
Towards the Greater Caribbean Biosecurity Community

Hacia la Comunidad de Bioseguridad del Gran Caribe

Rumo à Comunidade de Biossegurança do Grande Caribe

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Abstract

The document proposes a theoretical framework for building a biosecurity community in the Greater Caribbean by integrating the concepts of biosecurity, transdiplomacy, and security community. It analyzes regional integration processes in Caricom, OECS, and ACS, highlighting their potential and challenges in fostering cooperation, trust, and responsibility for life and territorial care. The work emphasizes transcending traditional security to prioritize ecological sustainability, social justice, and multilevel transdiplomacy involving state and civil actors. Despite structural inequalities and fragmentation, these organizations offer complementary scales of integration toward resilient, inclusive governance. Advancing a biosecurity community requires overcoming limits through renewed leadership and genuine participation, establishing a regional biopolitical paradigm essential for sustainable peace and development in the Caribbean and beyond.

Keywords: biosecurity; transdiplomacy; security community; Greater Caribbean

Resumen

El documento propone un marco teórico para la construcción de una comunidad de bioseguridad en el Gran Caribe, integrando bioseguridad, transdiplomacia y comunidad de seguridad. Analiza los procesos de integración regional en Caricom, OECS y ACS, destacando su potencial y desafíos para fomentar cooperación, confianza y responsabilidad en la protección de la vida y el territorio. Se enfatiza superar la seguridad tradicional para priorizar la sostenibilidad ecológica, justicia

social y transdiplomacia multinivel entre actores estatales y civiles. A pesar de desigualdades y fragmentación, estas organizaciones ofrecen niveles de integración complementarios hacia una gobernanza resiliente e inclusiva. Avanzar requiere liderazgo renovado e inclusión genuina, estableciendo un paradigma biopolítico regional clave para la paz y desarrollo sostenible en el Caribe y más allá.

Palabras clave: bioseguridad; transdiplomacia; comunidad de seguridad; Gran Caribe

Resumo

O documento propõe um quadro teórico para a construção de uma comunidade de biossegurança no Grande Caribe, integrando biossegurança, transdiplomacia e comunidade de segurança. Analisa os processos de integração regional no Caricom, OECS e AEC, destacando seu potencial e desafios para fomentar cooperação, confiança e responsabilidade na proteção da vida e do território. O trabalho enfatiza a superação da segurança tradicional para priorizar sustentabilidade ecológica, justiça social e transdiplomacia multinível envolvendo atores estatais e civis. Apesar das desigualdades e fragmentação, essas organizações oferecem níveis complementares de integração rumo a uma governança resiliente e inclusiva. Avançar requer liderança renovada e participação genuína, estabelecendo um paradigma biopolítico regional essencial para a paz e o desenvolvimento sustentável no Caribe e além.

Palavras-chave: biossegurança; transdiplomacia; comunidade de segurança; Grande Caribe

Introduction

This work is structured around the concepts of biosecurity, transdiplomacy, and security community to offer a theoretical proposal for the construction of a regional biosecurity community in the Greater Caribbean.

Biosecurity is operationally defined as all those political decisions and practices aimed at the care, production, and reproduction of life within a territory. Transdiplomacy refers to a practical-theoretical approach that contemporaneously crosses institutions and civil society to build multilevel cooperation networks. A security community is a geopolitical space whose member states have established peaceful relations that make armed conflicts between them unlikely.

Based on these three concepts and with reference to the Latin American eco-territorial turn literature, a proposal will be formulated to offer an innovative approach available to Caribbean civil society and decision-makers.

Theoretical Framework

Biosecurity

The concept of biosecurity (Ghilarducci, 2023) arises from the contemporary need to create a theoretical tool guiding strategic regional territorial planning based on the production, reproduction, and defense of life. Climate change, population growth, technological progress, and social changes reposition ecological problems at the center of the socio-political and economic debate. These dynamics impact local territories, creating risks to the safety of their inhabitants. This requires rethinking political priorities and integrating security studies with ecological perspectives. The first functional definition of biosecurity refers to all decisions, actions, and planning oriented towards the production, reproduction, and defense of life in a territory. The concept combines Foucault's biopolitics, Beck's global risk society theory, and the Latin American eco-territorial turn by Svampa and Escobar, among others. It addresses how environmental policies and risks affect contemporary societies.

