THE CARIBBEAN PAPERS

Caribbean Regional Governance and the Sovereignty/Statehood Problem

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Addressing International Governance Challenges

Summary

It has long been argued that the English-speaking Caribbean states require the establishment of some kind of effective and binding regional system of governance. What is more, the many deficiencies of the current system are widely known and acknowledged. Why, then, have they not been seriously addressed over a period of more than 40 years? This paper argues that the key blockage is the continued adherence of Caribbean political leaders to a conception of sovereignty and statehood that is inappropriate and outdated. These are no more than constructed concepts that have been framed and deployed differently in other parts of the world, notably in Europe. The conventional Caribbean understanding of sovereignty and statehood needs urgently to be opened up, unpicked and discussed in a frank and open debate with the people of the region. The paper sets out a series of steps by which the region's leaders can initiate and lead such a debate prior to designing a new set of governance arrangements for CARICOM that would permit the substantive strengthening of sovereignty via its creative pooling. Only when a more nuanced and sophisticated understanding of what sovereignty means in the contemporary world order is embedded into the Caribbean political culture will the leadership be able to build the effective institutions of regional governance that remain so badly needed.

About the Caribbean Economic Governance Project

This project convenes researchers and leaders within the private and public sectors to examine and provide substantive answers and policy prescription to current economic governance challenges facing the Caribbean region. The papers were initially presented at CIGI workshops, where their authors benefited from extensive comments and discussion on their work. Through this series, we hope to present and discuss policy issues pertaining to trade, investment, human capital, the fiscal outlook, and public sector management practices, among other issues relevant to the Caribbean region's economic future.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACS	Association of Caribbean States
CARICOM	Caribbean Community and Common Market
CARIFORUM	Caribbean Forum of African, Caribbean and Pacific States
CARIFTA	Caribbean Free Trade Association
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
CRNM	Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery
CSME	Caribbean Single Market and Economy
ECCB	Eastern Caribbean Central Bank
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement
EU	European Union
LDC	Less Developed Country
MDC	More Developed Country
OECS	Organization of Eastern Caribbean States

Introduction

For many observers of the Caribbean political scene, both today and in the past, it has been an article of faith that the most obvious solution to the region's ills is some kind of effective and binding regional system of governance. From the various pre-independence experiments in augmenting regional unity to the failure of the West Indies Federation and beyond, attempts to engender a satisfactory and comprehensive mode of regional governance in the English-speaking Caribbean have not been distinguished by their success. Of course, the current apparatus of regional and sub-regional organizations has, in its own way and within its own remit, not been a completely ineffective set of structures. Since its establishment in 1973 the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) has made strides in constructing a gradually deeper and wider inter-governmental regional network which has been further enhanced by the recently-introduced Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME). The Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery (CRNM) – which is actually an agency of the Caribbean Forum of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (CARIFORUM) rather than CARICOM – has played a vital technical role in managing the myriad bilateral and multilateral negotiations in which the region has recently found itself. The Association of Caribbean States (ACS) has contributed to the creation of linkages between the Caribbean islands and their Central and South American neighbours bordering the Caribbean Sea. The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB) have both done much to stabilize the political economy of the tiny Leeward and Windward Islands during a challenging couple of decades.

The point remains that these institutions, neither on their own nor collectively, represent an optimal approach to managing West Indian affairs and interests in a world

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which has become increasingly unsympathetic towards them. They certainly do not represent a Caribbean version of the European Union (EU) – undoubtedly the most successful contemporary example of effective regional integration – and they do not provide the kind of purposive developmental capacity that one of us argued in an earlier CIGI paper was vital in today's world (Payne and Sutton, 2007). The argument advanced in that piece was that the past three decades had seen a wholesale colonization of West Indian approaches to development by neoliberalism. Local intellectuals had understandably struggled to come to terms with the well-financed might of what became termed the "Washington Consensus" and development as a political process had thus foundered against the technocratic approach favoured by the international financial institutions. The Caribbean approach to economics and politics had, therefore, seen the "politicos" replaced by the "técnicos," with the result that the regional elite's role in development had shifted from leading a vibrant indigenous debate to become one of deciding "how best to administer the programmes that were designed elsewhere under the neoliberal paradigm" (Sutton, 2006). As is by now familiar to all observers, the "structural adjustment" programs administered throughout the 1980s and 1990s under the auspices of neoliberalism had the effect of engendering relative economic decline whilst simultaneously weakening the Caribbean state, the institution then obliged to pick up the pieces (Conway, 1998).

Moreover, this decline took place in an economic climate in which intensified processes of globalization and the attendant liberalization of the world economy were eroding the pillars, in particular non-reciprocal preferential trade, upon which the relative prosperity of the region throughout the 1960s and 1970s had been based (Bryan, 2007: 45). With this in mind, it was suggested that, for the small (and tiny), fragmented, insular states which were adrift in the Caribbean Sea, there was

> an overriding need to create a Commonwealth Caribbean "functional equivalent" at the regional level for the kind of 'developmental states' that were so crucial in the 1980s and 1990s in East Asia in breaking out of the impasse of underdevelopment in that part of the world. (Payne and Sutton, 2007: 22)

The rationale for the discussion at hand, however, is not to restate the argument for the utility or otherwise of such an institution: a "region-wide developmental state." It can be taken as read that we perceive a better-resourced, better-integrated, more effective regional state machinery which

can rise above petty nationalisms as vital in the current era of globalization to drive forward development goals which are, have long been, and will continue to be "extraordinarily difficult to deliver at the national level alone" (Payne and Sutton, 2007: 25). It is also quite evident that existing regional arrangements do not fulfil this task with any degree of satisfaction, given that they remain characterized by a variety of "governance pitfalls" (Storr, 2004: 2). It is rather our task here to explain this gap: to ask why the English-speaking Caribbean states have been unable or unwilling to address the deficiencies in their institutions of regional governance; and to understand their reticence about widening, deepening and pooling sovereignty in light of the opportunities that such action could unlock.

Some of the explanations are, of course, self-evident. A lack of capital, whether natural, human, political, technical or financial, has represented an enduring barrier to the implementation of agreements which already exist, let alone embarking upon new ones. Because of this resource problem, agreements reached at the regional level have often been undermined and even "subverted altogether in the end" (Brewster, 2003b). A further issue relates to the fact that the Caribbean as a whole is a highly fragmented amalgam of actors, cultures and jurisdictions which reflect the wider region's complex colonial history. As such, regional integration conceived as an endeavour primarily to be undertaken by the English-speaking countries is both more questionable and more difficult today than it was in the early 1970s. Suriname and Haiti, for example, are full members of CARICOM, and a range of non-independent territories (such as the British Overseas Territories, Puerto Rico, Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles), as well as larger Latin American states (such as Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela), are either associate members or have observer status within the organization. Similarly, Haiti and the Dominican Republic are additional signatories to CARIFORUM, a nuance that has further muddied the obvious parameters where regional lines could be drawn. The Dominican Republic, in particular, presents evident difficulties for any project of deeper CARICOM integration, given the size of its economy and the fact that it has a greater population than the English-speaking Caribbean states combined.

Yet the fact remains that, if there was a concerted effort to spend the requisite political capital, such issues could be overcome, and it is here in politics where we find the most plausible explanation for regional reticence. The esteem in which Caribbean states and their leaders seem to hold their sovereignty cannot be underestimated. Whether it is understood analytically, practically or rhetorically, sovereignty has grown into a highly sensitive and emotive issue, with politicians typically placing a "high premium" upon it (Storr, 2004: 16). Its protection is the ostensible reason

why CARICOM has persisted for more than three decades with a system based upon what Havelock Brewster (2003b; 2003a) has called "discretionary inter-governmental cooperation," rather than the kind of intergovernmental and supranational mélange that characterises EU decision-making. In this paper we shall attempt to unpick this distinctive Caribbean understanding of sovereignty, particularly in light of the fact that, for all its nominal value, it is of questionable weight in a global political order in which individual Caribbean states wield little real power. It is the case, moreover, that regional elites have doggedly attached themselves to a somewhat reductionist notion of sovereignty, characterized by a narrow, state-centric and largely "zero-sum" understanding of the term. Such a state of affairs endures even as theoretical advances in the political science literature, along with developments in practical experiments around the world, are suggestive of sovereignty being something which is considerably more malleable. For the Caribbean, however, the inability to cross these conceptual and institutional bridges has arguably further weakened the relative autonomy that the region's states can hope to enjoy within the global system and will continue to do so as long as fragmentation and weak regional institutions reign.

