

Trinidad and Tobago

Vanderbilt

Trinidad and Tobago gained its independence in 1962 and joined the Commonwealth. It is a parliamentary democracy and has three major political parties: National Alliance for Reconstruction (NAR-Robinson personalist, aimed at people with Indian descent), People's National Movement (PNM- conservative, mainly ethnic black), and United National Congress (UNC- centrist, social-democratic, mainly East Indian) (Cahoon 2013).

Eric Williams (PNM) was the first prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago and he governed the country for 20 years until his death in 1981. He was replaced by the PNM party leader George Michael Chambers. Therefore, this change is not a SOLS change. Per our rules, we do not code a SOLS change in the year Trinidad and Tobago became independent and Williams assumed the prime-ministership.

In 1986, the leader of the NAR, Arthur Robinson, became prime minister. He stayed in office until his term ended in March 2002 when he was replaced by the leader of the right-of-center PNM Patrick Manning. Thus, these two changes of prime minister are SOLS changes.

The PNM was again defeated in 1995 when the UNC leader Basdeo Panday became prime minister. Hence, this change is also a SOLS change. According to Schlager et al. (2006, 1358), the NAR's leader, Ray Robinson, "brought his NAR into a coalition with Panday to give a ruling majority to the UNC" when UNC and PNM tied at 17 seats each in the 1995 election. This indicates that UNC formed a coalition with NAR. The UNC/NAR coalition remained in power until 2001.

Manning returned temporarily to his position as leader of the opposition. In the 2001 congressional elections, the result was a tie for the PNM and the UNC with 18 seats for each party. Therefore, President Robinson had to determine who would be prime minister and decided for the PNM candidate, Patrick Manning. Thus Manning returned to office in 1991 and governed until 2010. There is thus a SOLS change in 2001.

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