The Politics of Integration

Caribbean Sovereignty Revisited

Terri-Ann Gilbert-Roberts

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THE POLITICS OF INTEGRATION

To all Caribbean citizens who retain faith and hope that their Community will eventually fully engage in a process of regional integration, enabled by an effective governance system, which reflects their common identity, connects them one to another, and helps them to meet their development aspirations.

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INTRODUCTION

A critical three-tiered question lies at the heart of any discussion of politics and governance.

> *'Who governs whom...why (for what purpose)...and how (by what means?)'*

Accordingly, various theoretical traditions have made assumptions about the nature and role of leadership, about ideas and ideology and about governing institutions. In the context of Politics and International Relations scholarship, those assumptions have been confined to the conceptual parameters of a system of sovereign states. In that regard, the answers to the first two queries – *'Who governs whom...and why?'* – have been treated as axiomatic. States govern 'the people' through governmental representatives who are empowered to exercise political power on behalf of 'the people' in the pursuit of human and socio-economic development. State sovereignty has therefore, traditionally enjoyed an unopposed position as the dominant paradigm for governance. However, contemporary processes of globalisation and regionalisation have increasingly challenged the predominance of sovereignty, giving rise to a complex governance problematic.

Since the end of the Second World War in particular, scholars pursuing an answer to the third tranche of our question: essentially, *'How do states govern?'*, have been confronted with an arena for governance which extends beyond the territorial borders of the state. Firstly, the liberalisation of socio-economic activity worldwide, via processes of globalisation, has created an arena for international governance in which non-state actors also exercise political influence over the process of development, even without attaining sovereignty. In that regard, liberal theoretical traditions have continuously challenged the predominance of the realist state-centric paradigm, in light of the increased influence of transnational private and civil society interests in the governance process. Yet, both liberal traditions as well as neo-realist traditions, while acknowledging the role of other actors, continue to recognise the special role of the state in developing the regime of

rules that govern the arena in which all the actors operate. Indeed, 'global governance', as a new area of enquiry, continues to investigate the role of states in intergovernmental organisations like the United Nations. In those settings, state sovereignty is not considered to be obscured by the agency of international organisations but rather, to be fully exercised within that collective framework.

At the same time, a second type of transnational activity has raised more serious challenges to sovereignty. The increased regionalisation of political activity, whether complementary to, or incongruous with the aforementioned global governance regimes, has given rise to the emergence of supranational actors that have, in many instances, assumed roles traditionally played by sovereign states. Although states ultimately retain responsibility for the creation of supranational capacity arising from intergovernmental regionalism, the emergent supranational institutions are empowered, on establishment, to operate autonomously of the state but also in cooperation with national governance institutions. The dynamics associated with the coexistence of intergovernmental, supranational and national spheres of power present a conceptual and institutional challenge to the 'state sovereignty' paradigm. That challenge is representative of a problematic relationship between sovereignty, on the one hand, and regional governance, on the other hand.

Certainly, a similar problematic has been explored in several other regions, particularly in Europe, Latin America and Southeast Asia and, to a lesser extent, in the Pacific and Southern Africa.[1] However, the experiences of smaller developing countries have hitherto received minimal attention. In that context, this book grapples with the dynamics of the problematic by way of an exploration of the experience of regional governance among the 15 developing states of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), where a paradox of sovereignty is clearly evident.[2]

THE PARADOX OF SOVEREIGNTY IN SMALL DEVELOPING STATES

Notwithstanding the acknowledgement of general 'paradoxes of state power' highlighted in the aforementioned literature on regionalism, a distinct nuance of 'paradox' emerges among certain categories of developing states. The special challenges associated with developing states such as those in the Caribbean include the fact that they are not only small, but that they are also relatively 'youthful'. In the first instance, consequent on their small size, CARICOM states face structural challenges related to

limitations in natural, human and technical resources which suggest that a regional approach to governance holds greater potential to contribute to the attainment of their development goals than do exclusively statist strategies. In that regard, their small size has encouraged the pursuit of shared development strategies through regional integration. In the second instance, these states are further constrained in the implementation of regional integration by virtue of their limited historical experience of governance. The novelty of sovereignty – in a region where all but three of the member states gained sovereign independence less than 50 years ago – serves as an inducement to fragmentation and the emphasis on individual state projects of governance.[3] Together, those two characteristics – small size and youthfulness associated with limited sovereign experience – present the CARICOM region as a particularly interesting case for investigating the problematic relationship between sovereignty and regional governance. While the constraints of small size suggest that regional governance should be treated as an imperative for effective governance of the development process, the characteristic of 'youthfulness' undermines the process of addressing that imperative.