The discussion which follows has four parts. The first outlines the different phases of regional governance in the Commonwealth Caribbean, moving through the failure of the West Indies Federation, the establishment of the Caribbean Free Trade Association (CARIFTA) and, later, CARICOM, before assessing the role of the West Indian Commission and the July 2003 "Rose Hall Declaration" which vowed to establish a formal CARICOM Commission. The second part looks at how Caribbean intellectuals and leaders have understood the notions of sovereignty and statehood. We offer a critique of these ideas and seek to understand what gives them continuing apparent strength. In the third part we address the wider conceptual debate as it pertains to sovereignty. Drawing on literature from mainstream political science, we look at the ways in which notions of sovereignty and autonomy have been deployed in academic debate in order to uncover the implications for both the traditional Caribbean conception of sovereignty and, consequently, the regional integration process. In the final section we will offer a range of conclusions about the Caribbean "sovereignty/statehood problem" as we conceive it. In particular, we will address the ways in which the distinctive Caribbean understanding of sovereignty – which in turn derives from the region's specific experience of statehood – influences its approach to region-building. We will also begin to explore how the region might seek to escape from its self-imposed trap.

Phases of Regional Governance

For the purposes of our analysis, we identify four main phases in the modern history of regional governance in the English-speaking Caribbean. Each of them highlights the continuing schizophrenic character of intra-regional relations, exhibiting simultaneously the stamp of integration and fragmentation.

Decolonization and Federation

The West Indies Federation which was agreed in principle in 1947 was the first modern attempt to craft a comprehensive regional settlement and its failure still "haunts the political landscape" (Alleyne, 2007: 2). Indeed, it would not be incorrect to suggest that a more resolute approach by Britain, as the decolonising power, could have set the ball of sustained, effective and productive integration rolling inexorably forwards, but that level of commitment simply was not there. The Federation was designed rather to help limit the costs of empire to an almost bankrupt post-war Britain by rendering its Caribbean territories "viable" to sustain self-government as a single sovereign unit (Mordecai, 1968). By the time it came into being in 1958, after some 11 years of torrid negotiations, it was essentially still-born, riven by divisions on all sides. It lasted just four years. As was the case with other federal schemes imposed by London on local elites in the era of decolonization, the Federation fell victim to a combination of the muddled thinking of British political leaders and civil servants, the political immaturity of local Caribbean leaders, and the inadequate support and understanding of the Caribbean peoples it was designed to satisfy.

Specifically, we can identify two key factors that precipitated the failure. First, the intermittent decade, somewhat typically of British policy, had seen key constitutional powers, such as universal suffrage, devolved locally when the islands were supposed to be negotiating a common political fate together. Second, the larger islands – in particular Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago - had enjoyed in this period several years of economic growth, stimulated respectively by bauxite and oil production, which seemed to augur well for their future survival as separate states, thus rendering obsolete the "viability" test. Equivocation on the part of London served to allow these larger units to accede to independence alone, swiftly followed by Barbados and British Guiana, and brought about a "state of anomie" and "bewilderment as to how to proceed" on the part of the remaining small Eastern Caribbean islands (Lewis, V.A., 1993: 99).

This situation lasted until 1967 when British attempts to craft a dignified exit from the region resulted in the elaboration of the concept of "Associated Statehood" for the smaller islands (Antigua-Barbuda, St. Kitts-Nevis-Anguilla, Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia and St. Vincent) which were still considered unviable as fully independent states. Essentially, Britain retained control over external and defence responsibilities, with the local states gaining internal self-government. By the late 1970s this compromise had also collapsed and the Eastern Caribbean states finally acceded separately and often clumsily to independence. The cumulative process fixed in place the pattern of fragmentation, insularity and inter-island competitiveness which has plagued Caribbean developmental unity ever since (Payne, 1991; Thorndike, 1993; Wickham, 1997).

CARIFTA and CARICOM

After the collapse of the West Indies Federation, thoughts of regional integration were placed very much on the back burner for a period of time. Painful wounds took time to heal. Nevertheless, it remained clear that a degree of functional cooperation, particularly in economic affairs, was vital in a region in which the different units had now to find their ways on the choppy seas of the international system. As such, this period witnessed the "very tentative beginnings of a process of rebuilding the regional community in a less formal and structured manner" (Payne, 2008: 14). The first manifestation of this loose framework of cooperation was the establishment, in 1968, of CARIFTA, an embryonic regional organization which had been called for by William Demas, a prominent Trinidadian civil servant and emerging regional public intellectual, in an essay entitled *The Economics of Development in Small Countries* (Demas, 1965) published a few years earlier. CARIFTA's remit embraced three main areas: establishing a measure of free trade in the region; creating the regional institutions necessary to facilitate subsequent deeper economic integration; and undertaking the delicate negotiations surrounding the creation of a regional development fund which eventually emerged in the shape of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB). As had been the case in most previous regional negotiations, divisions existed and Jamaica, in particular, the territory which had been the first to walk away from the Federation, showed a degree of hostility and intransigence towards the project. However, by the time the negotiations were completed and CARIFTA had come into being in the summer of 1968, the four countries which had founded the organization in 1965 (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago) had indeed been joined by Jamaica, Belize and most of the then Associated States. What is also important is that this period witnessed the embedding in the region of a recognition that the member states of CARIFTA were at different levels of development, and that the pace of their integration should be shaped according to their status as either "more" (MDC) or "less" (LDC) developed countries (Axline, 1978).

In the minds of its proponents, the next logical chapter in the regional story was the "deepening" of CARIFTA. However, proposals to "widen" the organization at the same time – which again were strongly supported by Jamaica as a means of impeding the former goal – threatened to stunt progress. Belize had joined in 1971 and, although its membership had always been intended, this did presage the potential membership of other countries in the wider region which were not part of the English-speaking Caribbean. Shridath Ramphal (1971: 20), the then Guyanese foreign minister, outlined his frustration by identifying the ways in which such a move would "dilute the intimacy of the organization" and, consequently, "enormously increase the difficulties of securing consensus for our joint progress upward towards an economic community." The institutional immobilization was exacerbated by the failure to reach an agreement with the European Economic Community (EEC), as it then was, regarding the region's trading links with Britain in the event of the latter acceding to membership. This was complicated further by the fact that the Associated States remained under London's jurisdiction and thus potentially enjoyed automatic rights of entry for their products into the EEC market, thereby threatening a flood of European manufactured goods into the region with which the Caribbean MDCs would not have been able to compete. This weakened the ability of CARIFTA to speak with one voice on the issue of Britain's application to the EEC and raised the spectre of the disintegration of the bloc even before it had really established itself – all a direct legacy, we should remember, of the collapse of the Federation.

Yet the election to office of Michael Manley and the People's National Party (PNP) in Jamaica in 1972 dramatically reinvigorated the fortunes of the integration movement. For a variety of reasons (Payne, 2008: 118-121), Manley was personally committed to effective integration and forcefully made the case that "national survival, like business survival, is a matter of margins;" as such, "regional integration can provide the framework in which internal markets are increased, external bargaining power enhanced, and international recognition maximised" (Manley, 1970: 101). The shift in Jamaican attitude had the effect of re-energizing the integration process and paved the way for the adoption of many of the substantive measures which had bogged down intra-regional negotiations since 1967, such as agreement on a common external tariff, the harmonization of fiscal incentives, the forging of a collective approach to foreign

investment and industrial policy, cooperation in fiscal and monetary affairs and so on (Axline, 1978). For the first time these measures were brought together under a single banner, with the CARIFTA Secretariat making the argument that the time had come to

> take the decisions necessary to convert CARIFTA into a Caribbean Common Market. At the same time, as common services and areas of functional co-operation generally are extended, a certain amount of tidying up is required. These two processes… point to the need to give a formal juridical basis to the entire complex of regional co-operative arrangements, including the Heads of Government Conference which is the apex of the entire regional movement. (Commonwealth Caribbean Secretariat, 1972: 5)

It was no coincidence that the idea of a common market as it was conceived in the Caribbean still self-consciously viewed the Heads of Government – and the national sovereignties that they represented – as embodying the executive power of the proposed organization. Indeed, in every respect – sovereign equality, non-interference, non-condemnation and so forth – the assumption that national sovereignty was paramount provided the bedrock for the negotiations (Griffin, 2007). Nonetheless, it was the various meetings of the Heads which culminated, in October 1972 at Chaguaramas in Trinidad, in the most productive intergovernmental conference in the entire history of Caribbean integration. The summit agreed the establishment, from May 1973, of a Caribbean Community and Common Market with three main policy agendas: the deepening of economic integration; special treatment and assistance for the LDCs, most of which joined in July 1974; the extension of functional cooperation to incorporate new areas of integration; and the initiation of a degree of foreign policy coordination. CARICOM was born and, notwithstanding the overall critical thrust of our analysis, it has to be acknowledged that it has both survived and indeed prospered in its own fashion. It is now the second oldest regional integration movement in the world (after the EU) and can be said, overall, to have achieved more than many other comparable projects elsewhere in the so-called developing world (Girvan, 2005; Braveboy-Wagner, 2008).

