

ABSTRACT

This study examines the state of civil-security forces relations in Jamaica with special reference to the post-Independence period. More specifically, the extent, and sources of conflict between the Government and the Security Forces are analyzed with respect to the attitudes and collective political responses of the Security Forces to the attempts by government at social reform, including the reform of the Security Forces themselves.

Using a sample survey of the Officer Corps, the study found a high degree of racial, social, and ideological (as expressed in policy orientation), fragmentation between the leadership of the Security Forces and the economic elite. In contrast, there is much closer integration with, and fairly tight mechanisms of control by the political elite over the Security Forces.

It is argued that this fragmentation has created the necessary political space for political movements from 'below' -in periods of crisis and popular mass demonstrative action - to influence the political process and has tended to restrict the policy options of the governing elites to reformist, rather than socially

conservative and repressive orientations.

This argument, grounded historically, shows that the Security Forces have been favourable to the different coalitions for progressive sociopolitical change which have emerged. The social liabilities of the declining elite fractions - being a racial minority- has facilitated this. The responsiveness of the state to pressures from below is explained in terms of this fragmentation and weak coercive capacity. Thus rather than vetoing the PNP's programme of reforms in the mid 1970s, the Security Forces actively supported it.

This study represents an advance in the scope and quality of empirical data on the Security Forces. It seeks to assist in breaking the and near-total dependence on foreign police and military experts for policy studies in this important field; and strengthening the knowledge base needed to facilitate better civilian control of the Security Forces, thus offering wider and more relevant options to policy-makers.