

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

Overcoming Weakness and Marginality in Caribbean International Relations: Rethinking Conceptual Aspects of Size, Sovereignty, and Power

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This thesis takes a critical theory approach to understanding historical and contemporary overtures in Caribbean international relations. It brings conceptual and philosophical awareness to perceptions of weak and peripheral behaviour by the Caribbean and identifies prevailing contentions that lead to the consolidation of such barriers. Through a range of issues, the thesis demonstrates how structural deficiencies contribute to miscellaneous incapacities that negate primacy for the Caribbean. The paucity of self-confidence creates the sphere for anomalies that lend conviction to perceptions that the Caribbean is a marginalised region unable to exert influence because of its small size, depressed sovereignty, and the absence of certain criteria for asserting power.

This is a qualitative exercise that is built from a historical/comparative methodology and utilises eclectic sources which include interviews, documents, speeches, various publications, and unpublished materials. It argues that the Caribbean can overcome much of the perceived weakness and marginality by rethinking important concepts in International Relations and Political Theory. The level of consciousness and concretised *Caribbean identity* necessary for mapping behaviour is anchored to structural obstacles such as dependency and compliant relationships. The severity of social forces and institutions careens the Caribbean into submission to hegemonic behaviour. Fixation on small-size is an over-compensated disability suppressing the Caribbean's social reality from seeking inwardly for mechanisms to enhance Caribbean primacy in international relations.

Through a process of *social radicalism* elevated by a distinct sense of Caribbean utopianism, there is a need for the Caribbean to take autonomous measures which are girded by a strong sense of responsibility over its actions. This practical progression is integral for re-shaping the Community's destiny. A critical theory approach therefore becomes a conscious advocate and expression for the epistemological, cognitive, and ontological transformations necessary to re-direct the Caribbean towards incorporating self-determination as an asset for future international relations. The way the Caribbean perceives itself is fundamental for projecting influence to external actors. A critical approach assists in safeguarding Caribbean sovereignty despite the implications of globalisation and interdependence as contemporary phenomena. Critical thought concludes that perceptions ultimately determine levels of success in international relations.

Keywords: Caribbean international relations; small-size, sovereignty and power; critical theory; international primacy; social reality; identity and consciousness.