The West Indian Commission

The problem, however, has been that CARICOM has consistently been too half-hearted, too unadventurous, and too late in just about everything it has done. By the late 1970s a number of factors, both economic and political, had placed strain upon relations within the English-speaking Caribbean. It had become clear, for example, that the countries of the region were deeply stratified economically, with Trinidad's oil wealth, in particular, bringing "additional attention to the structural imbalance within CARICOM" (Braveboy-Wagner, 2008: 40). The intensified divisions were in turn aggravated politically by the emergence of radical politics in some countries (Thorndike, 1985; 1993; Rose, 2002). There was also a distinct "lack of harmony between asserted regional objectives and unilaterally inspired foreign policy initiatives" (Lewis, 1983: 119). Under these pressures personal relations cooled between the original leaders of the CARICOM process and, gradually, a new generation of political leaders came to the fore with different ideas and perhaps a less intense level of emotional commitment to Caribbean unity.

These people were generally younger and also notably more pragmatic than their predecessors, and it was assumed by some that the more flexible approach towards regional integration would be more helpful (Will, 1991). This might have occurred if the Caribbean development debate had not been so overwhelmingly influenced in the 1980s by both the United States government in Washington D.C. and the various international institutions which also reside there under its watchful eye. It had long been recognized that US policy towards the Caribbean was predicated upon traditional security concerns viewed through the prism of the Cold War. The Grenadian Revolution thus provided the backdrop for a renewed US interest in the region (Serbin, 1998). With the accession to power of the Reagan government, policy was formulated as a familiar carrot-shaped stick. Specifically, this comprised a mixture of avowed intolerance to radical political experiments, combined with the provision of development assistance, market access and aid through the (albeit inadequate) Caribbean Basin Initiative to more friendly states (Deere, 1990; Grugel, 1995). The vulnerability and dependence of the Caribbean countries were cruelly exposed during this period. They suffered from declining terms of trade in respect of the primary products which dominated their relatively undiversified economies, leading in turn to a desperate need to borrow. This propelled them into the clutches of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, which in turn applied the medicine of structural adjustment and market liberalization (Girvan, 2006a).

As the 1980s passed into the 1990s Cold War tension eased, but structural adjustment became further entrenched and CARICOM continued to falter. The US, at this time, began stepping back from its extensive interest in Caribbean

affairs. Yet, rather than relief, this process only engendered "a new and intangible sense of beleaguerment" as the region began to contemplate its new position in a rapidly globalizing world (Payne and Sutton, 2007: 2). This new mood of anxiety was reflected in the establishment in 1989 of the West Indian Commission and the subsequent publication of its huge report provocatively entitled *Time for Action* (West Indian Commission, 1992). The report was uneven in quality, but it reviewed in a serious and thorough fashion every facet of the situation facing the region. Even though it can be said to have accepted the broad neoliberal ideological framework dominant at the time, it nevertheless advocated the purposeful deepening of the regional integration process on many fronts.

Amongst these ideas, and most relevant to our interests here, the report called for the establishment of a permanent CARICOM Commission, loosely modelled on that within the EU, and blessed with a degree of genuine authority. Sir Shridath Ramphal, the Chair of the Commission, stressed that such an institution was vital to oversee the effective deepening and widening of CARICOM. Nonetheless, the proposal was in the end rejected by the leaders of the member states, who seemingly did not want retiring leaders interfering in national sovereign affairs in the guise of commissioners. Instead, a relatively weak CARICOM Bureau, composed of the preceding, current and prospective chairs of the Heads of Government conference, was instead created to try to fill some of the executive vacuum. It quickly became clear that neither the Bureau nor the Secretariat were capable of dealing with the different multilateral and international negotiations into which the region was being drawn in the 1990s, and so the CRNM was established on an ad hoc basis to undertake this work. It was not without irony that Ramphal himself became the machinery's first head (Payne, 2008).

The important point to note here is that what emerged in this period was manifestly not the permanent and effective CARICOM Commission called for by the authors of the report. In light of this failure, Virgil Henry Storr (2004: 11) argues that CARICOM should thus be considered today a kind of "pseudo-integration." He further remarks that "reading the CARICOM Secretary-General's Reports from the late 80s and early 90s, for instance, are [sic] more like reading apologies than progress reports." The West Indian Commission fully recognized that many aspects of the apparatus of Caribbean regional integration had become dated far too quickly, but was in the final analysis unable to supplant the "weak version of inter-governmentalism" represented by the CARICOM system (Payne and Sutton, 2007: 23). The executive vacuum which had emerged in the 1980s and

1990s endured and the Heads missed the opportunity to lift CARICOM's operation to a new level of seriousness.

It should also be noted that this failure happened in tandem with the decision to establish the CSME, neatly illustrating the consequences of a limited regional governance structure and the untimely application of ideas and accords. The Single Market and Economy was first agreed in principle at Grande Anse in Grenada in 1989, yet it took 12 years until it was signed into life in 2001 with the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas. It was a further five years – not until January 2006 – before the CSME came into being and, to this date, it has still not been implemented fully.

The Rose Hall "Moment"

It thus became ever clearer that the Caribbean was ill-equipped to cope with the intensification of many of the processes of globalization affecting its development prospects. The 24th meeting of the CARICOM Heads of Government was held in Montego Bay, Jamaica, in July 2003, a year which also witnessed the celebration of the organization's 30th anniversary. In the opening speech, the incoming chairman and then Jamaican prime minister, P.J. Patterson, argued forcefully that "we must chart new directions" in a world which was "unfriendly to multilateralism and inimical to the development of countries such as ours." Because of the urgency of these challenges, he suggested, Montego Bay was the place to achieve concrete agreement on what to do about them, because, if regional integration had hitherto been simply "an option," it had now become "an absolute imperative" (Patterson, 2003: 4-6). To support his argument, he set out a range of proposals, including strengthening the CDB and ensuring that the region was "absolutely united in objectives, strategy and execution at the political and technical levels" in extra-regional negotiations. The most important passage in his speech, however, was perhaps the following:

> As an Association of States, we must exercise sovereignty individually and collectively for the betterment of our people… The time has come for evaluation, review and whatever adjustments are required of our institutional machinery in order to ensure efficiency in the management of its affairs, including speedy actions and decision-making and implementation at the national level (Patterson, 2003: 8-11).

Given the emotional history of integration, it is hardly surprising that Patterson couched his argument in such

guarded language and, in particular, prefaced his call for the better exercise of collective sovereignty with a nod to the enduring power of island nationalism. Nonetheless, the broader point was clear: the institutions which had hitherto served the region were plainly not up to the job of satisfying the developmental aspirations of the people and, as such, it was "high time" to explore the contentious issues necessary to "cross the rubicon" (Patterson, 2003: 12).

The conference which followed was seemingly the most successful in terms of making new commitments since the historic meeting that decided to form CARICOM in the first place. In the concluding document – *The Rose Hall Declaration on Regional Governance and Integrated Development* (CARICOM, 2003) – the Heads finally consented to the much discussed establishment of a CARICOM Commission to lead the way in the deepening of the regional integration process and "other areas… as the Conference of Heads may from time to time determine." This decision stemmed, they said, from a recognition that the "current geopolitical and geostrategic environment" had become less favourable to the interests of small developing countries and, as result, global processes of change had engendered "major implications for the exercise of sovereignty by… small states such as those in the Caribbean" (CARICOM, 2003). This was, in itself, nothing more than a statement of principle, yet for the first time a Commission with executive functions had been promised, rendering the Rose Hall Declaration "a momentous and potentially seminal" document (Payne and Sutton, 2007: 24).

