

Chapter 3

Principle 3: Intelligent
Political Strategies and
Engagement

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3.1 Developing trust between politicians and administrators in developing small states (St Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada and Saint Lucia)

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Overview

This case study discusses the meaning of trust in the context of political and administrative bureaucracies in small states with reference to the Caribbean, using St Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada and Saint Lucia as case studies. The author believes trust is central to the functional relationship between the minister and the permanent secretary since their job roles are intertwined. It is also claimed that untrustworthiness is used as the default position of both the minister and the permanent secretary, particularly during transition governments, as both the politician and the administrator (permanent secretary) continuously search for evidence to justify their trust in each other.

The case study commences with a background on why trust is important for the functional relationship between the political and the administrative bureaucracies, followed by an overview of the characteristics of small states with reference to the Caribbean region. The relevant forms of trust are then discussed and applied to the development of a framework of trust and guidelines for its implementation.

3.1.1 Background

‘The political–administrative interface’ is the term used to describe the functional relationship between politicians (ministers) and administrators (permanent secretaries) and is considered one of the most important aspects of the machinery of government. Max Weber (1980, in Fry and Raadschelders, 2008), in his theory of bureaucracy, outlined its significance and conceptual foundations. He argued that, for an effective relationship, there should be clear terms of roles and responsibilities for both politicians and administrators. He further argued that bureaucrats (administrators) were technical people who were supposed to be politically neutral, to give non-partisan advice to politicians and to execute the decisions of politicians to the best professional standard. Weber completed his argument by stating that, in terms of hierarchy, the administrator is subordinate to the politician.

Mainstream analysis of the political–administrative interface based on the prognoses of the Weberian model of public administration underscores the importance of trust in between politicians and administrators. On careful scrutiny of the experiences of many countries, including the UK and Canada, where variants of the Weberian model are practised, questions about trust and/or expectations between the politician and senior public servants still arise (Agere, 1999). These questions are even more pronounced in small island developing countries in the Caribbean, given their ‘smallness’, the contiguous interpersonal relations within such countries and their serious developmental challenges.

In the Weberian model, the argument that the administrator is subordinate to the politician is fraught with conflicts if the relationship is not managed appropriately. In addition, the Weberian model suggests the political–administrative interface is based on mutual dependability because the administrators are considered subordinate but at the same time are advisers to the politician (minister), based on their institutional knowledge, technical experience and years of on-the-job experience.

Meanwhile, politicians are generally not exposed in great detail to the administrative bureaucracy and mostly rely on these administrators for advice and guidance. As such, their functions are intrinsically linked and a functional relationship is imperative. Research has shown that the best results are achieved when these two parties in the relationship work together cooperatively (Ben Gera, 2009).

Despite its critical importance, though, the question of trust has not attracted much attention in the mainstream literature on political–administrative relations. There is no doubt that roles and hierarchical arrangements cannot be overemphasised, but it is equally important to scrutinise how political–administrative interactions shape policy outcomes.

With a specific focus on Caribbean small island developing states, this case study attempts to fill this gap by looking at the form(s) of trust that would be appropriate to sustain an effective political–administrative interface.

The claim is that trust is central to the functional relationship between the minister and permanent secretary since their job roles are intertwined: the minister has direct control of the ministry and initiates policy whereas the permanent secretary is responsible for development and implementation of policy as well as overall management of the resources of the ministry.

It is also claimed that untrustworthiness is used as the default position of both minister and permanent secretary and, therefore, these actors are both always in constant search of evidence to support justifying their trust in each other.

3.1.2 Justification

The issue of the political–administrative interface has long been associated with the inception of democratic governments (Peters, 2005). Yet this problem has been approached mostly from the legal (constitution), institutional (policy frameworks) and roles and responsibilities perspectives. The literature in this field abounds with technical and sociological solutions on how to balance this relationship, particularly in transitional governments. This study therefore applies a philosophical approach that could unearth the nuanced underpinnings of the political–administrative relations that are particularly difficult to track solely using legal, institutional and sociological approaches.

A positive political and administrative interface is required for effective governance, growth and development of the state. How the two actors work together is therefore of critical importance. Peters (2005) likens the relationship to a ‘transmission belt’ within the public sector. According to him, the ‘upward transmission is for advice, information and loyalty to the mission rather than the person but it depends on the permanence, experience and knowledge of the permanent secretary’. The ‘downward transmission deals with legitimacy of government, policy direction and accountability’. Peters’ illustration emphasises the mutual dependence of the actors — the politician and the permanent secretary; some form of trust is required for the sustainability of the relationship. Agere (1999) echoes this point, that, without the trust of the minister, the permanent secretary would find it very difficult to manage the ministry effectively, and vice versa. This study therefore argues that trust is central to the functional relationship between the minister and the permanent secretary.

3.1.3 Characteristics of Caribbean small states

The countries used in this study are Grenada, Saint Lucia and St Vincent and the Grenadines, which share similar characteristics in terms of population size and constitutional frameworks. The duties of the ministers, as set out in the constitutional provisions of, for example, Grenada read:

Where any Minister has been charged with responsibility for any department of government, he shall exercise general direction and control over that department; and, subject to such direction and control, every department of government shall be under the supervision of a public officer whose office is referred to in this Constitution as the office of a permanent secretary (Section 67).

Similar provisions are made in the respective constitutions of Saint Lucia (Section 69) and St Vincent and the Grenadines (Section 60) with regard

to the duties of the minister and the permanent secretary. The minister's role of having 'general direction and control over (the) department' and the permanent secretary's role of supervision of the department are subject to the direct control of the minister. These two roles are therefore intertwined and cooperation is necessary for a functional relationship.

Table 3.1 shows the number of ministers, permanent secretaries and populations in the three respective states. It also shows more permanent secretaries than ministers, and this is because 1) the prime ministers hold several ministerial portfolios, and therefore two or more additional permanent secretaries are assigned to the Prime Minister's Office; 2) more than one permanent secretary is attached to a minister who has several portfolios; and 3) permanent secretaries are also assigned to other portfolios, for example administration of an island government agency. Governments are elected to a five-year term of office and can be re-elected for another term of five years. There are usually only two political parties in each country, and the power distance ratio between the governed and those who govern is very low, owing to the size of the populations (Nwasike, 2011).

Certain characteristics of these states generally influence how government works, which in turn shapes the political culture and behaviour of the citizens (Sutton, 2007). These small states are facing enormous challenges owing to their vulnerability in terms of size, climate change, high debt, trade imbalances and other constraints. The contagion of the global financial crisis, added to the above challenges, saw the decline of the major industries of tourism and construction, which led to increased unemployment and increased demands by citizens.

On the other hand, the permanent secretary is likely to be an experienced administrator, is appointed and is not time-bound, but wants to ensure the rules and procedures are met subject to transparency and accountability measures. The presence of appointed political advisers and the frequent perception of civil servants that the political are not 'technically qualified' increase the complexity (Agere, 1999). Another characteristic of small island states is that the government is the major employer, and the seated

Table 3.1 Characteristics of states

Name of country	Number of ministers	Number of permanent secretaries	Population
Grenada	13	21	108,000
Saint Lucia	13	20	168,178
St Vincent and the Grenadines	10	12	104,000

Source: Data collected for this study.

prime minister's vision influences growth and development. As in other countries, the government determines who gets what, where, when and how, and therefore it is important for the permanent secretary to work with the minister to deliver on government's priorities.

While the permanent secretary does not have to agree with the policies of the minister, he or she is required to implement these in an unbiased way and in the public interest. When this does not happen rapidly, owing to other infrastructural challenges, politically motivated public servants or other stakeholders can then place significant pressure on the minister to have the permanent secretary removed from office.

The permanent secretary may then be transferred to an obscure position within the public service, in spite of any shortage of professionals. As such, it is not uncommon to find public servants promoted based on perceived loyalty to the political administration and not necessarily on merit. Hurley (2011) argues that this may make the 'minister feel more comfortable, tend to like the permanent secretary more and may gain their reciprocity which will build trust' (pp. 121–23).

Baier (1991) supports the preference for loyalty rather than merit, claiming that it may be 'easier to remedy incompetence than ill will' (p. 116). This is precisely the argument made by politicians themselves—that public servants can always be trained to do the job as long as they have the interests of the government at heart. Hardin (2002) would refer to this 'interest at heart' as the 'encapsulated interest' based on trust (p. 37).

This study now seeks to find what form(s) of trust is/are appropriate for the functional relationship between the minister and the permanent secretary in small island states of the Caribbean, focused on Grenada, St Vincent and the Grenadines and Saint Lucia.