Michel Foucault introduces biopolitics as the management of power focused on regulating the vital processes of the population, understood as a scientific and political problem seeking to regulate collective life through control techniques (Foucault, 2000). From this perspective, biosecurity involves deliberate and strategic action aimed at conserving and protecting the conditions that allow the existence and well-being of human communities in their territories.

Contemporary society, characterized by Ulrich Beck's "risk society," faces an era in which decisions made under uncertainty may generate systemic risks with effects for future generations (Beck, 2002; 2004). This approach warns of the need to include civil society in decision-making processes to avoid risk externalization and promote democratic and sustainable management of life and the environment.

On the other hand, the Latin American eco-territorial turn, proposed by Maristella Svampa and Arturo Escobar among others, emphasizes valuing the territory beyond its economic dimension, questioning the very concept of development (Escobar, 2007) and considering it from the cultural, social, and

ecological perspectives of indigenous and local communities. These communities, resisting the dominant extractivist logic, demand territorial sovereignty to protect vital resources (Svampa, 2019).

Thus, biosecurity materializes as a tool to rethink sovereignty, understood not only as political control but also as strategic care and defense of essential elements for life—air, water, land, and energy first and foremost—prioritizing public policies that ensure sustainability and quality of life for current and future populations (Boff, 2015).

Ultimately, the concept of biosecurity calls for articulating comprehensive political strategies linking biopolitics, environmental care, and social justice, enabling an approach that conceives security as the protection of life itself in all its dimensions, beyond traditional state or military-focused security approaches.

Integral Multilevel Transdiplomacy

The concept of "integral multilevel transdiplomacy" (Ghilarducci, 2024) emerges as a critical and propositional response to the limitations of classical diplomacy and the growing gap between states and civil society in Latin America. This theoretical and practical proposal seeks to overcome the disconnection between official institutions and social actors, attending both to academic evolution in international relations and social demands for greater inclusion and democratization in international relations.

The first component, transdiplomacy, is based on Enrique Dussel's idea of transmodernity, which recognizes the centrality of the oppressed and historically victimized by Eurocentric modernity as active subjects of history (Dussel, 1998; 2000). Thus, transdiplomacy proposes respectful interaction and dialogue between institutional and non-institutional actors, recognizing the multiplicity of subjects and visions (Arévalo Robles, 2017; Ghilarducci, 2020). This perspective does not seek to

replace the state but to articulate with it from a critical position, promoting greater democratization.

The second term, integrality, implies the integration of two theoretical strands within the discipline: on the one hand, diplomacy as an international institution regulating relations between states (Bull, 2012; Buzan, 2014), and on the other, diplomacy as communicative action constituting identities and recognizing cultural and social differences (Der Derian, 1987; Constantinou, 2006). In this sense, the homo-diplomatic dimension stands out, considering diplomacy as intersubjective dialogue with transformative potential at the human level, beyond mere official representation (Constantinou, 2006).

Finally, the multilevel or multidimensional character emphasizes the coexistence and articulation of various sociopolitical levels: state diplomacy, subnational paradiplomacy, and civil society diplomacy (Butler, 1961; Constantinou & Der Derian, 2010). This perspective recognizes the complexity of the global system, which includes not only states but also NGOs, transnational groups, and epistemic communities integrated into the *magna communitas humani generis* (Bull, 1972). Thus, integral multilevel transdiplomacy bets on transforming international relations towards greater inclusivity and plural participation.

In summary, integral multilevel transdiplomacy represents a theoretical attempt to reduce the distance between state institutions and civil society, redefining diplomacy as a common good that articulates formal institutionalism with diverse social and political practices, promoting intercultural dialogue and peaceful conflict resolution in complex contemporary contexts.