Accordingly, the concept of a paradox of sovereignty in the Caribbean provides a foundation to better contextualise the problematic analysed in these pages. The concept, first introduced by William Demas, and discussed more extensively in chapter 3, highlights the peculiar situation among small states in which, theoretically, the erosion of recently-attained sovereignty through the delegation of authority to regional institutions is, paradoxically, essential for the reinforcement of the sovereign capacity of the state. In effect, without collective action through transfers of authority to shared institutions, small states are constrained in the implementation of their development goals. In other words, Demas juxtaposed the erosion of formal state sovereignty with the potential for acheiving an effecive sovereignty at the regional level. However, the significance of contextualising the case within this paradox of sovereignty has less to do with the structural context of small size and more to do with the problematic that is presented to the leaders of *new* states, irrespective of their size. Fundamentally, the imperative of eroding sovereignty in order to reinforce it raises some interesting issues related to the value which political elites, that is, the leaders responsible for governance, place on sovereignty and the extent to which they display, at the same time, a level of willingness to compromise sovereignty in order to reap the benefits of regional governance. In effect, the central question raised by the Demasian paradox, which is the formative problem investigated in this study, is:

How do the meaning attributed to and the value placed on sovereignty by political leaders, as well as their attendant interpretation of the imperative inherent in sovereignty paradox, constrain or catalyse the regional governance process?

In that regard, the discussion in the following pages is concerned with the way in which political elites interpret sovereignty as well as the paradox of sovereignty. It is also concerned with the extent to which those interpretations have influenced the emergence, evolution and functioning of regional institutions, and ultimately, the extent to which they have determined the overall effectiveness of regional governance. The study assumes that the relationship between the theoretical implications of the Demasian paradox and the empirical manifestations (the institutional forms) will be influenced by and reflective of the historical, socio-cultural and broad political context from which they emerge.

Against the background of those assumptions, the following argument is proposed. In the context of new states, including those in the Caribbean, sovereignty has evolved in close association with movements for national independence and is reflective of emergent national identities. In that scenario, the legitimacy of the authority of political elites is firmly embedded within nationalist expectations of a responsibility to safeguard sovereignty. As a consequence, elites are likely to place a high value on the concept of sovereignty and be unwilling to compromise it in a regional context, since the maintenance of legitimate national authority will be contingent on their personal success in the guardianship of the concept. The hypothesis is further advanced to suggest that if elites embed an approach to safeguarding sovereignty within the regional governance framework, then, they will not have fulfilled the theoretical imperative of the paradox – the need to surrender sovereignty – and ultimately, regional governance institutions will be denied the capacity to govern the regional framework effectively.

In order to test this hypothesis, the study develops an understanding of the politics of integration, and more specifically the internal dynamics of CARICOM governance. The specific questions raised about CARICOM, which are refined further in chapter 2 relate to how sovereignty emerged in the region, how it was conceptualised, how political elites constructed interpretations of the paradox of sovereignty and how those interpretations have impinged on the institutional mode of governance. Those questions raised by the hypothesis provided the framework for the formulation of

a historical and exploratory methodological approach to researching the CARICOM experience of regional governance.

The research which underpins this book was undertaken between 2007 and 2010 and has led to the formulation of a three-pronged review of the case. Firstly, the paradoxical relationship, established within the literature, between the concepts of sovereignty and regionalism – the one representing a traditional symbol of governance and the other a contemporary development strategy – is reviewed in the opening chapters in order to support the construction of a special framework for the definition and analysis of regional governance. Chapter 1 reviews the historical evolution of the concept of sovereignty, revealing its multi-dimensional character. It further discusses the role which regionalism plays in enhancing state capacity for governance and the implications which regionalism has had for the various dimensions of sovereignty. Finally, it uses the insights from those understandings of sovereignty and regionalism to define the concept of regional governance. Chapter 2 advances a three-tiered analytical framework which employs political context analysis, institutional analysis and sovereignty bargains analysis in order to contend with the central research questions on the relationship between the interpretations of sovereignty held by political elites and the strategies that they adopt to resolve the paradox of sovereignty.

The second part of the discussion presents an empirical review of the evolution and functioning of CARICOM and Eastern Caribbean regional institutions between 1947 and 2012 (chapters 3–9). The historical analysis compiles the results of document analysis and interviews with elites involved in regional and national decision-making at both personal and professional levels. The primary sources of documentation reviewed were official speeches, statements and agreements which reflect the analytical focus on the role of elites in framing the regional governance context and special attention has been given to analysis of the decisions emanating from the annual conferences of CARICOM Heads of Government which have been instrumental in the formation of a view on the meaning of sovereignty in a context of regional decision-making. Other secondary sources of academic literature assisted in the framing of the broader context of events, the assessment of the involvement of other state and non-state actors and the influence of ideologies and philosophies on the institution-building processes. As a complement to the document analysis, off-the-record interviews were conducted with the widest possible range of senior representatives of national governments, regional and

national civil and public service, social scientists within academia, the private sector and civil society across the region. The findings from those interviews have been instrumental in reconstructing elite perspectives on CARICOM's history and the tradition of sovereignty. Respondents provided background information about the dynamics of high-level deliberations among leaders, technocrats and other stakeholders. As a consequence, those very instructive insights have been incorporated into the analysis without quoting or identifying individual informants.