3.1.4 Forms of trust

Trust is very important in all facets of political and socioeconomic processes. It is central to human life and existence. More specifically, it is very difficult to live without trusting others, institutions or the societal environment. Although there is relative agreement by philosophers on the value and nature of trust, in practice trust is used in a variety of ways with different interpretations.

Trust is often stated in the form of 'A trusts B for X', which means that one trusts another to perform a certain task within a certain domain. Trust can also be stated in the form of 'A trusts B', which means A trusts B with everything and the scope is unspecified or unrestricted. However, this form of trust is not commonly used among adults; according to Baier (1986),

it is a form of trust usually used by infants whose trust in their parents is 'inarticulate and uncritical and blind', or for trust in God, which would be total.

An analysis based on critical evaluation of views on trust by various philosophers, carried out as part of this work in order to determine which of the views of trust was most appropriate to the relationship between the political and administrative directorates in small island states of the Caribbean, exposed the complex nature of the interaction between the minister and the permanent secretary. Elements from each philosopher were found to be relevant, and these were discussed within the character and limitations of the small island states. McLeod's (2011) emphasis on trustworthiness and its relevance as a foundation for building trust was given an additional dimension by Hardin (2002), who believes parties must first be introspective in earning that trustworthiness, since encapsulated interests will be a key driver for trust.

Familial relationships, the high power/distance ratio between the governor and the governed and other defining features of small states politics relate well to the need for an optimistic perception of goodwill in building trust, as argued by Jones (1996). Baier's (1986) argument for trust based on the goodwill of the trusted and a willingness to be vulnerable as a key trustor could be a valuable learning point for new ministers entering public office. New ministers must now balance preconceived notions of the trustworthiness of the permanent secretaries with the benefits to be gained from capturing goodwill. The next section discusses the theoretical framework utilising these views of trust.

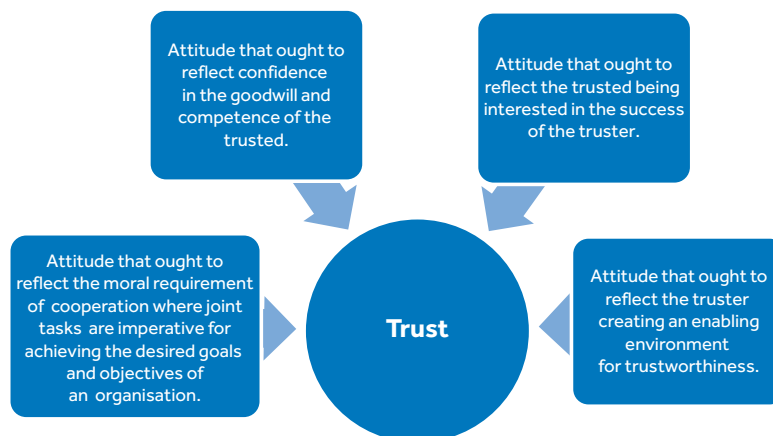
3.1.5 A framework for developing trust

Development of the Trust Framework is based on analysis of the relevant literature on trust and the provision of data from High-Level Retreats conducted by the Commonwealth Secretariat in small states within the Caribbean for Cabinet ministers and permanent secretaries. The theoretical basis is given below, where the **trusted** is the permanent secretary and the **trustor** is the Cabinet minister.

Trust is an attitude that ought to reflect that:

1. There is a moral requirement for cooperation between two or more parties and where joint tasks are imperative for achieving the desired goals and objectives of the ministry and the national government as a whole.
2. Trust requires that the permanent secretary (the trusted) is competent, confident in his or her ability to be the chief operating

Figure 3.1 Framework for developing trust between political and administrative directorates



officer of the ministry and shares goodwill towards his/her minister (the truster) so the minister can succeed in the discharge of responsibility.

3. The permanent secretary must be interested in the success of the minister at all times and demonstrate this by being proactive and innovative.
4. The Cabinet minister is initially responsible for creating an enabling environment for trustworthiness to flourish and should demonstrate this by adopting the default position of trustworthiness when assuming office until there is evidence of untrustworthiness.

The published work on High-Level Retreats conducted by the Commonwealth Secretariat in Grenada, Saint Lucia and St Vincent and the Grenadines showed there were commonalities in what ministers and permanent secretaries believed to be criteria for trust (Nwasike, 2012). These were as follows: integrity, commitment, loyalty, equity, excellence, accountability and efficiency.

The above criteria for trust are discussed in the context of the model developed for trust between the minister and the permanent secretary.

1. **The moral requirement of cooperation where joint tasks are imperative for achieving the desired goals and objectives of an organisation:** In the domain of the civil service, the minister (politician) has direct control of the ministry, which means he/she ought to maintain the integrity of the systems of the machinery of government (a constitutional requirement). In defining the policies that have to be developed and implemented by the permanent

secretary, the minister needs to work closely with the permanent secretary, who has knowledge, technical expertise and long tenure within the civil service. Matheson et al. (2007) refer to this arrangement as ‘information asymmetry’, where the agent can hide or make important information unavailable to the principal, thereby ‘thwarting the principal’s efforts’ to control and direct the agent or to achieve the desired goals in a timely fashion. Dasgupta (1988) also made reference in his definition of trust to the role of ‘hidden action’ by the agent. Therefore, cooperation is necessary for a functional relationship between the minister and the permanent secretary.

Both minister and permanent secretary have roles and responsibilities as provided by the constitution of the various states and so have a duty to fulfil them. Fulfilling roles and responsibilities is also a matter of integrity — ‘standing by one’s fundamental ethical commitments’—to parties in the relationship. Mendus (2009) argues that, for the minister, integrity may be challenging, as the nature of politics itself undermines or threatens integrity. Commitment also ensures that there is fairness of treatment of all civil servants and that the behaviours of both the minister and the permanent secretary reflect impartiality. Commitment would also require that the behaviours and interactions of the minister and permanent secretary be exemplary in complying with moral norms and expectations (Kohen, 2005). Because of the nature of the cooperation needed between the minister and permanent secretary, trust then becomes a moral (impartial) requirement for the relationship.

- 2. Confidence in the goodwill and competence of the trusted:** Everyone makes a decision to trust in a particular domain on a daily basis, and the minister is expected to be open and take the default position of neutrality as a newcomer to the organisation. Openness will allow the minister to receive more information through listening. After processing this information, the minister will be able to update the trustworthiness of the permanent secretary either ‘upwards or downwards’ (O’Neill, 2002). In so doing, the minister is extending goodwill in the form of ‘moral competence’ (Jones, 1996) and at the same time demonstrating confidence in the competence of the permanent secretary. Trust is reciprocal, and the minister’s show of goodwill towards the permanent secretary in the initial meeting will also demonstrate the integrity and commitment that may encourage the permanent secretary to consider reciprocating in a like manner or to show ‘moral competence’: loyalty, kindness and generosity.

3. **The trusted being interested in the success of the truster:** The permanent secretary is functionally the trusted junior partner in the relationship. This means the minister as the senior partner must communicate clearly the vision of the ministry and what is needed to accomplish that vision. The minister should let the permanent secretary know upfront what is required of the ministry and that there will be challenges, which will require a rapid response from the minister. And, should such a challenging situation occur, the minister would expect the permanent secretary to recognise it as a 'hot button' and redouble efforts to have the situation resolved. The minister should also ensure that the permanent secretary has a clear understanding that, as much as possible, policy decisions taken be based on the advice of the permanent secretary; where decisions taken by the minister are contrary to the permanent secretary's advice, there will be political implications for which the minister will be accountable, but which the minister expects to be implemented by the permanent secretary. These discussions need to take place with the permanent secretary at the beginning of the tenure of the minister to avoid misinterpretations and conflicts. This not only builds goodwill but also allows the permanent secretary to understand the interests and expectations of the minister and be a part of these. If the minister does not have confidence in the competence of the permanent secretary to positively support his/her interest, according to Hardin (2002) the minister will not 'empower or take the advice' of the permanent secretary (p. 37). In other words, the permanent secretary will not be able to act on the minister's behalf or use discretionary power as and when necessary. Therefore, there is a clear need for the permanent secretary to understand the interests of the minister (assuming all are legal) and play a positive role in the acquisition of those interests. However, the level of commitment required by the permanent secretary for positively supporting the minister's interest will depend to some extent on the incentive structures (ibid.).
4. **The truster creating an enabling environment for trustworthiness:** The enabling environment of trustworthiness ought to be created by the minister in the first instance, as he/she has the constitutional responsibility of being in charge of the ministry and has the power to punish betrayal. The minister as a part of the Cabinet is also responsible for ensuring there is integrity in the systems and structures of government. The minister can support the integrity of the government's institutional structures by upholding standards generally, and in particular standards of performance.