Even at this stage, there was circumspection in the way in which the Commission was announced in the Declaration. Despite the fact that the Heads advocated a shift towards so-called "mature regionalism," they felt the need to make an explicit "reaffirmation that CARICOM is a Community of Sovereign States" and to note that any "deepening of regional integration will proceed in this political and juridical context" (CARICOM, 2003). These observations generated considerable criticism from committed integrationists within the region. Havelock Brewster (2003b: 1-3), in particular, argued that this continued need to insist on the supremacy of the member states was likely to be "crippling," because any Commission which was not "constitutionally empowered" to make, legislate and implement decisions would be "little more than an expensive duplication of the CARICOM Organs" that already existed. Consequently, it was Brewster's view that the clumsy attempt by the Rose Hall Declaration to "reconcile these two diametrically opposed conceptions of sovereignty" did not represent an "advance towards mature regionalism." Rather, he suggested that it looked like "one step forward and two steps backward."

This reading of the situation was confirmed by the lack of immediate action to take forward implementation of the Declaration. Nevertheless, the February 2006 Heads of Government summit did set up a "technical working group" to be led by Vaughan Lewis, a former member of the West Indian Commission, former Director-General of the OECS and former prime minister of St. Lucia, to take the proposal forward. The working group reported in February 2007 and broadly endorsed the Commission proposal, arguing that deepening of the CARICOM mandate should go hand in hand with simplification and the removal of bureaucratic impediments to the effective exercise of regional authority. It was recognized that "the Caribbean stands at a critical juncture in its evolution which compels it to adopt a creative, yet pragmatic, system of regional governance" capable of advancing existing integration processes such as the CSME. The issue at stake was nothing less than "the capacity of the Region to deal with the plethora of multi-faceted challenges it will continue to face." Accordingly, given the drawn-out status of the integration process and the compelling threats faced by the region, it was argued that "a decision on the subject be adopted with a due sense of urgency" (Lewis, V.A., 2006: 31). The message could not have been put more clearly. A comprehensive regional governance settlement was vital and needed to be achieved quickly. Many of the foundations were already in place and only political will was required to make it happen.

However, it is already apparent that the project has become yet another casualty of continued prevarication. The Lewis report was both comprehensive and ready for immediate implementation, yet the Heads were reticent about accepting its recommendations wholesale. This is partly, but only partly, explained by the fact that the CARICOM system has lately been almost entirely consumed with negotiations with the EU over the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), which has witnessed tensions emerge between the different regional institutions, the member states, and the academic and technocratic communities. Nonetheless, the overriding impression is that, once again, deeper integration has been placed on the back burner, perhaps as a way of avoiding intensifying existing controversies.

Indeed, at the 28th Heads of Government Conference in July 2007, the region's leaders reverted to type with an agreement which settled at the level of the lowest common denominator, falling well short of the lofty promise of Rose Hall. Eschewing any contentious statements, they produced a tepid *Declaration on Functional Cooperation* (CARICOM, 2007) in which the Heads claimed to recognize "the deepening of the regional integration process

as critical to the Community's ability to respond to the challenges and opportunities presented by changes in the global economy, but focused their attention instead on making a renewed commitment to functional cooperation. As we have seen, within the structure of CARICOM this was scarcely novel. Moreover, aside from some vague gestures regarding institutional improvements and ensuring equal access to regional services, the statement's emphasis on the merits of cooperation between sovereign nation states could hardly have been less subtle. The term was repeated no fewer than eight times in a document which was just two pages long. Without irony, the Heads mandated yet another "task force" which, this time, was charged with reviewing "the status of functional cooperation" in time for the following conference.

A year later, when the Heads met again, this time in Antigua, *The Declaration of Dickenson Bay* (CARICOM, 2008) was an even more forgettable document. At less than a page, CARICOM's leaders hardly bothered even to mouth any platitudes beyond recognising that "the regional integration process remains the only viable option for a Community of small developing states in the current global economic dispensation." They noted that there existed a need "for strong leadership and resolute commitment to the integration process," but offered nothing by way of substantive proposals to meet these needs. A year later still, in July 2009, the Heads of Government did express more urgently their sense of the need to strengthen, even revive, the regional integration movement in conditions of global recession and financial turmoil. On the crucial governance issue they did take the decision to incorporate the CRNM into the Secretariat as a new Office of Trade Negotiations but otherwise did no more, apparently, than review the overall arrangements of the Community and await further proposals by the Secretary-General (CARICOM, 2009).

The only reasonable conclusion that can be drawn from the deafening silence surrounding the issue of the Caribbean Commission is that, for the time being at least, it has been comprehensively put to bed. The previous CIGI paper that we noted earlier argued that it was vital for the region to "seize the Rose Hall moment" in order to "establish and properly fund a CARICOM Commission, and charge it with nothing less than charting all aspects of a region-wide development strategy" to ameliorate the uncomfortable global position in which the Caribbean finds itself (Payne and Sutton, 2007: 24). The Caribbean is manifestly still a long way from achieving such a settlement, with the weakening of the proposals enunciated in the Rose Hall Declaration suggesting that "mature regionalism" has not even, as yet, begun to establish itself. The consequences

of such inertia are multiple. As we suggested earlier, the CSME has long been a casualty of weak supporting institutions. An attempt to overcome this problem was made via another report for the Heads, in which Norman Girvan (2006b) attempted to chart a clear road map towards the full implementation of the CSME and the creation of a "single economy and development vision." These recommendations have also encountered a passive response. The upshot is that the English-speaking Caribbean, today, is still left with the same overlapping mixture of poorly-resourced and often competing institutions and, most importantly, that the pledged CARICOM Commission, which could have pulled them together and provided the leadership necessary to make them work in harmony, has not been established. The result has been indecision, insecurity and friction between the CRNM, the CARICOM Secretariat and the Heads of Government, particularly where the ill-defined grey areas in their respective mandates have overlapped. Moreover, this has been occurring against an international backdrop in which the myriad development and security challenges facing the region have continued to intensify.

The Caribbean Construction of Sovereignty and Statehood

What emerges, then, is that the various island states of the English-speaking Caribbean have a peculiar attachment to their national sovereignty which has not diminished in the post-independence era during which they have been able to exercise it. Indeed, quite the contrary: the analysis that we have advanced so far would suggest that, in spite of the pressing need to create more effective regional institutions, the apparent strength of insular national identities – which derive directly from the distinctive West Indian experience of statehood – continue to sustain an enduring conceptualization of sovereignty which is both narrow and considered to be the sole preserve of national leaderships. In the section below, we explore the reasons why this may be so.

The Search for Caribbean Nationhood

We need to begin by reaching back to the early history of the Caribbean. By doing so, it is possible to see how the societies of the Caribbean were created "de novo" and, in the words of Gordon Lewis (2004: 3-4), became "a tabula rasa on which the European colonisers… put their imprint as they wished." From this traumatic beginning there developed new societies which were sui generis, bereft of a past, and whose peoples "were the first overseas conscripts of modernity" (Scott, 2004: 192). As a result, in

reconstructing a new narrative, emergent leaders had to reinvent their "homeland," the territorial aspect of which "was adopted from the administrative boundaries of the colonial powers" (Premdas, 2002: 57). For Britain, given that its Caribbean was largely – although not entirely – a collection of islands, the beach was generally seen to be the boundary. As a result, insular identities became further entrenched by a self-reinforcing mixture of a natural frontier and the colonial power's lack of interest in trying to overcome it. Over time this created a unique regional political culture wherein, as Anthony Maingot (1993: 43) once noted, "the Caribbean sea acts both as a barrier and a bridge." Historically, therefore, the islands within each cultural-linguistic bloc developed social and political idiosyncracies which gradually morphed into distinctive national identities. This process was exacerbated yet further by the "massive political underdevelopment" generated by the style of British colonialism, in particular the fragmented character of the weak, ineffectual and divergent institutions that were bestowed on all parts of the region (Will, 1991: 7). The process of division was well-embedded by the time that the prospect of independence – and the associated "melancholy fate of the West Indies Federation" (Milne, 1974: 295) – came on to the regional radar.

