

## ABSTRACT

The Political Tendencies of Contemporary Martinique in the Context of Post-Decentralisation of 1981 and Pre-European Economic Community of 1993

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The political development of the French Antilles has often been described as 'deviant' to the extent that the islands have tended to move towards closer union with France rather than mounting a popular independence movement. This development is generally analysed in terms of the peculiarities of French colonial policy and local election results which reveal high levels of abstentionism. Both of these contribute to the picture of an apathetic and non-politicised electorate whose 'Martiniquan identity' has been overwhelmed by French culture. Rather than limiting the analysis to a look at the historical relationship between the island and France, and its contemporary socio-economic and political context, this dissertation offers an alternative approach. Using the survey method of investigation it places the emphasis on the politicisation and participation of the electorate in the attempt to understand the reasoning behind local decision making and political opinion.

The various analyses revealed that the influence of the policy of assimilation was a complex affair which, in combination with other factors internal and external to the island, resulted in a **local** demand for departmentalisation rather than independence. They also showed that since decentralisation in 1981 certain changes are taking place in voting patterns, with the electorate supporting

aspects of the independentist argument, ecological issues and various non-aligned political movements. Martiniquans in general were revealed to be well informed with high levels of politicisation, but their electoral participation is complicated by a number of characteristics of local election procedure. Despite the existence of a real ambiguity in terms of national identity, the concept of 'Martiniquan identity' is alive and well. Only the future can tell whether this will translate into the creation of a popular independence movement as any such decision will depend on a local evaluation of the options available.