Measuring standards of performance is very important for the development and maintenance of a climate of trustworthiness. It demonstrates excellence, accountability and efficiency. Where there are no standards and important decisions are made arbitrarily or without transparency, there will be accusations of favouritism, nepotism and even outright bribery.

Permanent secretaries (and in fact the entire civil service) should be governed by Codes of Conduct, and when the permanent secretary breaches any of the Codes or acts in an unprofessional way, for example not giving the best professional advice to the minister, he or she ought to be disciplined appropriately. Failing to take this approach raises questions about the integrity of the institutional structures, the commitment to accountability and efficiency and, generally, the government's standards on performance. Ministers are accountable to the legislature and permanent secretaries to the minister and to Parliament. This is exactly the point made by Hardin (2002) about having institutional support structures for standards of performance that would assist in securing trustworthiness and in turn will support individual trust. When these institutional structures are absent, according to Hardin, individuals will use their 'personal devices of internal motivation' (pp. 30–31).

3.1.6 Guidelines for implementing the trust model in small island states

The model for trust between the political and administrative bureaucracies of small states and in particular small states in the Caribbean may be applied in practice using the following steps:

1. Create a deeper understanding of the meaning of trust. This may be done during retreats for ministers and permanent secretaries.
2. Demonstrate why trust ought to be a moral requirement in the relationship between the permanent secretary and the minister.
3. Explain how trust is linked to strong institutional structures, for example the public service commission, performance management systems and Parliament and its oversight sub-committees.
4. Demonstrate that government is responsible for creating a trusting environment using case studies.
5. Demonstrate how trust is developed through accountability and maintaining standards of behaviour and performance, for example implementation of the Codes of Conduct.

6. Demonstrate how personal values of integrity, loyalty and commitment are all linked to trust.

3.1.7 Conclusion

Small states and small island states in particular cannot afford the loss if experienced incumbent permanent secretaries exit when a new administration takes office on the grounds that they are politically biased and will therefore frustrate the incoming government's priority agenda. Continuing efforts must therefore be placed on the study and analysis of trust and its related factors, as they play a key role in the sustainable use of human and other resources in small states.

A framework has been developed here for small island states in the Caribbean, premised on the centrality of trust to the functional relationship between the political and administrative directorates. The framework is adaptable and can be used in other Commonwealth countries. It seeks to identify the form(s) of trust that is/are appropriate for sustaining a functional relationship between the minister and the permanent secretary utilising the framework.

3.2 Coalition governments in Trinidad and Tobago

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Overview

Coalition governments have become the object of intense debate globally as a result of their increasing presence in the international political environment. Around the world, they have increasingly emerged as alternative sources of executive and parliamentary power and have thus given rise to discussions and analysis on their effectiveness and sustainability. In 2010, Trinidad and Tobago joined the growing number of countries with elected coalition governments when the People's Partnership (PP), comprising five political parties — the United National Congress (UNC), the Congress of the People (COP), the Tobago Organisation of the People (TOP), the Movement for Social Justice (MSJ) and the National Joint Action Committee (NJAC) — campaigned and won the 2010 general elections. This was the first time a coalition had been formed and had won the general elections in Trinidad and Tobago.

3.2.1 Context and definition of coalition governments

A coalition government can be defined as a political system where two or more political parties combine their efforts by means of a formal agreement

or a coalition, in order to govern together (Makarenko, 2007). Another definition indicates that coalition governments consist of two or more parties that compromise on principles and share a mandate, usually in order to gain control of Parliament or the Cabinet (Finley, 2012). Coalition governments generally refer to different political parties collaborating to form a temporary alliance large enough to enjoy the confidence of Parliament, allowing them to form a government. In the context of the Parliament, Riker (1962) asserts that a group of legislators who collaborate to vote on a specific issue or sets of issues constitutes a coalition. He contextualises coalitions within stable, formal institutions and thus places emphasis on established systems of rules regarding legitimate power and authority within a democratic state. However, as Arora (2011) contends, a coalition may also be created in a period of national crisis, such as in times of war and civil unrest.

Within the context of general elections, a coalition government may also refer to the manifestation of a particular situation in which no political party achieves a clear majority vote. In this regard, political parties collaborate to provide a majority at the floor of the Parliament. Nonetheless, it is important to note that coalitions can be formed prior to elections and are thus not necessarily an outcome of a general election. In this sense, coalitions may be electoral, parliamentary and/or governmental. Coalition cabinets are prominent in countries in which Parliament is elected by proportional representation and represented with several organised parties. Further, the concept of a coalition is also embedded in wider discourses on organising theory and game theory, as discussed below (Arora, 2011; Riker, 1962).

According to Daghie (2014), the concept of coalitions is historically rooted in organising theory. Essentially, an organisation refers to a group of people working together to achieve objectives. In earlier debates on conflict, organising or organisational theory emerged to facilitate collaboration among individuals and sub-groups with common goals. In this regard, coalitions refer to groups and/or sub-groups joining together to achieve a commonly shared goal with the intention that their individual interests and objectives be simultaneously achieved. However, according to Cyert and March (1992), the effectiveness of coalitions is impeded depending on the range of competing interests among sub-groups, especially if these are not clearly specified beforehand. In this way, dominant coalitions are effectively constrained by their environments and thus place greater emphasis on consensus-building and negotiations (Loader, 2012).

In contrast, game theorists view coalitions in terms of a constant sum game. Riker (1962), in his publication, *Theory of Political Coalitions*, conceptualises political coalitions as 'a constant sum game played for the fixed prize of holding office'. He postulates the size principle, where 'coalitions are engaged in a zero-sum competition with other coalitions over a limited resource (such

as trying to win votes), and where coalition leaders can offer bribes, money, promises, or other things of value to induce outsiders to join them,' the latter referring to 'side-payments'. Under the size principle, rational coalition leaders attempt to attract the smallest number of potential members into their coalition that is required to succeed in elections. The size principle is also consistent with the strategic principle. This argues that, in the final stages of coalition formation, leaders intend to gain a minimum winning size. In this context, sub-groups within the decision-making machinery of coalitions with greater bargaining power generally aim to exploit such an advantage for their own personal gain. Further, coalitions tend to offer ambiguous stances on essential issues and policies in an effort to win votes from differing electorate preferences.

Essentially, coalition politics also refers to the collaboration of different sub-groups and political parties to develop one unified political party. Organising and game theories are useful in highlighting key elements of coalition politics. The former illuminates the scope for consensus-building and collaboration. In contrast, game theory emphasises the rational interests of individual sub-groups and how this can potentially shape dynamics within a coalition party.

In general terms, it has been argued that the main advantage of a coalition, as advocated by consociational theory, is the broader representation in the adoption of laws and policies in support of minority groups. Single party majority systems are more prone, albeit relatively, to less debate and exchange of ideas in the development of policies in comparison with coalition political groups. In contrast, individual ministers within coalition governments inevitably represent a wider category of electorates and thus a wider range of issues and viewpoints. Such a situation increases the chances for greater debate and wider representation in policy formation. According to consociational theory, coalition governments are useful mechanisms for managing conflict in highly differentiated societies as they allow for the representation of numerous groups, including minorities.

However, while this may occur in some societies, the exchange of multiple ideas may also generate conflict. Critics of coalition governments argue that they are also more prone to controversy and conflict owing to the wider divergence of views among members. In this regard, coalitions tend to be more fractious, which can contribute to the undermining of effective and legitimate development of policies. In culturally and socially diverse societies, coalition governments may be constituent of sub-groups with conflicting ideological principles and therefore weaken effective decision-making. Further, in situations where one party is more dominant and powerful, the benefits of consensus-building and representation are deferred, as policies developed may align more closely with the interests of powerful party

officials. These officials may also have access to more resources for collusion during decision-making processes.

Coalition parties are sometimes characterised as a 'double-edged sword', with the very benefits of their constitution being some of their key weaknesses. Here, the wider exchange of ideas among sub-groups, while beneficial for representation, may also increase the potential for conflict. Also, power dynamics within a coalition can significantly shape the effectiveness of representation. As a result of this phenomenon, dominant political parties within a coalition may stifle the viewpoints of smaller, less powerful, members. Similarly, the benefits of coalition politics are highly contingent on power dynamics and the overarching political, social, cultural and economic environment that shapes the context in which they operate.