The decolonization phase of Caribbean history should therefore be read as an era in which each of the elites of the different territories was searching, first, for national liberation and second, for control of the levers of political power. Having achieved these twin goals they were loath to give them up. In this sense, political independence and the exercise of sovereignty were intertwined with West Indian nationhoods. As Gordon Lewis (2004: 239) has again noted, there was thus initiated a

> process whereby cultural nationalism moves forward to political nationalism and whereby it becomes clothed with all of the paraphernalia of the independent nation state, in which there is a government exercising the sovereign power – the authority, that is – to give orders to all and receive orders from none, and requiring… the obedience of its subjects.

The result was that the search for nationhood was manifestly not for something which was inclusively and broadly West Indian in character, but was rather predicated upon mimicking the evolving European nationalist stereotypes of the epoch (Lewis, G.K., 2004: 325). In this sense, the "national" identities which emerged in the Caribbean were the outcome of the grafting of a European-style debate on to a political culture in which the idiosyncracies

of the different islands were essentialized. The political elites which emerged under these circumstances thus strove for an independent nationhood for each tiny island and territory, with, naturally, themselves at the apex of the governing machinery. Once decolonization had been completed in this fashion, much of the integration impetus had been effectively undercut. Will (1991: 5) noted that "shared feelings or attitudes towards unification and identity … grow from actual or imagined common experiences." The reality is that such common experiences, whether actual or imagined, have simply not been present in the requisite quantity in a Caribbean where individual nationalisms have ruled, notwithstanding significant migratory flows, kinship and intermarriage among the islands and territories up to the present day.

Limits to the Exercise of National Sovereignty

The post-independence period, then, was one in which each of the individual nation states of the Caribbean exercised their sovereignty independently. In some respects, of course, this brought them success. Most notably, the achievement of national independence by these small territories earned them seats in the United Nations (UN) General Assembly with all of the rights and responsibilities that such a status conferred. In theory, therefore, tiny Dominica could have the same say in international affairs as great powers like the United States or China. Its borders would be respected by international treaties along with the juridical principles that underpin the notion of national sovereignty and international law. In addition, the different countries of the English-speaking Caribbean were able – again, in theory – to enjoy the various benefits that came with engaging in inter-state relations, pursuing international trade and setting their own domestic agenda.

In reality, however, the value of this sovereignty was limited by their relative ability to exercise it, which was, in turn, determined by their small size, regional fragmentation and limited development. Moreover, the international system with which they were expected to engage, was scarcely hospitable to the interests of weak, newly-independent states. As Ralph Premdas has argued, the establishment of national polities in the Caribbean exposed the different countries to "transnational forces which rendered the claims of sovereignty a farce and a mockery." He argues that the "deep dependence" exhibited by the nominally independent Caribbean states rendered such sovereignty simply "an atavistic symbol, an illusory indulgence parodied persistently by a multiplicity of transgressions" (Premdas, 2002: 49).

It would not be an overstatement either to suggest that these infringements took place across the region's political and economic panorama. Politically, it was the Grenadian revolution and the US response to it which most forcefully highlighted the limits of a small Caribbean state's ability to set its own domestic agenda free from outside interference (Thorndike, 1985; Rose, 2002). Moreover, the relative ease with which the US was able to intervene in the country's affairs – and, in the process, divide its Caribbean neighbours – was a brutal reminder of how a lack of regional unity weakened national sovereignty and independence. Indeed, after Grenada it became clear that the space to exercise Caribbean sovereignty and forge radical or distinctive positions would be heavily circumscribed wherever it came into conflict with US interests (Payne, 1994). Economically, this also secured a degree of allegiance (or perhaps more accurately, resignation) on the part of regional elites to the tenets of the Washington Consensus following the collapse of the terms of trade for most of the region's exports and the intensification of their various primary product dependencies. This was further exacerbated by the structural adjustments of the 1980s called for by the IMF and World Bank and had the effect of simultaneously weakening individual Caribbean economies and emasculating the institution through which it had been hitherto presumed that such difficulties could be addressed: the national state (Conway, 1998; Rapley, 2002; 2006).

It is undeniable that these varied political and economic crises dramatically narrowed the available space for the exercise of national politics and highlighted clearly the limited value which national sovereignty had actually bestowed upon the Caribbean. In trying to understand these constraints, we can usefully distinguish between what Christopher Clapham (1999: 528) calls the "ability to effectively exercise sovereignty" and the "ability to exercise substantive independence" in a hemisphere dominated by the regional hegemony of the United States. Essentially, for the individual small states of the English-speaking Caribbean, their "international autonomy," or ability to exercise their nominal sovereignty in a broadly substantive sense, has been repeatedly shown to be heavily circumscribed in the post-independence era (Clapham, 1999: 525).

The Reproduction of Insular Sovereignty in the Caribbean

Why, then, is sovereignty still reproduced in an insular fashion in the region? The continued attachment to national sovereignty that West Indian leaders exhibited throughout the immediate pre- and post-independence periods can be explained at least in part by the fact that it has successfully "served as a symbol of dignity and equal-ity" (Premdas, 2002: 50). Newly-independent peoples, or those soon to be so, genuinely prized what had appeared for so long to be such a precious commodity and associated sovereignty conceptually and practically with their independence, as if the two were somehow synonymous. The consequence, then, has been that the shared historical experiences of colonialism and decolonization were internalised locally as "national" phenomena.

Inextricably linked to this appeal to independence, Clapham (1999) has described how "sovereignty" in any "Third World" or post-colonial context takes on special meaning because of the very history of exploitation and lack of control over political affairs which new leaders thereafter attempt to reverse. In this sense, it can be considered a practical foundation upon which politics in newly-independent societies is constructed. Intrinsic to this view is an understanding of how these leaders use sovereignty as "an ideology of internal state consolidation," with the "assertion of international autonomy as a tool for the entrenchment of domestic political power" (Clapham, 1999: 525). In his analysis, Clapham is primarily referring to the situation in Africa where such consolidation of domestic power has at times been highly problematic, leading to despotism and other abuses. Yet his insights shed light on the Caribbean experience, where the impetus for local leaders to consolidate power derives from a broadly similar core dynamic. Indeed, the issue for West Indian leaders is that their domestic legitimacy, not to mention their hopes for re-election and access to resources, depends on the engendering of development and the rapid delivery of tangible benefits "to appease demanding electorates" (Alleyne, 2007: 16). In this sense, they can hardly be expected to eschew short-term pursuit of local objectives over longer-term consolidation of regional ones in a context where poverty and underdevelopment continue to exist. As, one observer astutely noted many years ago, issues surrounding development underpin many of these debates, rendering "all questions related to integration in these countries highly political" to a somewhat excessive extent (Axline, 1978).

Part of the dilemma in the Caribbean is that, traditionally, political leadership has been highly personalistic on account of the need to ensure effective internal rule. The problem with this – compounded by the Westminster system of government – is that it makes compromise difficult, regardless of the issue at hand, and particularly so when it comes to something as contentious as national sovereignty. This once led Forbes Burnham, the former prime minister and later president of Guyana and one of the key progenitors of CARIFTA, to invoke *Paradise Lost* in an unfavourable analysis of the regional leadership's insu-

larity, suggesting that, "at the intellectual level Caribbean leaders had always accepted the need for unity," whilst "at the emotional level too many of us are direct descendants of Satan, preferring to rule in hell than serve in heaven" (cited in Milne, 1974: 299). In many ways, given the fierce and often vitriolic way in which politics tends to be conducted in many of the islands of the region (Payne, 1993; Thorndike, 1993; Ryan, 2001), politicians cannot be expected to behave any differently, particularly if they value their political survival. In the West Indian context, such practising political operatives have therefore become notorious for being "primarily concerned with maintaining their own national power bases" in a bid to avoid being supplanted by emergent rivals and ensuring that lines of patronage remain open (Griffin, 2007: 310).