Together, the findings highlight the way in which the interrelationships among the interpretations of political elites; the Caribbean political context and political culture; ideas and ideologies; and the institutional structures have affected the regional governance framework, with special reference to the efficiency and effectiveness of the decision-making and implementation processes. The chronological narrative culminates with an exploration of the potential and limitations inherent in the existence of a distinct Eastern Caribbean subculture of regional governance, having regard to the strengthening of the overarching CARICOM framework. In spite of the fact that the subregional framework is comfortably nested within the wider political context of CARICOM and the political elites share similar understandings of sovereignty, the historical evolution of the OECS has given rise to different institutional forms of governance which have been perceived to be more efficient. Chapter 9 explains the reasons for that distinction and its relationship to the CARICOM case.

Finally, the book presents some conclusions about the legacy of the regional tradition of sovereignty and discusses prospects for change. Therefore, chapter 10 concludes the entire investigation with a discussion on the influence of the CARICOM tradition of sovereignty on the effectiveness of the mode of regional governance and speculates on the prospects for reconstruction of new modes of regional governance. Specifically, by consolidating the empirical data on CARICOM and the assumptions of the conceptual and analytical frameworks, the study argues that the way in which the paradox of sovereignty has been construed and constructed by political elites has impinged negatively on the effectiveness of the CARICOM mode of governance. In essence, those elite interpretations have largely been responsible for the weaknesses widely acknowledged in the institutional framework.

Admittedly, limitations are inherent in analytical processes and there are two which are noted in respect of this investigation. The first is that in the context of this historical methodology, it has been difficult to interpret,

with complete accuracy, the thoughts of elites. However, interviewees were particularly instrumental in providing insight into the ideational, philosophical and cultural views and beliefs which influenced the actions of key regional decision-makers. Where possible, close attention was paid to matching those insights to the written accounts of the decision-makers themselves. This generally revealed a strong commonality of themes in relation to identification of key factors that have influenced the governance process. In that context, the interpretations presented in this thesis can be considered as valid without intent of seeking to be clairvoyant. The second limitation is that the scope of the investigation is relatively wide and therefore the book does not claim to have accounted, at the time of writing, for every single contextual factor which could have impinged on regional governance between 1947 and 2012. Instead, the study focuses on significant events that have had a deep and lasting impact on the conceptualisation of sovereignty and the creation and modification of regional institutions. I trust that notwithstanding such limitations, the analysis will present an interesting and informative account of sovereignty within a regional framework and of the regional governance phenomenon which still requires new and effective strategies to reinforce its relevance to the development process. In pursuance of the research framework introduced here, we now turn to establishing the conceptual foundations of the study in chapter 1.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
ACCP	Assembly of Caribbean Community Parliamentarians
ACS	Association of Caribbean States
ALBA	Bolivarian Alternative for Latin America
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
BLP	Barbados Labour Party
CAIC	Caribbean Association of Industry and Commerce
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CARIFORUM	Caribbean Forum of ACP States
CARIFTA	Caribbean Free Trade Association
CCJ	Caribbean Court of Justice
CCL	Caribbean Congress of Labour
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
CHOG	Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community
CLE	Council of Legal Education
CMC	Common Market Council
COFAP	Council on Finance and Planning
COFCOR	Council for Foreign and Community Relations
COHSOD	Council on Human and Social Development
CONSLE	Council for National Security and Law Enforcement
COTED	Council on Trade and Economic Development
CPDC	Caribbean Policy Development Centre
CRIP	Caribbean Regional Indicative Programme
CRNM	Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery
CSE	CARICOM Single Economy
CSM	CARICOM Single Market
CSME	CARICOM Single Market and Economy
CXC	Caribbean Examinations Council
ECB	European Central Bank
ECCA	Eastern Caribbean Currency Authority
ECCM	Eastern Caribbean Common Market
EEC	European Economic Community
EU	European Union
ECJ	European Court of Justice
ECSC	Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court

EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement
FLP	Federal Labour Party
FTAA	Free Trade Areas of the Americas
IDMAG	International Development Management Advisory Group
ISER	Institute of Social and Economic Research
JCC	Joint Consultative Committee
JCPC	Judicial Committee of the Privy Council
JLP	Jamaica Labour Party
JMA	Jamaica Manufacturer's Association
LDC	Less Developed Country
MDC	More Developed Country
MERCOSUR	Common Market of the South
PNP	People's National Party
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Area
NIEO	New International Economic Order
NWG	New World Group
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
OCC	Order of the Caribbean Community
OECS	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
OTN	Office of Trade Negotiations
PMEGG	Prime Ministerial Expert Group on Governance
PMSCEN	Prime Ministerial Subcommittee on External Negotiations
PNM	People's National Movement
RSS	Regional Security System
SCOPE	Standing Committee of Opposition Parties of Eastern Caribbean States
SCAC	Standing Closer Association Committee
SDV	Single Development Vision
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SCMLA	Standing Committee of Ministers responsible for Legal Affairs
SCMFA	Standing Committee of Ministers of Foreign Affairs
SICA	Central American Integration System
TASU	Technical Assistance and Services Unit
TWG	Technical Working Group on Governance
UNASUR	Union of South American Nations
UG	University of Guyana
UWI	The University of the West Indies
WIC	West Indian Commission
WIF	West Indies Federation
WISA	West Indies Associated States

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables and Illustrations