Trinidad and Tobago is a useful case study for illuminating the complexities of coalition politics. Coalition governments are prominent across the globe, with the Caribbean standing as no exception. The UK, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, the Nordic countries, Pakistan and Switzerland are some international examples with a recent prominence of coalition governments. Within the Caribbean region, Guyana and St Kitts and Nevis are also important examples of coalition governments established in recent times. In the case of St Kitts and Nevis, in 2015 Team Unity, a coalition of the People's Labour Party, the People's Action Movement and the Concerned Citizen's Movement, won the general elections. In May 2015 in Guyana, a coalition government comprising A Partnership for National Unity and the Alliance for Change was elected.

3.2.2 Background to the coalition experience in Trinidad and Tobago and public sector reform

Trinidad and Tobago, a former British colony, is the southernmost island of the Caribbean island archipelago, and is located between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean and to the north-east of the South American mainland country of Venezuela (LAPOP, 2010). The island of Trinidad was discovered by Christopher Columbus and claimed for Spain on his final voyage on 31 July 1492. Great Britain won the island from Spain in 1797; it remained a colony of Great Britain until its independence in 1962. In contrast, the island of Tobago was a colony of the Great Britain from 1803 and it was only in 1889 that it joined Trinidad to form the single colony of Trinidad and Tobago. In January 1899, Tobago formally became a ward of the colony, and British rule was maintained.

In 1962, Trinidad and Tobago became independent and, following its former colonial masters, it adopted the Westminster model of government. This still is used today. This Westminster model provided for free and fair elections,

held at regular intervals with universal adult suffrage, as well as a system of parliamentary democracy. In 1976, Trinidad and Tobago became a republic and formally established the post of president as the head of state, to replace the post of governor general that existed before.

According to the Census, Trinidad and Tobago has a multi-racial and multi-ethnic population of approximately 1.3 million citizens. Afro- and Indo-Trinidadians comprise the majority of the population (accounting for just over 70 per cent); other ethnic groups comprise Mixed, Chinese, Whites, Amerindians and Syrian-Lebanese racial groupings. This plural society is also home to a wide range of religious groups, including Hindus, Muslims, Roman Catholics, Pentecostals, Baptist Faiths, Anglicans, Seventh Day Adventists and others.

As a result of its geographical location and its natural resource endowments of oil, natural gas and asphalt, Trinidad and Tobago has developed an economy based predominantly on the energy sector (primarily oil and natural gas). As a major component of its productive sector, Trinidad and Tobago's economy relies significantly on the production and export of oil and natural gas combined with related industrial activities, including oil refining, gas processing and production of urea, ammonia, iron, methanol and steel. The economy of Trinidad and Tobago and the various productive sectors have significantly influenced the formation of the political party system, as a convergence of political interests was perceived as critical to the achievement of common developmental goals. Indeed, historically, the political parties emerged from labour unions, one representing the sugar workers and the other workers in the energy sector.

Politically, after independence, the twin-island republic of Trinidad and Tobago came to operate under a multi-party system. At that time, it was mainly two parties that emerged to contest the national elections, with the People's National Movement (PNM) consistently being one of the two. While the PNM, founded by Dr Eric Williams in 1956, is the oldest political party in Trinidad and Tobago, several other parties have formed within the political system in more recent times. Basdeo Panday, who later became prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago, established the UNC in 1988. The only other party to gain political power through elections has been the National Alliance for Reconstruction (NAR), under the stewardship of Arthur Robinson, which was voted into office dramatically in 1986 with a landslide victory over the ruling PNM by 33 to 3 seats. The NAR served only one term, has not been in power since and has been dissolved. The COP, formed in 2006, failed to capture a single seat in its primary contestation in the general elections in 2007 (LAPOP, 2010), and became a member of the PP coalition that won the general elections in 2010.

Historically, the PNM and the UNC have been the major political parties in the country and their policies have traditionally shaped the workings of the

public service. An overview of the history of the public service in Trinidad and Tobago reveals that the public sector since independence has provided basic governmental services across the country. Currently, the public sector constitutes a diverse labour force of roughly 60,000 monthly paid employees. However, it is increasingly also made up of a large number of daily rated and contract employees. In an effort to improve the efficiency of the public sector, a series of reform initiatives have taken place since 1964.

These efforts have been deemed necessary as the provision of the services offered by the government are critical for the development of the economy and the welfare of the populace. The Trinidad and Tobago government, as is the case with many small developing states, constitutes one of the largest employers in the economy, and as such needs to be constantly upgrading the levels of its service to the public.

These programmes generally seek to outline the key goals for improving public sector reform. These are outlined in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Public sector reform 1964–2020

Period	Reform description
1964	Reform programmes focused on terms and conditions for public servants
1970	Reform initiatives emphasised the improvement of institutional architecture and the restructuring of public service practices and procedures Stakeholders expressed apprehension concerning over-centralisation and inefficient disciplinary systems and performance appraisal systems
1973–75	Implementation of the Administrative Improvement Programme This initiative illuminated flaws in performance appraisals in addition to the need to provide better training opportunities for employees
1981	Effort to improve efficiency in the public service Reform called for assignment in financial and personnel matters Main focus on job assessment, career development and training
1984–86	Dumas Report: Review of Public Service Task Force Assessment identified a need to improve the appraisal system across the public service
1989	Administrative Reform Programme This programme reinforced the need for institutional strengthening Key elements: formation of mission statements and development of strategic plans; improvement of organisational structures and processes; improve financial management system
1992	Draper Report: Transform and Improve the Human Relations Management Function in the Public Service
2007–20	Vision 2020: National Readiness Assessment Study An integrated and holistic approach to national development initiatives
Source: Based on research conducted by Beresford and Nunes (2004).	

Baptiste (2012) further identifies critical aspects of reform initiatives over the past 15 years. He demonstrates that key aspects of these effects have been geared towards improving personnel management, with a particular emphasis on reducing the over-dominance of central agencies. The main agencies responsible for personnel management are the service commissions (the Public, Police, Teaching, Judicial and Legal Service Commissions). These play a key role in managing the public service, and their key purpose as established under the constitution of Trinidad and Tobago is to recruit, transfer and promote public servants. In addition, they serve to negotiate terms and conditions of employment and the efficient administration of public sector officials.

A key concern in the administration of the service commissions and the public service at large has been the issue of decentralisation and politicisation. In the early 1990s, in an effort to promote decentralisation, the government established human resource management units for individual ministries and departments. However, some key issues still remain prominent.

First, Baptiste (2012) focuses on the need to improve the administrative system for rewards and compensation for public servants, which was also a major challenge for the PP government between 2010 and 2015. Further, another key issue that also affected the PP government pertains to the continuing wide gap in salaries between the private sector and public service employees undertaking similar job functions. While this has continued to deter skilled labour from entering the public service in some cases, it was noted that this factor also translated to sub-optimal levels of efficiency and innovation during the PP government.

The first coalition government came into office in 1986. The government, the NAR, consisted of the Organisation for National Reconstruction, the United Labour Front, the Democratic Actions Congress and the Tapia House Movement. It is interesting to note that this coalition was formed after the general elections were held: each party had contested the elections as individual political entities.

After this time, unlike the NAR coalition government in 1986, which was formed under a post-election agreement, the UNC led by Kamla Persad-Bissessar, the COP under the leadership of Winston Dookeran, the TOP, with Ashworth Jack as its leader, the MSJ, led by Errol McLeod, and the NJAC under the leadership of Makandal Daaga established a coalition party. This PP campaigned as a single unit and won the country's 2010 general elections. The PP subsequently lost political power to the PNM under the leadership of Dr Keith Rowley in the general elections held in 2015.

In general terms, the system of governance in Trinidad and Tobago consists of three main pillars, the legislative, the executive and the judiciary. Legislative power lies with the House of Representatives, with 41 elected members, and the Senate, with 31 members appointed by the president on the advice of the prime minister and leader of the opposition, with nine of these members serving as independent members. Executive power lies with the prime minister and the Cabinet, which is appointed from MPs. The judiciary is independent of the government, as guaranteed by the Constitution.

General elections in Trinidad and Tobago are held every five years and this form of government allows the general population (the electorate) to elect their representatives, who in turn represent their opinion in Parliament. The elected candidates under this system become MPs, and their relative numbers of seats determine which political party holds the majority in Parliament and ultimately forms the government. When no one political party holds the majority in Parliament, this can lead to the formation of a coalition government.