Security Community

The concept of a security community refers to a transnational group of sovereign states whose members maintain reliable expectations of peaceful conflict resolution, avoiding war to settle differences. It is a community where deep social

ties, shared values, norms, and a collective identity generate mutual trust and reciprocal obligations.

The main characteristics of such a community are a shared identity where members possess common values, norms, and symbols providing a social identity and a sense of "we" transcending purely national interests; multiple and direct interactions producing relations across spheres with face-to-face encounters and transactions strengthening bonds and generating trust; reciprocity and long-term cooperative commitment implying mutual interest in maintaining peace and avoiding violence; existence of reliable expectations of peaceful change as members neither fear nor prepare for war against each other and resolve disputes through peaceful mechanisms (Deutsch, 1957; Adler & Barnett, 1998).

There are essentially two types of security communities corresponding to different developmental stages over time. Amalgamated communities involve states formally merging into a single political entity with a common government, while pluralistic communities retain full state sovereignty but share collective identity and non-aggression norms, maintaining peaceful trust relations (Adler & Barnett, 1998).

The formation of a security community is understood as a social process involving phases: initial emergence of coordination based on shared interests, increasing density of interactions and institutional cooperation, to the consolidation of a collective identity and stable peace expectations. Economic, political, and cultural transactions, socialization through international organizations, and social learning are key components transforming interstate relations and fostering trust (Adler & Barnett, 1998).

The concept challenges the traditional realist view of the international system as anarchic with inevitable conflict by proposing that developing shared identity and social norms can lead to stable peaceful order. Additionally, it holds that security goes beyond military aspects to include economic, social, and environmental dimensions (Adler & Barnett, 1998). In sum, a security community is a regional or

transnational space where identity, trust, and cooperation translate into reliable expectations of peaceful conflict resolution, establishing a mutual trust order that predisposes lasting peace and shared governance.

Towards a Conceptual Synthesis: The Biosecurity Community

Biosecurity, integral multilevel transdiplomacy, and security community are categories converging on the contemporary need for cooperative protection and management of global risks affecting life and human coexistence on territories. Biosecurity, understood as a political and social strategy aimed at ensuring the production, reproduction, and care of life against biological, environmental, and social threats, finds in integral multilevel transdiplomacy a political interaction mechanism articulating multiple state and non-state actors at various decision levels, from local to global, to address complex issues transcending traditional borders. Meanwhile, the security community, as conceptualized by Adler and Barnett (1998), involves a set of actors sharing values, norms, and reciprocal expectations of peaceful conflict resolution, thus generating stable coexistence founded on trust and mutual recognition.

The convergence of these concepts allows articulating the idea of a biosecurity community as a polyarchic and transnational network integrating the rational and collective management of biological and environmental risks with multilateral and inclusive diplomatic practices, under normative consensus and a shared sense of responsibility for life and territory. Their reciprocal relation is expressed in biosecurity materializing the biopolitical security dimension, transdiplomacy offering the necessary political channels for negotiation, coordination, and multisectoral impact, and the security community providing sociopolitical support based on trust and lasting cooperation.

This theoretical synthesis illuminates how, from Foucaultian biopolitics redefining power over life and recognizing the global risk society, biosecurity

becomes a strategic priority only effective through a flexible and multilevel diplomatic network fostering the building of a supranational community of shared values and integral security (Adler & Barnett, 1998). The biosecurity community, therefore, goes beyond functional cooperation to face risks, aspiring to political and cultural integration where life care articulates collective interests and commitments towards stable and sustainable peace.

In conclusion, the biosecurity community concept emerges as a proposal to think and practice security through biosocial and political lenses, where the integrality of multilevel transdiplomatic action and the consolidation of security communities are fundamental to tackling global and local governance challenges of life. This community symbolizes a new paradigm articulating norms, actors, and actions with the common purpose of preserving life reproduction and mitigating environmental risks in a framework of dialogue, trust, and shared responsibility.

In summary, a biosecurity community is an integrated set of actors and norms that, through multilevel transdiplomatic cooperation, collectively and sustainably manage biological and environmental risks to guarantee the protection and reproduction of life in a shared territory, based on mutual trust and responsibility.

