors, like electoral systems features, or in consequence, perhaps, of still other factors like an excessive ethnic diversity or a faulty democracy. However, research suggests that such other factors are not really helpful in explaining the inclination of some small states to operate decentralisation

and devolution. The diffusion aspect does not really work as former British colonies have in about equal proportions resorted to and not resorted to means of decentralisation; microstates that have installed decentralisation devices show no tendency to favor proportional or mixed electoral systems at the disadvantage of majority-enhancing plurality systems, ethnic diversity differences appear less decisive as are democracy level differences, and so on (Anckar, 2005, pp. 114-117).

It is hard to escape the argument that non-contiguity makes a real difference which is about a broader involvement in institutions and practices of decentralisation and devolution. “Physical isolation can create a powerful sense of local community and accentuate differences of dialect and custom”, it is said in an introduction to an anthology on the political economy of small tropical islands (Newitt, 1992, p. 11); the implication of this being that the very factor that speaks against decentralisation, namely smallness, also, via its association with isolation, becomes a factor that accentuates the isolated position of the units in question and predispose these to receiving special treatment and decentralisation. At once large and small, such countries constitute, in a manner of speaking, “gigantic miniatures” (Anckar, 1994). Kiribati is a small country with a land area of some 800 km²; given alternative measures, however, the country emerges a giant as its exclusive economic zone is spread over 3.500.000 km² of ocean water. Indeed, it is an apposite saying that Kiribati is “a nation of water” (Teiwaki, 1988).

Conclusion

An old political science handbook asserts that “people forget that institutions are not ends in themselves but tools for certain purposes, which should be discarded if the purpose is no longer achieved” (Soltau, 1951, p. 241). The same author also reminds us that “the trouble with all institutions is that they are by their very nature rigid and difficult both to adopt and to change” (Soltau, 1951, p. 240). The value of these two pithy observations is evident from the pages of this paper. The bicameralism device has been adopted or redefined among small states to function as means rather than ends and to facilitate the achievement of some specific smallness-related goal or goals, be they democracy, stability, the preservation of power positions, or the like. Furthermore, while it is true that institutions are as a rule installed to achieve defined purposes, discarding institutions that have become cumbersome or redundant in the course of time may for reasons of constitutional rigidity and inertia prove a tricky business, as is evident also from the infrequency of reform and mobility among small states that has been reported here. One example is how a proposed change to the constitution of St Vincent and the Grenadines, providing for a Senate elected via proportional representation, was rejected at a referendum in 2009: the text failed to achieve the requisite two-thirds majority required for ratification (Elkins and Ginsburg, 2011, p. 15).

To sum up: bicameralism small states style has three distinguishing features. First, as might be expected, the institution of bicameralism proper is not much used by small states. Second, while bicameralism may in general serve several constitutional and political purposes, in the small states community bicameralism proper has been used foremostly to avoid ill-considered legislation. In small states bicameralism has offered pause, reflection and moderation, while functions of bicameralism in the spheres of interest representation and conflict resolving have been transferred to the domain of autonomy politics. Interestingly, this installation and use of bicameralism and bicameralism substitutes may reasonably be understood as expressions of rational consideration, as countries with a history of party-political domination have installed policies that favour balance and moderation, and as several archipelagic small countries have implemented autonomy policies.

In spite of all this, the above references to rationality do not suggest that each and every calculation made in each and every country has explicitly concerned the relationship between dominance and constitutional devices or between geography and devolution. The references rather suggest that constitutional issues have been decided in a mental and political climate which promotes inclinations towards moderation, balance and autonomy.

As suggested by this study, small size is probably a contributing factor that has motivated states to seek for alternatives to a bicameralism proper. Small size namely implies small-sized legislatures (e.g. Dahl and Tufte, 1973, pp. 80-84; Derbyshire and Derbyshire, 1999, pp. 74-79), and the division of, for instance, the Tuvalu 15-member Parliament into two houses, would appear a cumbersome and over-stretched solution. A much wiser solution which takes care of the representation problem that follows from Tuvaluan non-contiguity is to apply autonomy policies that serve to neutralise any awkward consequences that may follow from an extended and distant geography.

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D. Anckar

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D. Anckar

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