3.2.3 Formation of coalition and coalition agreements

This study now focuses on the most recent coalition government of Trinidad and Tobago, the PP, which assumed office in 2010. It is significant to note that the coalition was formed prior to the general elections in 2010, and it defeated the PNM by securing 29 out of a total of 41 seats and controlled the executive and legislative branches of the political system. The political leader, Kamla Persad-Bissessar, was sworn into office as prime minister on 26 May 2010. The PP coalition subsequently lost the 2015 elections by securing only 18 of the 41 parliamentary seats in the general elections and is now the main opposition party in Trinidad and Tobago.

It is important to observe that, prior to the general elections in 2010, the five parties that formed the PP established a set of guiding principles, in the Fyzabad Declaration of April 2010. In this Declaration, the parties expressed their commitment to social justice and transparency. Members agreed to:

... respect the principles of social justice and therefore believe that the operation of the economic system should result in the material resources of the community being so distributed as to subserve the common good, that there should be adequate means of livelihood for all, that labour should not be exploited or forced by economic necessity to operate in inhumane conditions but that there should be opportunity for advancement on the basis of recognition of merit, ability and integrity.

The Fyzabad Declaration also affirmed that the parties in the PP would:

... adopt Principles and Codes of Conduct whereby the interest of our beloved Country is and shall be put before party and individual self-interest and as a Government comprising the Partners they will implement a Public Policy Program to improve the quality of life of the People of Trinidad and Tobago based on shared principles of National Development and national unity. Together these constitute the foundation for sustainable government.

As part of the accord, the parties in the PP also agreed ‘not to tolerate any form of corruption’ or ‘politicise the civil service, commissions or state enterprises’. It is also of significance that the parties in the PP also agreed as part of the Fyzabad Declaration to ‘make choices based on merit in carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits’. These agreed principles demonstrated that all the parties in the coalition were committed to an efficient and effective public service in order to ensure the development of the country could be sustained.

There is also the view that coalition governments are more likely to demonstrate and sustain democratic practices, since such governments represent a wide range of public opinion. Further decisions are usually made in the interest of a significant majority of the population. It is also posited that, prior to implementation, public policy in coalition governments tends to be widely discussed and debated within the government and in the wider community, and this thus presents a more democratic and participatory approach to governance. It is instructive to note, however, that the majority of interviewees indicated that debate and discussion on public policy between public servants and ministers of the coalition government were insignificant in Trinidad and Tobago.

Research has indicated that there are also disadvantages of coalition governments. Primarily, there is the view that, when two or more parties join to form a government, there is a wider range of competing interests under this arrangement. Further, competition among various interest groups within the coalition can emerge, as well as the struggle to maintain separate identities among the political parties represented in the coalition. In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, by 2012 one of the partners of the PP, the MSJ, had withdrawn from the partnership. In a statement by the National Executive and Activist Council of the MSJ in June 2012, one of the primary reasons for joining the coalition had been to effect progressive changes in the country’s governance. As a reason for its withdrawal, the MSJ noted that the objective:

... seems to be thwarted notwithstanding our best efforts by powerful elements in the partnership who quite frankly are very happy with the

existing system once they are in charge. For them it is not about changing the system of governance but rather changing faces because it is 'we time now', we do not see this approach to politics and governance being altered in the near future.

It is also argued that coalitions can be less democratic than one-party governments since the group with the largest number of seats tends to dominate the decision-making processes. As the MSJ noted in its statement of withdrawal from the PP government, the decisions were made predominately by the prime minister: 'This is really a reinforcement of the old system of governance where the Prime Minister decides. It flies in the face of the decision of the political leaders of the PP' and 'The leaders recognize the importance of this forum for the discussion and resolution of national policy issues.'

Further, there is the view that smaller parties perceive their existence in power as a part of the coalition to be dependent on their allegiance to the dominant party. In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, it has been noted that the smaller MSJ withdrew from the PP and declared that, 'If we want to change the system of governance we also have to start addressing the culture of dependence.' The MSJ went further to suggest that, even as a small party, it can engage further with citizenry and influence political action through this process as well collaborate with the public to take actions in their best interest.

In the manifesto of the PP, entitled Prosperity for All, 2010, the partnership committed to 'establish an Economic Development Board which will consult with stakeholders and play an advisory role in policy formulation', as well as 'a Ways and Means Committee to formulate a project plan on a phased basis to make all government public services more accessible to residents'. The manifesto also committed the PP to transparent and accountable governance where all plans and policies 'will be aligned to a national framework for sustainable development'.

3.2.4 Negotiations, compromise and concessions

Analysts and commentators have argued that coalition governments are theoretically more representative than majority governments as they are by definition representative of a much larger percentage of the general population. This naturally increases the need for compromise among the elected members of Parliament, and this creates the environment for negotiation and conciliation. With respect to Trinidad and Tobago, interviewees noted that the environment for negotiation was not established during the period of a majority PP government. It was also observed that there was a notable limitation to the areas of compromise among members

of the government. For public servants, this environment of inflexibility led to higher levels of frustration, which, according to interviewees, also led to incidences of demotivation.

Traditionally, many commentators have suggested that coalition governments can gain from more consensus-based politics, as a result of all parties having to compromise to allow policies and measures to be passed in Parliament. While this requires high levels of skill and capacity from the political leadership, there is also the issue of public perception and confidence in this type of government, especially when it is not well entrenched in the political culture of a nation, as is the case with Trinidad and Tobago.

Further, there is more pressure to represent the interests of the majority of parties in the nation state, rather than a few or only the elite in society, as in the accusation made against majority governments. Interviewees highlighted that, in the absence of a spirit of compromise among members of the Cabinet, there were several changes in the ministers of government, and, during the period 2010–15, 21 ministers left the Cabinet for varying reasons.¹ This change of ministers created a situation in which policy changes were frequent. Table 3.3 highlights the ministers of government who were replaced, dismissed or resigned during the PP administration.

Interviewees noted, however, that public servants continued to implement policies and procedures that were ‘tried and tested over time’ and had proven efficient, even in the rapid changes in executive and ministerial personnel experienced during the PP government. They suggested that, at times, there was serious conflict with policy-makers, which negatively affected the efficiency of the public service and the administration of its programmes.

The view has been advanced that generally coalitions opt to utilise the parts of their individual manifestos that are compatible and as such may be able to be easily operationalised in the areas of health, education, fiscal and economic policies, and other important aspects of government. Similarly, it has been suggested that coalitions tend to attract a larger voter turnout, as well as being more inclusive in relation to women’s and indigenous peoples’ representation and the formulation and articulation of more all-inclusive government policies. In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, in 2002 voter turnout was 609,571, in 2007 653,882, in 2010 722,322 and in 2015 734,792. Thus we can see voter turnout is higher than usual when coalitions contest elections, whether as challengers or incumbents.

Research has indicated both advantages and disadvantages to coalition governments. In the first place, coalitions make it possible to take a wider array of public opinions into consideration when formulating policy. In addition, under a majority government there is greater probability of laws being steamrolled through Parliament, whereas with coalition governments

Table 3.3 Ministers of government replaced or dismissed or who resigned during the PP administration

Political affiliation	Parliamentary status	Last portfolio	Start date	End date	Term (days)	Termination
COP	Government Senator	Attorney General	26/05/2010	02/02/2015	1,713	Resigned
UNC	Government Senator	Minister of Justice	28/05/2010	02/02/2015	1,711	Replaced
UNC	MP Toco/Sangre Grande	Minister of Sport	28/05/2010	02/02/2015	1,711	Replaced
NJAC	Government Senator	Minister of National Security	28/05/2010	02/02/2015	1,711	Replaced
COP	Government Senator	Minister of National Security	06/09/2013	02/02/2015	514	Fired
COP	MP D'Abadie/O'meara	Minister of Sport	27/07/2010	31/07/2014	1,465	Resigned
UNC	MP Fyzabad	Minister of Tourism	28/05/2010	31/03/2014	1,403	Resigned
UNC	MP Caroni Central	Minister of the People and Social Development	28/05/2010	25/3/2014	1,397	Fired
COP	Government Senator	Minister of Communication	25/06/2012	05/09/2013	437	Replaced
TOP	Government Senator	Minister of Justice	26/09/2012	05/09/2013	344	Replaced
UNC	MP Chaguanas West	Minister of National Security	28/05/2010	26/04/2013	1,064	Resigned
Independent	MP St Joseph	Minister of Justice	28/05/2010	20/09/2012	846	Fired
UNC	MP Toco/Manzanilla	Minister of National Security	27/06/2011	27/08/2012	427	Fired
UNC	Government Senator	Minister of National Security	28/05/2010	24/06/2012	758	Replaced
UNC	Government Senator	Minister of Gender Affairs	27/06/2011	24/06/2012	363	Replaced
COP	Government Senator	Minister of Communication	27/06/2011	24/06/2012	363	Replaced
UNC	Government Senator	Minister of Health	28/05/2010	26/06/2011	394	Replaced
UNC	Government Senator	Minister of Public Administration	28/05/2010	26/06/2011	394	Replaced
UNC	Government Senator, Senate Leader	Minister in the Ministry of National Security	17/06/2010	26/06/2011	374	Replaced
COP	Government Senator	Minister in the Ministry of Finance	18/06/2010	26/06/2011	373	Replaced
COP	Government Senator	Minister of Planning, Restructuring and Gender Affairs	28/05/2010	10/05/2011	347	Fired

there is a tendency for greater debate and more attention to detail when bills are taken to the national Parliament. Further, coalition government decisions benefit a wider range of citizens; majority governments typically look after the interests of the political and economic elites who make up their constituencies.