This definition synthesizes the concept integrating biosecurity as a life protection practice, transdiplomacy as a multiactor and multilevel mechanism, and security community as the normative social fabric of trust and cooperation.

Three Integration Processes in the Greater Caribbean: Caribbean Community (Caricom); Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), Association of Caribbean States (ACS)

The Caribbean Community (Caricom)

The Caribbean Community (Caricom) is a regional organization established in 1973 through the Treaty of Chaguaramas with the goal of promoting economic integration and cooperation among its member states. Currently, Caricom groups 15 mostly island and English-speaking countries with the central objective of

establishing a common market and coordinating policies in trade, health, transport, education, and security (Payne, 2008).

Its main focus is the free movement of goods, services, capital, and people within the community, establishing a competitive and sustainable regional space. Among its major achievements is the development of the Caricom Single Market and Economy (CSME), which aims to reduce trade barriers and facilitate labor mobility (Byer & Williams, 2010). Furthermore, Caricom has established institutional mechanisms to resolve trade disputes and coordinate responses to regional challenges such as natural disasters and security (Pollard, 2003; Goring, 2013).

However, Caricom faces structural challenges linked to economic disparities among members, the region's climate vulnerability, and the need to enhance citizen participation in integration processes (Axline, 1978; Rodríguez & Jessen, 1999; Braithwaite, 2020). Caricom's ongoing dialogue with extraregional partners like the European Union, the United States, and China reflects its growing geostrategic role within hemisphere politics (Bishop, Hosein & Saridakis, 2020; Erisman, 1989; Roy, 2022).

Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)

The OECS is a subregional grouping focused on economic, social, and environmental integration of seven island states in the eastern Caribbean. Founded in 1981, its most distinctive feature is monetary integration through the common use of the Eastern Caribbean dollar, promoting macroeconomic stability and facilitating intra-subregional trade (Payne, 1984; Riverstone, 2000).

The OECS works to strengthen institutional cohesion to address common challenges, particularly vulnerability to climate change, natural resource preservation, and disaster risk management. This environmental focus positions it as a sustainability reference for the insular Caribbean (Collymore, 2016; Wilkinson, 2021; Hassanali, 2022; OECS, 2025).

OECS also promotes social and cultural programs to foster regional identity and integral human development, which facilitates cooperation in education, health, and migration policies among its members (OECS, 2020). While it lacks the size and diversity of Caricom or ACS, OECS represents a successful model of focused integration for small territories with shared challenges.

Association of Caribbean States (ACS)

The ACS, founded in 1994, is a consultation and coordination mechanism including both island and continental countries bordering the Caribbean Sea. Its heterogeneous membership comprises 25 member countries and other associated states, covering Spanish, English, and French-speaking states, as well as Central and South American countries (Payne, 1999; Laguardia Martínez, 2020).

The ACS's core mission is to foster regional cooperation for a broad economic environment, protect the Caribbean Sea's natural heritage, and promote sustainable development and disaster resilience. It pays particular attention to key sectors such as tourism, transportation, maritime security, and climate change, coordinating actions in these areas.

Beyond its diplomatic function, the ACS has consolidated as a space for academic and scientific cooperation, promoting research networks on common issues like public health, migration, and environmental vulnerability. This dimension is essential for advancing informed regional policies and strengthening intercultural ties across the region (Remy, 2020).

Comparison and Synergies between Caricom, ACS, and OECS

Integration in the Greater Caribbean operates at different scales and priorities. Caricom stands out for economic and political integration among English-speaking island states with dedicated institutions. For example, Caricom has advanced the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME), which aims not only at free internal trade but also at harmonizing economic policies and functional cooperation (Bauer,

Cashin & Panth, 2008; Bishop et al., 2011). The ACS differentiates itself by its multilingual and multidimensional inclusion, encompassing insular and continental territories with a broad scope incorporating political, economic, environmental, and scientific cooperation. This is shown by Guzmán Ulloa and Sánchez Ortiz (2020) in their review of the ACS integration system, identifying four base dimensions: political-institutional, economic, socio-cultural, and environmental. Meanwhile, the OECS offers specialized subregional integration emphasizing monetary union (via the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union, ECCU) and climate resilience, addressing the specificities of small island states in the Eastern Caribbean (Bishop, 2011; Nassar, 2021).