As a result, as Storr (2004: 20) has put it, "Caribbean leaders have a habit of being bold at the [regional] negotiation table but timid when it comes to implementation," with national interests still continuing to trump the regional more often than not. The prevailing political culture provides a significant part of the explanation for this. Of course, many West Indian political leaders have themselves been responsible for consciously cultivating the personalistic and particularistic way of doing business that obtains in much of the region, but it is equally true that they are often engaged in a game of balancing a range of competing objectives. These in turn derive from the distinctive nature of the Caribbean political system – the small size of societies, the relative poverty of many people, the inherited mechanisms of the Westminster model and so forth – which participants cannot easily avoid. In tiny societies it is nigh on impossible to avoid relations of patronage, either in seeking office or attempting to remain there (Ryan, 1999: 2001), which explains in good part why "the winner takes all" still dominates as an ethic of statecraft.

Contradictions in the Caribbean Conception of Sovereignty

Nevertheless, the Caribbean attachment to national sovereignty – over and above any regional or "West Indian" notion of statehood which could have been cultivated – still appears somewhat peculiar, even in spite of the evidence presented here and the argument made by Vaughan Lewis (1983: 121) some years ago that the Caribbean conceptualization of sovereignty was something which had crystallised in "our view of the assumed rights of legally sovereign governments." It is our contention here that the kind of state sovereignty to which the English-speaking Caribbean is wedded is, in fact, something of a chimera. The purest definition of the term is encompassed in the "legal, constitutional authority" of states (Philpott, 2001: 298), yet, for all

societies, the distinction between this legal monopoly over their right to be sovereign and their autonomy (the practical ability to exercise that sovereignty) is far from clear. The former is something which, in the international legal environment, has been generally held to be indivisible ever since the establishment of the Westphalian System. In the real world, the latter is replete with tensions and trade-offs. Most states – to whatever extent – tend to recognize the limits of their ability to be independent, and appreciate the complex interdependencies that constrain and enable different courses of action in the international environment.

In spite of this obvious reality, the way in which the notion of sovereignty is understood, projected, discussed and practised in the Caribbean is somewhat at odds with the region's existential situation. As Premdas (2002: 50) has put it, sovereignty is regularly "invoked as a rhetorical flourish with minor effect in international relations and bargaining." Moreover, Caribbean leaders are acutely aware of the constraints upon their ability to exercise their national sovereignty; many have even maintained, rhetorically at least, something of an attachment to the regional project as a way of overcoming these limits. We have already noted, for example, how P.J. Patterson called for a conscious shift in regional thinking about sovereignty in the run-up to the Montego Bay Heads of Government conference in 2003. Many other leaders have spoken in similar fashion for 30 or more years. Burnham predicted in 1967 that "the fact of a Caribbean nation will be in our time" and, four years later during the CARIFTA negotiations, asserted that "the question arose not so much as to whether there should be political integration but what should be the stages towards this political integration" (cited in Milne, 1974: 295). Around that time the Tobagonian A.N.R. Robinson in his book entitled *Patterns of Political Transformation in Trinidad and Tobago* made a staunch appeal for Caribbean unity:

> A decade ago we witnessed the futility of half-hearted union. Now we are experiencing the futility of separateness, however purposeful. To seize and maintain the better future that can be ours, we must impel ourselves towards purposeful union. We must build up the nation of the Caribbean in our own likeness. (Robinson, 1971: xxiii)

Newer leaders have been no different, entering the Caribbean political scene with similarly staunch pronouncements of regional commitment. Former Prime Minister Owen Arthur of Barbados, for example, relatively recently compared the prevailing CARICOM settlement to

"the fifth wheel of a coach" which was "not much of a hindrance to progress; not much of an aid" (cited in Alleyne, 2007: 4). For all this, and more, the coach, as we have seen, has continued to do no more than rattle along.

It is also not clear that the Caribbean peoples themselves are as interminably parochial in their outlook as is often suggested. Whilst popular enthusiasm has been lacking for attempts at integration in the region, and there is perhaps little evidence to support the existence of "a vibrant and burgeoning sense of West Indianism in the population at large" (Payne, 2008: xxxii), it is reasonable to ask if everyday people could be reconciled to the regional impulse with the right kind of leadership. Until now, however, debates have been couched in highly elitist terms, resulting in a notable failure to bring the people on board (Lewis, P., 2002). This is particularly striking, given that "many people from the region identify as West Indian when in the United States or Europe," but then, when they return home, find that "national identities are fiercely protected" (Storr, 2004: 16). As Premdas (2002: 59) has remarked, in accepting their "West Indianism" – however ephemerally – it is clear that the practices of many "are at great variance from the exclusive claims for singular loyalty to the state," Embrace of this reality, where "The Caribbean" becomes something of a "deterritorialised phenomenon," opens up a vista of opportunity for arriving at "a more realistic understanding of what is the operational meaning of sovereignty in the face of globalization and the global distribution and dispersal of Caribbean peoples" (Premdas, 2002: 59-60).

In summary, then, despite the fact that regional elites appear to recognize the limits of sovereignty and often discuss it in those very terms, political practice has been different. We observe a disconnection between, on the one hand, the limited autonomy which Caribbean leaders generally accept characterizes their capacity to engage in international relations as separate states and, on the other, the incongruent fashion in which they often staunchly defend their supposed national sovereignty within the framework of the slow, ineffective and limited progress made in the regional integration process. This is further fuelled by the way in which the political process in the region reproduces insularity. Given the difficulty of coming to terms with exactly why the Caribbean retains such a narrow and reductionist understanding of sovereignty, and why it continues to privilege national interests over the regional, we move on in the final substantive section of the paper to a discussion of how the concept has been understood in the wider political science literature in search of some clues as to how West Indians could, perhaps, liberate themselves from this ongoing burden.

The Wider Conceptual Debate

In exploring this wider conceptual debate we note immediately that understandings of the concept have evolved, ebbing and flowing over time, although generally moving in the direction of more flexible and contingent conceptualizations.

Krasner's Four Types of Sovereignty

Stephen Krasner is perhaps the political scientist most associated with discussions surrounding sovereignty, and he outlines the four ways in which it has traditionally been understood in the literature (Krasner, 2001a). These are:

a)   interdependence sovereignty;

b)   domestic sovereignty;

c)   international legal sovereignty; and

d)   Westphalian sovereignty.

Krasner's analysis highlights the way in which these four distinct – yet related – aspects of sovereignty are neither reducible to each other, nor necessarily exhibited together at the same time. They are each different components of an over-arching whole. Interdependence sovereignty, refers to a state's ability to regulate its borders and ensure that it has a measure of control over the flow of goods, capital, people and even ideas across them. Domestic sovereignty, relates to the state's level of internal consolidation and control, highlighting the extent to which it is unchallenged domestically and accepted by its populace. International legal sovereignty simply means the extent to which the state is recognized by other states, this being a precursor to participation in inter-state relations and membership of international organizations (in particular, the UN). Finally, Westphalian sovereignty refers to the autonomy of domestic authority structures, meaning the extent to which the state is able to set domestic and international agendas, the effectiveness of its institutions and so forth. In essence, the argument runs that each of these four aspects of sovereignty can be simultaneously exhibited in different ways and to differing extents. They can even also come into conflict with and undermine each other. It is worth quoting Krasner (2001a: 2) at length on this point:

> A political entity can be formally independent but de facto deeply penetrated. A state might claim to be the only legitimate enforcer of rules within its own territory, but the rules it enforces might not be of its own mak-

ing. Control over transborder movements, domestic authority and control, international recognition, and the autonomy of domestic structures do not necessarily go together. In fact rulers have often traded one off against the other.

The practical significance of the different dimensions of sovereignty is this: just because the foundations of traditional Westphalian inter-state politics solely "recognize juridically independent territorial entities and exclude external sources of authority from domestic territory," along with the mutual recognition and non-interference that this entails, does not mean that optimal outcomes are always achieved in the resolution of political and economic issues (Krasner, 2001a: vii-viii). This is because, for example, the exercise of state sovereignty in an anti-democratic or repressive fashion can lead to appalling social consequences. In addition, the maintenance of an international system predicated on a tightly-defined and restricted juridical understanding of state sovereignty fails to recognize both the huge disparities in state power and the extensive proliferation of other influential non-state actors and systemic phenomena. In this sense, the notion of sovereignty as the "political equivalent of property rights" is too straightforward for what is, in practice, a hugely complex international environment (Krasner, 2001a: viii). As a result, for many states the quality of their sovereignty is thus belied by the heavy constraints upon their ability to exercise their autonomy effectively.