Levels of economic growth tend to rise more easily in countries being governed by coalition governments. This has been the case in developing countries like India, where the strengthening of the economy has been correlated with the weakening of the single-party government: under a coalition government there has been increasing political space, which allows for inputs, opinions and ideas in the decision-making process. However, under the PP government in Trinidad and Tobago, economic growth rates slowed from 1.6% per cent in 2010 to -2.1 per cent in 2015 (Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, 2016).

3.2.5 Challenges to the public sector

While there were significant challenges in the administration of the coalition, the PP government introduced important initiatives between 2010 and 2015. In 2011, the PP government introduced a medium-term policy framework under the theme 'Innovation for Lasting Prosperity'. This framework identified items for action within the period and was anchored on seven interconnected pillars for sustainable development: people-centred development, poverty eradication and social justice, national and personal security, information and communication technologies, a diversified knowledge-intensive economy, good governance and foreign policy.

The main thrusts of this medium-term policy framework were:

- To diversify and deepen the production base to ensure that, in a context of depleting energy resources, the economy would continue to grow and sustain a high standard of living;
- To move the economy up the value chain, improve competitiveness and expand investment both local and foreign;
- To have a secure and safe nation and to strengthen the framework, institutions and infrastructure to support human security;
- To expand the capacity of citizens for knowledge accumulation and use, innovation, creativity and entrepreneurial activity;
- To reduce socioeconomic and regional inequalities within the borders, move people out of poverty and promote social inclusion through more meaningful economic participation.

Further, this initiative by the PP government was the first effort by any government in Trinidad and Tobago to integrate and articulate its approach to development in the interest of multiple parties. It also sought to promote greater collaboration and stronger functional cooperation among ministries and state agencies in order to facilitate greater coherence and effectiveness in the implementation of development policies. While in the earlier stages of its delivery this initiative demonstrated promise, interviewees indicated that these practices were not sustained, which led to a reduction in public confidence in the state bureaucracy.

Another important initiative of the PP government was the introduction of the National Performance Framework (2012–15). As Prime Minister Persad-Bissessar observed, ‘The framework places emphasis on monitoring performance on projects and programs and more importantly, on evaluating the impacts of such initiatives in the lives of citizens.’ This framework was established to facilitate a culture of reporting in the public sector and more particularly to identify the actual impact of government interventions on the lives of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. Figures 3.2 and 3.3 show the priorities and measurable performance indicators established in the National Performance Framework. This can be considered as one of the positive features of the coalition government.

There is also the view that coalitions require greater levels of political discipline than single-party governments, and issues such as transparency and accountability are frequently complex in their articulation. Interviewees indicated that, within the public sector, actions frequently occurred that brought up issues of transparency. These included the hiring of staff outside of normal procedures, the awarding of contracts under abnormal circumstances and the rapid promotion of individuals without the requisite experience or qualifications.

The view has also been advanced that, with the accession to power of coalition governments, the state bureaucracy has a tendency to become bloated, as there are demands for allocations of resources to satisfy a larger pool of constituents. In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, in 2013 there were 3,450 contract employees in the public sector; in 2014 this number had increased to 5,946. There was a significant increase in the number of both contracted workers and regular public service employees, and the figures rose from 55,000 persons in 2014 to 75,000 in 2015 (Office of the Auditor-General, 2016).

Further, there is the contention that coalitions are ‘promises to the people’ and are unpredictable, and may leave the country in a worse position than if there were a single-party government. In the case of the PP government in Trinidad and Tobago, interviewees indicated that indiscipline among the higher echelons of the public sector, including ministers of government, was

Figure 3.2 Medium-term priorities of the National Performance Framework

**GOVERNMENT'S VISION:
'INNOVATION FOR LASTING PROSPERITY'**

MEDIUM-TERM PRIORITIES	KEY RESULT AREAS	NATIONAL OUTCOMES
Crime and Law & Order	A Safe and Secure Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More Effective Law Enforcement • Reduction in Crime Against Property and Person • Efficient and Effective Judicial System
Agriculture & Food Security	A Food-Secure Nation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate and Affordable Food • Agriculture will be a Viable Sector of the Economy
Healthcare Services and Hospitals	First Class Healthcare A Fit and Healthy Nation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal Access to Healthcare Facilities across T&T • Efficient and Quality Healthcare System • Greater Participation in Sport and Recreational Activities Towards Healthy Lifestyles • Reduced Prevalence of Diseases • Healthier Choices in Diet and Nutrition
Economic Growth, Job Creation, Competitiveness & Innovation	A Resilient, Competitive, Stable and Sustainable Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Growth and Job Creation • Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Partnership • A Diversified Economy
Poverty Reduction and Human Capital Development	A Society Free from Poverty A Quality Education System that Caters to the Diverse Needs of 21st Century Learners A Knowledge-Driven and Skilled Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Adequate and Affordable Housing • Self-Reliant and Sustainable Communities • An Efficient and Effective Social System for the Poor and Vulnerable • Improved Learning Environment • Improved Students' Overall Performance • Improved Alignment of Students to their Prospective Best-Fit Jobs and Promote Career Establishment • Improved Institutional Strength and Capacity of the Ministry • Quality Graduates in Tertiary Education and Technical Vocational Programmes in Sufficient Numbers and Capabilities to Drive a Knowledge Intensive Economy • Synchronisation of Labour Market Requirements with Skills and Tertiary Education • Improved System of Entrepreneurship, Apprenticeship and Internship for Young Persons

responsible for a reduction of confidence in the public sector. They cited cases such as accusations of financial malpractice against two incumbent ministers at the time. It has also been argued that indiscipline, non-performance owing to discontentment and cabal-forming are all factors that detract from the strength and productivity of a coalition.

Coalition governments, while not new in Trinidad and Tobago, are currently seen by some citizens as the most important option for the future governance of the state. On the other hand, the view has been advanced that the PP coalition has devalued the argument in favour of coalition governments, since the level of interference in government institutions, poor governance

Figure 3.3 Performance indicators of the medium-term priorities

Crime and Law & Order	Agriculture & Food Security	Healthcare Services and Hospitals	Growth, Job Creation, Competitiveness & Innovation	Poverty Reduction and Human Capital Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime Rate • Recidivism Rate • Crime Solvency Rate • Homicide Detection Rate • Time taken for Cases from Start to Determination • No. of Backlog Cases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Inflation Rate • % Contribution of Agriculture to Non-Energy GDP • % Employment in Agriculture • Food Import Bill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % Population with Chronic Illnesses • Cancer Mortality Rate • Tuberculosis Mortality Rate • Non-Communicable Disease Mortality Rate • No. of New Infectious Disease Cases • Registered Patients at St. Ann's Psychiatric Hospital • Adult HIV Prevalence • Diabetes Mortality Rate • Obesity Rate • No. of Persons Participating in Sport • Physician Professionals per 10,000 persons • Nursing Professionals per 10,000 persons • Client Satisfaction Rate • % of Population Living within 1 Hour Travelling Time to a Health Facility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gross Domestic Product (TT\$ million) • Sector Contribution to GDP (%) • Export Expansion • Foreign Direct Investment • Unemployment Rate • Global Competitiveness Index • Global Innovation Index • New Business Creation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % Families Owning Homes • % Small Business Start-ups • % Population Living in Poverty • % Socially Displaced Persons • Differently-abled Unemployment Rate • % Students Attaining 5 or more Subjects at CXC • % Students Passing SEA • Employment Rates in the 15-24 Age Group • Tertiary Institutions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Enrolment Rate – Participation Rate – Graduation Rate • Response Time-Centre to Districts • % Enrolment Technical Vocational Institutions • % of Programmes listed on the National Development List offered by Tertiary Level Institutions • % Persons Graduating from Apprenticeship Programmes

and decision-making and lack of transparency and accountability within the public sector during its tenure reduced the public's confidence in this approach.