These entities maintain complementarities through parallel agreements, articulating efforts to confront regional fragmentation and promote the Greater Caribbean's geopolitical and socioeconomic stability. However, divergences in development levels, languages, and political structures represent challenges to deeper integration. Economic disparity among Caricom members complicates uniform CSME implementation (Bishop, 2011). Linguistic diversity and institutional differences hinder more homogeneous political integration, as studies show on multilingual integration barriers and the need to expressly recognize institutional plurality (Guzmán Ulloa & Sánchez Ortiz, 2020).

Regional integration in the Greater Caribbean remains a dynamic and challenging process balancing cultural, political, and economic diversity. Caricom, ACS, and OECS have complementary roles that collectively address shared issues such as climate change, security, economic cooperation, and regional identity. Strengthening integration opportunities include expanding scientific and academic cooperation, fostering citizen participation, promoting inclusive policies recognizing cultural diversity, and improving shared infrastructure for trade and transport (Unesco, 2021; Lewis, 2022).

Far from overlapping, these organizations represent different cooperation scales in the Caribbean: OECS as deep integration space, Caricom as a subregional

community under construction, and ACS as a broad hemispheric cooperation forum. Synergies lie in each level—micro, meso, macro—mutually reinforcing complementary action areas.

Towards a Caribbean Biosecurity Community?

The Greater Caribbean region faces environmental and social risks that transcend state borders and demand cooperative structural responses. The convergence of phenomena such as climate change, environmental degradation, pandemics, and food insecurity puts the need to rethink regional integration through critical categories such as biosecurity and transdiplomacy at the forefront. Unlike traditional security conceptions—focused on military defense or state stability—biosecurity is oriented toward the care, production, and reproduction of life, articulating territorial sovereignty, social justice, and ecological sustainability.

In this context, it is pertinent to analyze the three main integration frameworks in the Greater Caribbean—Caricom, OECS, and ACS—to assess to what extent these processes advance toward the construction of a biosecurity community, understood as a multilevel network of cooperation, trust, and shared responsibility centered on the defense of life and territory.

Caricom: Between Economic Integration and Shared Resilience

Caricom, founded in 1973 through the Treaty of Chaguaramas, constitutes the most ambitious project of economic and political integration in the Anglophone Caribbean. Its main achievement, the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME), seeks to coordinate the mobility of goods, capital, and people, as well as establish common dispute resolution mechanisms and political coordination (Byer & Williams, 2010).

From a biosecurity perspective, Caricom shows progress in areas such as health risk management (through the Caribbean Public Health Agency, CARPHA), disaster cooperation (with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency,

CDEMA), and climate change agendas (in dialogue with international organizations). These efforts reflect attempts to transcend economic logic to face shared existential threats. Nevertheless, Caricom exhibits significant structural limitations:

- Economic inequalities among countries hinder homogeneity in biosecurity policies.
- Excessive dependence on external partners (EU, US, China) for financing and technical support restricts regional autonomy.
- Weak citizen and non-state actor participation limits the multilevel transdiplomacy that the notion of a biosecurity community demands.

Consequently, Caricom advances functional biosecurity policies but has yet to consolidate a shared normative identity based on life care as an organizing principle.

OECS: Deep Integration and Resilience Laboratory

The OECS, created in 1981, represents a subregional model of deep integration among small island states. Its most distinctive feature is monetary union under the Eastern Caribbean dollar, which generates institutional cohesion and facilitates macroeconomic coordination (Riverstone, 2000).

From the biosecurity perspective, the OECS positions itself as a regional resilience laboratory: its environmental policies, cooperation in health and education, and promotion of a territorial approach to climate change demonstrate concrete commitment to life protection and sustainability. Initiatives like the OECS Environmental Management Strategy or renewable energy programs show the organization's capacity to articulate collective responses to risks directly threatening its members' survival (Wilkinson, 2021).

