

Abstract

The Influence of Ethnicity on the Formulation and Implementation of Foreign Policy in Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana

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It can be argued that the domestic influences of foreign policy are as important as the external influences of foreign policy. This is particularly important in states where certain domestic variables are particularly visible. In the Southern Caribbean States of Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana, for example ethnicity has become established as one of the most consistent variables that permeate the political, economic, social and cultural aspects of everyday life. It is not surprising therefore that the issue of ethnicity has spilled over into the international affairs of these Caribbean states, as the complex domestic situation sets the stage for the interplay between ethnicity and external affairs, particularly at the level involving the Indian and African population in these countries.

The purpose of this thesis in this regard is to examine the relationship between ethnicity and foreign policy formulation. Unfortunately this is an area of research that has been largely overlooked. Students of international politics and foreign policy have traditionally focussed on analysis of institutions and systems and little thought had been accorded to the relationship between the domestic environment and how this affects foreign policy.

It is, however, important to examine such issues particularly at a time when there appears to be a resurgence of ethnic conflicts in the international system. For

multiethnic states such as Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana it is particularly important since internal ethnic images affect the image of any state projected abroad. At the domestic level, however, ethnic tensions exist between the two major ethnic groups in both countries as they compete for their share of the political and economic pie. This domestic tension affects the image of the country presented abroad which will in turn affect trade, investment and tourism in these countries. No one wants to invest in, trade with or travel to such countries with unstable domestic environments and for these developing countries, trade and investments are especially important for their economic survival.

Keywords: Hazel Indira Bolan ; ethnicity ; foreign policy ; Trinidad and Tobago ; Guyana.