Brown (2009) has argued that high-performing public institutions and good governance are critical to social and economic development. Public institutions including ministries, departments and state-owned corporations make and implement economic and social policy, deliver services to the public and ensure accountability for the use of public resources and public regulatory authority (ibid.). Brown suggests that, in Trinidad and Tobago, similar to other small island developing states, small size lends itself to 'a kind to intimacy that facilitates good governance, and provides an environment that is conducive to institutional development' (ibid.). The vast majority of interviewees engaged in this study indicated that an environment for the sustained development of public sector institutions was absent and, even at a small size, the concentration of power by a few in the coalition did not lend itself to cooperation and inclusion of public servants in decision-making processes.

It has also been posited that the multi-party nature of the PP ought to have created the conditions for greater cohesion in the public sector and the emergence of a collective identity among public servants, thereby leading to a more efficient institutional environment. However, a large majority of the interviewees indicated that, during the PP administration, there was an absence of cohesion, which led to fragmentation among public servants, which also contributed to lack of common identity in the public service.

There is also the view that small size, as in the case of Trinidad and Tobago, allows for easier access to key decision-makers and enhances the consultative process within the public sector. In Trinidad and Tobago, it was also felt that, with multiple partners in government, public sector officials would have easier access to the major policy-makers. However, a majority of respondents/interviewees indicated that this was not the case, and it was suggested that, because of the influence of the major partner in the PP coalition (the UNC), there was a tendency to dictate policy without significant levels of consultation with public servants and the other minority parties in the coalition.

It was also felt that personal considerations and party loyalties to the major partner in the PP (the UNC) were prevalent in the 2010–15 period, and entry and promotion were not based on merit or performance evaluations. It must be noted, however, that most respondents/interviewees felt this was not different from periods in Trinidad and Tobago when a single party governed the country.

According to Kalberg (1980), Max Weber posits that the division of labour between the politician and the bureaucrat is sanctimonious, and should remain separate if the state is to be run effectively. To Weber, the bureaucrat must serve the politician as a technical guru, making possible the execution of all policy directives once they are in line with national interests and do not conflict with these policy objectives.

Another danger is that bureaucrats by definition may be political in orientation. The public service and bureaucrats are the creation of the politicians, and as such their actions are not apolitical in nature (Christensen and Laegreid, 2005). Under the PP, a tendency was observed to increase the public service with political appointees or ‘ministerial assistants’, who invariably acted with significant authority. This practice, according to the public servants interviewed, served to undermine the role of public service officials and led to significant levels of demotivation and mistrust among these officials.

There is also the view that the ability of the state to attract and retain skilled personnel in the public sector is critical to the implementation of development plans and programmes. This suggests that human resource

development and training should be a priority. Interviewees suggested that, between 2010 and 2015, however, the PP did not place emphasis on skills training and the upgrading of public sector capacity.

In the case of the PP government, the smaller parties (COP, MSJ, NJAC, TOP) expressed the view that the parties were side-lined, and in some cases public policy was made that compromised their positions. Interviewees felt that the UNC as the major partner in the coalition was able to implement policies without consensus and these frustrated public sector employees as well as the parties' constituencies, resulting in an overall reduction of public confidence in the government.

Analysts have argued that coalition governments are more likely to demonstrate and sustain democratic practices, since such governments represent a wide range of public opinions. There is a perception that decisions are usually made in the interest of a significant majority of the population. In the case of the PP government, however, a significant majority of interviewees indicated that the major partner (the UNC) did not demonstrate this practice. Interviewees cited the practice of employment without adequate qualification and promotions without requisite evaluations, which brought further dissatisfaction and perceptions of a reduction in the democratic process.

Further, the view was advanced that, in the case of the PP, it was expected that, prior to its implementation, public policy would be discussed and debated within the government and among the major party leaders in the coalition. Respondents indicated that this was not the case and public servants said there were significant levels of inputs from party leaders, which at times led to negative policy outcomes. However, there was also the view that having five parties in the government meant a wider range of competing interests, which did not always allow for consensus on issues regarding the public sector.

The PP can be seen as a complex political coalition, since it had several interests, ideologies and positions, and there is the view that this made it difficult for a culture of coalition-making to emerge. It has also been noted that, especially with respect to public policy, there was an absence of a sense of accommodation, as there was a seeming inability to accommodate each party's interests. This absence of a culture of coalition-making extended into the public sector and goes against the view that coalition governments emerge based on a mutually agreed and common programme and are sustained through consensus decision-making.

It is generally observed that, traditionally, leadership of a coalition government lies with the single largest constituent of the coalition alliance. This was indeed the case for the PP, as the UNC controlled the leadership. Interviewees also indicated that there were insignificant levels of consultation

with the smaller parties, which led to levels of indifference, fragmentation and lack of cohesion that carried over into the public service.

Ministers in the PP government were drawn from different parties and represented varying and at times conflicting and contradictory positions, ideologies and approaches to governance. This in itself created inconsistent policy interpretation and led to the non-uniform application of policies within the public sector.

This national performance framework was also established based on the government's recognition that, in the absence of quantifiable measures to monitor and evaluate the impact of government programmes and projects on the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, there would be limited determination of the improvement in the socioeconomic conditions within the country.

3.2.6 Lessons learnt from Trinidad and Tobago

Quality of policy decisions matters: The 2011 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Report *Better Policies for Better Lives* asserted that 'A priority for governments should be to build a policy making process conducive to trust.' In the case of the PP government, public servants interviewed indicated that the policy-making process was neither open nor inclusive, and lacked the input of the majority of stakeholders. As a result, they suggested, the quality of policy decisions was constantly poor, which led to the deterioration of levels of trust between policy-makers and public servants. Remedying this situation entails putting in place an inclusive policy-making process that guarantees the engagement of public servants and that can lead to a predictable public service environment as well as public trust in the institutions of government.

Agreeing on how to resolve issues in advance: Nwasike (2011) has argued that the political-administration interface, which is 'the functional relationship between the politicians (ministers) and administrators (permanent secretaries) is considered one of the most important aspects of the machinery of government'. Further, Nwasike contends that the importance of trust 'is still deemed fundamental to an effective relationship between the politician and administration'.

In the case of the coalition government in Trinidad and Tobago between 2010 and 2015, public servants interviewed indicated that the political-administrative interface was significantly stymied, which resulted in unclear roles and responsibilities for public servants, which in turn led to low levels of trust between the administration and politicians. A majority of the public servants interviewed said that their institutional knowledge and experience were frequently bypassed. This also led to a reduction of trust between politicians and administrators.

There was little communication between the ministers and senior public servants at the beginning of the PP government's term regarding the functions and implementations plans of some ministries and public enterprises. This led to situations of uncertainty, conflict and ambiguity, which also resulted in a reduction in levels of trust between administrators and politicians. Consistent communication and the building of trust were absent in some cases, which resulted in reduced levels of commitment by administrators. It is therefore critical that in coalition governments communication between politicians and administrators be clear and unambiguous for the purpose of policy delivery.

As Nwasike (2011) suggests, discussions on policy agendas should take place 'at the beginning of the tenure of the minister to avoid misinterpretations and conflicts.' One can therefore support the contention that 'an enabling environment of trustworthiness ought to be created by the minister in the first instance, as he/she has the constitutional responsibility of being in charge of the ministry' (ibid.).

The Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago, Act 4 of 1976, Section 85(1), enshrines, 'Where any Minister has been assigned responsibility for any department of Government, he shall exercise general direction and control over that department; and, subject to such direction and control, the department shall be under the supervision of a Permanent Secretary whose office shall be a public office.' During the tenure of the PP government, however, such general direction on the part of the minister to the public sector was lacking. This further led to increased levels of mistrust, reduction in confidence in the government and conflict at the political-administrative interface.

Building trusting relationships: Issues of trust within the political-administrative interface can occur on the side of both the politicians and the administrators. Draper (2001) has argued that ministers can form an immediate mistrust of senior public officers upon the assumption of their portfolios owing to the perception that these senior public officers would have worked closely (and appeared to have familiar relations) with the previous government. Conversely, mistrust in the public sector can arise when governments change or within the same government when ministers change (ibid.). For future coalition governments, especially in small states like Trinidad and Tobago, there must be a clear understanding that public servants should operate independent of any government in office.