Despite these advances, OECS faces three main weaknesses:

- Limited scale: its subregional character restricts impact beyond the Eastern Caribbean.
- Structural dependence on external funding, exposing vulnerabilities in program continuity.

- Gap between institutions and civil society, where local communities, NGOs, and social movements are not yet fully integrated into decision-making processes.

In summary, OECS is closer than Caricom to a biosecurity community model but within a restricted and dependent framework.

ACS: Multilingualism, Scope, and Transdiplomatic Cooperation

The ACS, founded in 1994, includes over 25 Caribbean Basin countries, both insular and continental, with linguistic and political diversity. Its main mission has been to promote cooperation for sustainable development, tourism, transport, and Caribbean Sea protection.

The ACS's breadth gives it enormous potential to become the central forum for building a biosecurity community. Its action axes explicitly include climate resilience, marine ecosystem protection, and scientific cooperation in health and risk management (Remy, 2020). Moreover, due to its inclusive character, it constitutes a space where multilevel transdiplomacy can find fertile ground, integrating states, observers, universities, international organizations, and civil society.

However, its main limitations are:

- Excessive heterogeneity of members diluting the possibility for sustained concerted action.
- Limited binding capacity, as its agreements are mostly voluntary cooperation without effective enforcement mechanisms.
- Extraregional geopolitical tensions, as several members maintain divergent alliances with external powers, obstructing the construction of a shared biosecurity identity.

The ACS represents a key space for weaving broad transdiplomatic networks but remains distant from consolidating solid normative commitments.

Synergies, Scope, and Limits Towards a Biosecurity Community

Analyzed together, the three integration frameworks reflect different levels of institutional density:

- OECS: micro-scale, deep and specialized integration.
- Caricom: meso-scale, economic and political integration under construction.
- ACS: macro-scale, broad and multilingual cooperation.

These levels are complementary and could theoretically be articulated into a polycentric rizomatic architecture towards a biosecurity community. OECS offers practical resilience experiences, Caricom provides broader political-institutional structures, and ACS offers an inclusive platform for hemispheric cooperation.

Nonetheless, evident limits exist:

- Institutional fragmentation with overlapping mandates and without clear coordination.
- External financial dependence compromising autonomy.
- Democratic deficit due to insufficient inclusion of non-state actors and local communities.
- Lack of a shared biosecurity identity that would enable life care to become a common organizing principle.

Final considerations

The Greater Caribbean presents a complex and challenging scenario marked by political, cultural, and economic diversity. Existing regional integration processes—Caricom, OECS, and ACS—constitute valuable platforms to advance toward forming a biosecurity community, a key condition to face the multiple biopolitical and ecological threats of the 21st century. The convergence of strategies from common economies, environmental management, academic cooperation, and multisectoral diplomacy could translate into an integral and multidimensional

territorial biosecurity framework. Despite structural limitations and internal disjunctions, the feasibility of this process is high if oriented towards overcoming fractures through renewed leadership, effective transdiplomacy, and genuine civil society inclusion.

Existing integration processes in the Greater Caribbean appear to progress unevenly toward a pluralist biosecurity community construction. OECS is the closest model due to its emphasis on environmental resilience and institutional cohesion; Caricom provides normative frameworks and political structures, though weakened by internal inequalities; and ACS, despite its breadth, faces the challenge of translating its plurality into binding commitments.

Building a biosecurity community in the Greater Caribbean requires overcoming structural limitations in each framework and advancing toward multilevel transdiplomacy, where states, civil society, academia, and transnational actors articulate efforts around life care. Only then can regional integration become a process oriented not solely toward economic efficiency but toward the collective protection of existence in a territory marked by ecological and social vulnerability.

In sum, the Greater Caribbean biosecurity community can emerge as a regional biopolitical governance paradigm that articulates life, justice, and sustainability as inescapable foundations for lasting peace and development and, as such, represent an example for the Americas and the rest of the world.

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Data availability:
Research data is available in the body of the article.