Throughout the world there are myriad examples of sovereignty either being infringed through the coercion of powerful states and other actors, or by countries choosing to pool their sovereignty voluntarily through efforts at regional integration or association within or even alongside other nations (Krasner, 1993). However, despite this, "the rules of sovereignty are the default," because they are "well-understood institutional and social facts," and, as such, "can easily be invoked because they are so widely recognized" (Krasner, 2001a: 4). In practice it is up to states to devise innovative solutions to overcome any deficit in their ability to exercise their sovereign power. Yet, in theory, the endurance of the rules upon which state action is based – which derives from the brilliance of their simplicity and comprehensibility – has led to a situation where sovereignty retains an unparalleled level of dominance over both the juridical practice of inter-state relations and conceptual debate in political science. This remains so even in light of the starkly evident flaws in the ways in which sovereignty is both practised in the real world, and the consequent limitations imposed on its significance as an analytical instrument (Krasner, 2009: 106).

Problematic Sovereignty

Sovereignty, therefore, is no more and yet no less than a constructed concept like many others in political science, which means that, to paraphrase Krasner (2001a) once more, it is somewhat "problematic." Indeed, it was only with the rise of the Westphalian state system – and the influence of those who theorised about it – that the idea emerged that rules were required to govern the actions of sovereign territorial states in a chaotic international arena (Krasner, 1999). As time has moved on, the world has passed through the epoch of revolutions and the establishment of post-absolutist, imperial nation-states, to the decolonizations of the postwar period, and now has moved into an era with a much larger community of states which is characterized at the same time by fragmentation, divergence and the proliferation of complicated, disparate regional and global governance structures (Payne, 2005). In this kind of world the key problem with the concept of sovereignty, as John Vincent (1974: 331) argued a long while ago, is that it privileges certain actors over others: specifically, the rights of states over non-state entities, with the result that there can be seen to exist something of a "No Trespassing" sign standing "at the perimeter of a piece of property held under international law." This has been fully institutionalized by the UN system so that, today, sovereignty comprises "the totality of international rights and duties recognized by international law, as residing in an independent territorial unit" (Crawford, 2006: 32). This remains the case, even though the community of states, and the UN itself, are both far from sufficiently powerful to ensure that the rules are always respected (Braveboy-Wagner, 2008: 99). In any case, it is not even clear whether such a capacity would either be possible or desirable. Furthermore, many of the problems which exercise states, along with the regimes which are constructed to deal with them, are transnational in nature; yet the international system is still fundamentally predicated upon the idea that the national state is the privileged unit of analysis and action.

Conceptually, then, there is clearly a tension between, on the one hand, the indivisibility of state sovereignty and, on the other, observable practice. In the abstract, a state is either sovereign or it is not, but the real world is one in which relativity, degree and grey areas abound (Krasner, 1999). This has been complicated in the current era by the emergence of a truly global political economy characterized by increasing global interconnectedness and liberalization of cross-border flows of people, finance, ideas, goods and technology, which in turn are driven by rapid technological change, internationally mobile capital and concerted state action in

support of liberalization. The "growing magnitude or intensity" of these flows are such that states and societies, whether they wish to or not, have "become increasingly enmeshed in worldwide systems and network interaction" (Held and McGrew, 2003: 3). The resulting intensification has led some to call into question the idea that sovereignty should remain "the ontological bedrock of international relations" (Beeson 2003: 361).

In light of these issues, David Held and his colleagues (1999: 29) have described a shift to what has been termed "a new sovereignty regime" under which states still retain a nominal monopoly over sovereignty in international legal terms, but, in reality, effective power is wielded by a complex web of actors and other systemic phenomena. This is a key point. The argument advanced by Held et al. is not that formal sovereign boundaries have become economically, politically, socially or militarily meaningless, but rather that "they have become increasingly problematic in an era of intensified globalization" (Held et al., 1999: 9). On this reading, processes of globalization have rapidly reconfigured the ability of states to ensure the four different elements of sovereignty that we described earlier, either for better or for worse. As a result, "traditional conceptions of statehood as an absolute, indivisible, territorially exclusive and zero-sum form of power" (Held, et al., 1999: 9) are arguably undermined.

Lessons for the Post-Colonial World

We must recognize here that these shifts in the ways in which sovereignty is understood today have especially meaningful implications for ex-colonial states in the poorer parts of the world. Approximately one hundred new states emerged during the post-war period and few, given their relative poverty and lack of institutional capacity, were equipped to cope with the responsibilities of statehood (Spruyt, 2002). Moreover, Clapham (1999: 522) notes, they

> enjoy a paradoxical relationship to the international regimes which have been devised to regulate the global system, and especially to the core institution of state sovereignty. Like all international regimes, that of sovereignty was created and imposed at the instance of the dominant states of the international system, which were exclusively of European origin. It was used, not merely to regulate relationships between the European states themselves, but in the process also to entrench their domination over other regions of the globe.

In this sense, the construction of sovereignty is both inherently Western-centric and has operated in a way which has been structurally antithetical (and often detrimental) to the interests of many poorer states. There is a paradox, however, in that the post-colonial states have, since independence, "emerged as the most strident defenders of Westphalian sovereignty in the international order" (Clapham, 1999: 522). We can push this point further by noting that, for many of these states, their survival is largely attributable to the fact that the state system is so well-institutionalized. Indeed, as Krasner (2009: 109) has himself argued, their continued existence "can hardly be explained by their material capabilities," but rather it is due to the fact that other states are willing to "endorse their existence." Moreover, for small states themselves, perhaps the most alluring aspect of the traditional sovereignty regime has been the way in which it has conferred international recognition upon them and their leaders (Krasner, 2001b: 20). Although, for example, the English-speaking Caribbean countries do not enjoy great amounts of "interdependence" or "Westphalian" sovereignty, they are, as independent states, assured of their "international legal sovereignty," even though that may not account for a great deal.

The attachment of the decolonized states to their sovereignty was evinced by the heated debates that took place in the UN General Assembly throughout the 1960s and 1970s as nationalist leaders celebrated their new-found independence. Yet, whereas the attachment to a reductionist conception of sovereignty has been quietly jettisoned by leaders such as those in Western Europe who have recognized the added value that can be gleaned from pooling it, many in the "developing" world (including in the Caribbean) have clung to it with a vengeance.

Sovereignty Bargains

In practice, the major way in which states have attempted to overcome deficits in their autonomy is through the pooling of authority in what have been termed "sovereignty bargains" (Litfin, 1997; 1998). The term was coined by Karen Litfin, who, in the context of her work on the transnational nature of environmental politics, has argued that a reconceptualization of the notion of sovereignty was necessary in order to achieve alternatives to ecologically damaging practices which affect all. For her, a sovereignty bargain is an agreement between states in which "sovereignty may be disaggregated, with autonomy, control or authority in one area being traded for greater autonomy, control or authority in another area" (Litfin, 1998: 203). In essence, such agreements are simply devices for working

in common interest with other states in order to maximise the value of the sovereign power of each. Yet any such establishment of a regional institution with a degree of supranational authority does "violate" the Westphalian notion of sovereignty by establishing "authority structures that supersede territorial boundaries and transgress autonomy by conferring control to supranational actors" (Mattli, 2000: 149).

In its most reductionist sense, such a bargain clearly is not compatible with what Litfin (1997: 169) has termed the "monolithic principle of sovereignty." However, it is not clear that state autonomy is compromised in the same way. It is rather the case that, in the uncertain world of today, many states are in fact empowered by the pooling of authority within a regional project, meaning that their autonomy may even be both simultaneously strengthened and weakened in a complex variety of ways. For example, the smaller states of the EU may be powerless to stop intra-European labour migrations or capital flows, yet their borders are also strengthened hugely in terms of trade by the existence of a common external tariff at the European frontier. Regardless of whether or not their nominal sovereignty is "violated" by the reconfiguration of their national borders by an outside agent, the net gain from membership of the EU – through the economic development, political stability and social cohesion that it may provide – is deemed to be resoundingly positive. The "inventive" violation of Westphalian sovereignty that the EU typifies is thus a product of state sovereignty in the sense that it emerges out of "voluntary agreements among its member states."