The OECD stresses the importance of integrity for the practice of good governance. While integrity is characterised by some analysts as an elusive concept, the notion is generally used as a measurement of public conduct (Rauls, 1973). According to the OECD Public Sector Integrity Review, integrity refers to 'the application of values, principles and notions in the

daily operations of public sector organisations'. Other analysts contend that integrity is the 'cornerstone of good governance' and that fostering integrity in the public sector is essential for maintaining trust in government. According to the OECD, to foster integrity 'is to prevent corruption in the public office, support a level playing field for businesses, and maintain public trust in governments'. Achievement of such requires coherent efforts to update standards, provide guidance and monitor and enforce them in daily practice.

Professionalism in the public service: According to Armstrong (2005), the concept of integrity has been identified as part of the founding principles of public administration. Armstrong contends that integrity refers to 'honesty or trustworthiness in the discharge of official duties, serving as an antithesis to corruption or the abuse of office'. Additionally, the UN defines integrity 'to include but not [be] limited to probity, impartiality, fairness, honesty and truthfulness' (UN Staff Regulations 1.2 (b)).

Since the 21st century, Trinidad and Tobago has sought to place integrity as a key element in the conduct of government business. In 2000, the Integrity in Public Life Act was introduced to form part of the country's legislative framework to regulate the conduct of public officials. As the Act states, it is intended 'to provide for the establishment of the Integrity Commission; to make new provisions for the prevention of corruption of persons in public life by providing for public disclosure; to regulate the conduct of persons exercising public functions; to preserve and promote the integrity of public officials and institutions, and for matters incidental thereto'.

Further, the Integrity in Public Life Act 2000 is the basis for the establishment of the Integrity Commission, and its mandate includes examination of the practices of those in public office. The roles and functions of the Integrity Commission include the four key areas of prevention, investigation, enforcement and education, as well as enlistment of public support. In addition, the Commission seeks to promote integrity, particularly among those in public life, from the level of ministers of government and MPs, to permanent secretaries, chief technical officers and members of the Boards of statutory bodies and state enterprises. Further, the Commission is required 'to regulate the conduct of persons exercising public functions through the receipt of declaration of incomes, assets and liabilities, and by monitoring compliance with the Code of Conduct presented in Part IV of the Integrity in Public Life Act 2000'. Additionally, the Commission is responsible for examining the practices of public bodies in order to facilitate the discovery of corrupt practices (Integrity Commission, 2016).

In discussing integrity within the PP government, the general view was that, in any political directorate, elected representatives, public servants and other holders of public office must discharge their responsibilities in a professional

and ethical manner. The PP Manifesto of 2010 indicated as part of its Declaration of Values that, in order to ensure the maintenance of integrity, representatives 'should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties'. It was observed, however, that, during the PP administration, there were several accusations of improper conduct, corruption and the irresponsible use of power, which at times led to resignations and dismissals of ministers.

It is therefore critical, especially in the context of the presence and role of the Integrity Commission, that there be stronger commitment to the responsible use of power and the commitment to honesty and transparency for future coalition governments to establish and maintain public confidence.

Effective leadership: Effective leadership in government is another critical factor in the successful administration of public services. It is also claimed that, from the early stages of a new government, the political leadership of ministries must build trust and positive relations at all levels in order to secure 'buy-in' and promote effective and efficient governance. Indeed, strong forces of globalisation have influenced a transformation in several critical areas, including the public sector, from an inflexible hierarchical structure towards an environment of collaboration, with creative and innovative leadership guiding the process.

For this transformation to succeed, public servants must feel a sense of direction and confidence. Further, leaders of government, as the interviewees suggested, must demonstrate the ability to engage in the process of participative management and also flexible problem-solving behaviour. Additionally, interviewees indicated that leadership, especially in coalition governments in Trinidad and Tobago, must be able to perform under constant public scrutiny from a range of stakeholders, including social media, the broadcast and print media and the citizenry. The interviewees indicated that, since there was not a strong synergistic relationship between the political leadership and the administrative hierarchy, responses to public inquiry were often varied and ambiguous. In these cases, public scrutiny led to controversy and mistrust, which undermined the leadership process.

The view has also been advanced that leaders in government must be able to develop a participative leadership style, especially in small societies. Van Velsor et al. (2016) claim that 'Participative leadership implies greater emphasis on involving others in decision making and getting more input before taking action.' The majority of interviewees indicated that leaders within the PP government did not embrace the establishment of participative management, which created a gap in the administrative interface between

politicians and public servants. It is therefore important that, from this experience, future leaders in government follow the recommendations espoused by Van Velsor et al. that leaders 'create an environment of shared collaboration that will provide the structure necessary to clarify ambiguity, lower volatility, reduce uncertainty, and make the complex more possible.'

Effective leadership requires a mechanism that provides effective innovation strategies. Dedicated and effective leadership is also critical to the effective execution of government policy at all levels. The role of public sector leadership is important in order to translate dedication into effective innovative strategies. In the case of the PP coalition in Trinidad and Tobago, this commitment and dedication was lost in a proverbial sea of issues relating to political clientelism, repaying loyal party members and associates and the like.

Access to information: While a commonly accepted definition of the concept of transparency is still under debate, it is recognised that, as a principle, governments have a duty and obligation to their citizens to act visibly and predictively and to provide timely and accurate access to information by citizens. According to Transparency International, transparency is a characteristic of governments that are open in the clear disclosure of information, rules, plans, processes and actions². Transparency is also seen as a basis of accountability and public confidence, and as a check against mismanagement and corruption in government. In recent times, it has been recognised that a transparent government is an essential component of a free and democratic society.

In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, during the PP government there were efforts to develop transparent policies and practices. The Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Property Act 2015 was promulgated 'to provide for public procurement, and for the retention and disposal of public property, in accordance with the principles of good governance namely accountability, transparency, integrity and value for money'. This legislation has as its major objective ensuring the efficient and transparent use of money in the procurement cycle. The underlying assumption suggests that the use of public funds necessarily requires a significant level of public transparency and accountability. The promulgation of the Act can be considered a positive example of the PP government's establishment of frameworks for transparency and accountability of public life in Trinidad and Tobago.

The National Performance Framework (2012–15) was highlighted by the PP government as another mechanism for the transparent management of government programmes and projects. According to Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar, 'The National Performance Framework is a tangible

example of the commitment of the People's Partnership Government to encourage greater transparency and accountability in governance and to ensure efficient and effective use of resources towards attaining national goals' (Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development, 2012). This framework can be considered another positive feature of the PP government since it provided a publically transmitted approach to the measurement of performance of the public sector.

3.2.7 Conclusion

The study shows that, for the PP government in Trinidad and Tobago, administration of the public sector under a coalition government was more complex than under the single-party government. In fact, the two coalition governments in Trinidad and Tobago that have been in place have failed to be re-elected after their first term in office. The study also indicates that, especially under coalition governments, strong and sustained collaboration between ministers and public servants is critical, and that this collaboration must remain in place for the entire term of the government. The study also highlights that public perceptions of institutions that govern them are important for sustained public confidence. This also requires clear alignment between the roles and responsibilities of ministers and public servants so the public can see high levels of cohesiveness between the two drivers of public policy.

The constant changes in the executive and administrative leadership that were experienced during the PP government had a negative impact on the performance of the public service, since leadership changes brought with them new approaches and strategies that were on several occasions ambiguous and inconsistent. There were also times of confusion, when policy changes led to the demonstrable uncertainty of administrators regarding the execution of public policy.

In conclusion, for public servants, there is always the need to create and maintain a balance between ensuring the will of the people through its elected representatives is carried out and defending the universality of public institutions and the public interest. As Talbot (2010) suggests, 'Representative democracy is always a balance between the need to implement the policy ideas of the winning party or coalition and maintain a sense of universal consent, including consent of the losing parties.'

In Trinidad and Tobago, while the PP government experienced times of instability and demonstrated levels of ambiguity in its approach to governance, it was clear that public servants during this era made significant attempts to ensure management of state institutions and the continuity of public service activities remained a top priority.

Notes

- 1 <http://www.guardian.co.tt/news/2014-08-02/full-list-tt-peoples-partnership-ministers-who-quit-or-were-fired>
- 2 What are the Limits of Transparency and Technology? From Three Gurus of the Openness Movement (Eigen, Rajani, McGee 2014)

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