The important point to note is that the autonomy exercised by each state within the constraints set by the EU framework is enhanced, along with the state's "ability to attain certain policy objectives" in a way that would otherwise be impossible (Mattli, 2000: 150). Indeed, without the mechanisms provided by EU membership, it is inconceivable to think that, for example, Luxembourg or Ireland would be able to extract the same benefits from the multilateral trading system that they currently enjoy on account of the EU"s bargaining power in the World Trade Organization. As Mattli (2000: 151) has put it, "while sovereignty bargains reconfigure sovereignty, they do not necessarily diminish it," because some reduced autonomy "may be the price to pay for enhanced control or legitimacy." In summary, then, as Litfin (1998: 203) has argued, "it would be simplistic to suggest that international cooperation axiomatically subverts state sovereignty," because, "in an interdependent world", it may actually be such cooperation that helps "to sustain the institution of sovereignty."

Significance of the European Project

Whether or not the lessons provided by the European project can speak easily to our analysis here is, at the same time, questionable, given that it is both unique in its particular outcomes and also the product of singular historical circumstances. Nonetheless, the EU model has certainly appeared attractive at times to Caribbean integrationists. As Havelock Brewster (2003b) has argued:

> The concept of sovereignty [in the EU] is not monolithic and static. It is divisible, and customizable according to the needs and desires of the participating States… It is even possible in instances to have a mixture of intergovernmentalism and supranationalism… it is a dynamic concept, changing not only by explicit Treaty decree but, *de facto*, in response to administrative complexity and convenience, the requirements of international organizations, and jurisprudential interpretation by the European Court of Justice. Researchers in this field describe the process as movement along a continuum of intergovernmentalism and supranationalism.

However, the EU did not develop in an institutional vacuum, and it is far from clear whether "what works for the EU" can, for a variety of reasons, be easily "replicated in other regions" (Alleyne, 2007: 14). First, the EU has been the outcome of particular historical circumstances which derive from the fallout from the Second World War, and also the economic and diplomatic support of the United States during the Cold War. Second, the member states have successively pooled their sovereignty in a process in which the "deepening" and "widening" aspects have occurred gradually over a period of more than 50 years. Third, the EU has been supported by the strength of its core economies – France, Britain and especially Germany – which have traditionally facilitated the generous resourcing of its key institutions, and, in particular, provided the bulk of the funds that have been available for the integration of often poorer new members. Indeed, the vast majority of applications for membership to the EU have been made in times of economic hardship with Brussels acting as a highly-resourced developmental beacon (Mattli, 2000: 151).

Fourth, and most importantly for our study, the steady but continuing process of "ever closer union" as laid out in the original Treaty of Rome, signed in 1957, has led to a situation where a complex range of institutional processes has been consciously developed to mediate between national

and community interests. Put most simply, the EU is at once "intergovernmental" and "supranational," depending on which aspect of the Union's competence is under consideration and under which of many later treaties it falls. So, in some areas – trade policy, for example – the member states have effectively surrendered their sovereignty to the supranational European Commission which has responsibility for negotiating a common position in external fora, for setting the common external tariff and so on. Moreover, the Commission has the right to draft legislation and monitor the activities of member states to ensure that they act in accordance with EU law (Mattli, 2000: 149). However, in areas such as security and foreign policy, national governments still retain control and cooperate intergovernmentally to achieve desired outcomes without precluding the possibility, which in practice occurs frequently, that some member states may take up divergent positions.

What does the EU Sovereignty Bargain mean for the Caribbean?

The significance of this for the Caribbean integration process is also multifaceted. First, in the English-speaking Caribbean there has been no crisis comparable to World War II, which fuelled "widespread disenchantment" with the European nation-state and precipitated the construction of the European institutions (Milne, 1974: 301). Rather, there have been a succession of "mini-crises" (the failure of the Federation, Grenada, economic decay, structural adjustment and so on), but no major turning point to provide the same kind of shock, or punctuation of the equilibrium, that precipitated the construction of the EU. Indeed, in many ways, the gradual and inchoate experience of decline in the Caribbean actually mirrors the sluggish pace of integration in the region.

Second, in contrast to the gradual expansion of the EU, most of the English-speaking members of CARICOM joined at the beginning (or very soon after), and the widening impulse, as we suggested at the start of this paper, has often been seen to be in conflict with the deepening aspect because of the unique geographical and cultural composition of the wider region. Third, the member states of the EU are both richer and generally much larger than those in CARICOM, where there exists no "Germany" with either the capacity or commitment to underpin the regional economy. Trinidad, the richest member state, has long been reticent about extensively funding regional development (Payne, 2008). Furthermore, CARICOM as a whole cannot have the "beacon" effect that the EU has had, precisely because of its relative lack of resources and developmental capacity. As such, the perceived marginal gains from deeper integration have never been as apparent to all involved as they have been, at moments, in the European context.

Fourth, and relatedly, the relative size and wealth of European countries – where the opportunity costs of integration have not generally been glaringly evident to the populace – have allowed for power to be gradually pooled "by stealth," to use the words of Joseph Nye (1968: 381). This has permitted the gradual construction of European institutions which are, to some extent, removed from everyday political concerns. By contrast, the regionalization process in the highly particularist, parochial and much poorer Caribbean could not be built up in the same way because resources are so scarce and shifts in politics at the regional level have a far more perceptible impact upon everyday life. Further, as Stephen Milne (1974: 298) once put it, "islands are small, government is centralised, and leaders are leaders. If anything important, or perhaps even anything unimportant, happened "by stealth," it would be a sign that leaders were no longer leaders." This, of course, returns us to the argument made earlier about the distinctive nature of the political process in the region, and the need for "heroes." This has perhaps waned to some extent, with the rise of a more technocratic style of leadership throughout the Caribbean (Payne and Sutton, 2001; Henke and Réno, 2003). Nonetheless, such modern pragmatists are still bound by political conventions which have developed over decades and are loath – or even unable – to break with them entirely. We described earlier the ways in which many leaders have, in fact, articulated a commitment to integration, even as the process itself has waxed and, more often than not, waned. Yet actions speak louder than words, and the relatively slow pace and clumsy character of integration is testament to the region's inability to break out of its sovereignty straightjacket (Alleyne, 2007: 6).

Conclusion

We have been at pains to point out in this paper that sovereignty (and statehood) are simply constructed concepts like any others. They have endured as the default operating system for organizing international politics and survive largely on account of their strength as "a set of normative assumptions into which statesmen are socialised" (Krasner, 2001a: 1). In the Caribbean political leaders have evidently been unwilling to countenance the sharing of their national sovereignty, even in light of the fact that the value of that sovereignty – that is, autonomy – is heavily circumscribed and examples abound from around the world – and in particular Europe – of the ways in which state power can be, and has been, imaginatively pooled in "sovereignty bargains" to accentuate the relative

aggregate autonomy of all the parties involved. Moreover, the West Indian attachment to a highly reductionist notion of the concept is even more surprising if we consider that "conventional norms of sovereignty have always been challenged" by the way in which so few states have actually enjoyed high levels of "autonomy, control and recognition" (Krasner, 2001b: 20). As Daniel Philpott (2001: 298) has remarked, "it is not that sovereignty no longer is; it is that it never quite was." As such, if we accept that most states have seldom exerted control over their sovereignty or enjoyed significant autonomy, it is certainly clear that, for the relatively young, small and poor states of the post-colonial English-speaking Caribbean, this has been the abiding reality. Further, as Cynthia Barrow-Giles (2003: 52) has starkly put it, "the idea and practice of absolute sovereignty are even more tattered, more bruised, more bloodied, than a decade ago, and a lot more tarnished than the decade of the 1970s [the era when most of the Commonwealth Caribbean acceded to independence]."

If this is so, then it is clear that, following the European lead, the Caribbean understanding of sovereignty needs to be opened up, unpicked and discussed in a frank and open debate. It seems incongruent at best, and negligent at worst, for the region's political leaders to remain rhetorically attached to a conception of sovereignty which is reductionist, outdated and highly damaging to the interests of their people. Moreover, it is at the popular level that this debate needs to take place most urgently. The problem is that initiation of such a popular debate requires brave leadership and plain speaking from the political elite. Somebody needs to stand up – a Norman or a Michael Manley, an Eric Williams, even an Errol Barrow, an early and under-appreciated prime minister of Barbados. At the most recent CARICOM summit held in Georgetown in July 2009 the Guyanese President, Bharrat Jagdeo, did at least come close to broaching the issue. He emphasized in his opening speech to the conference that there was a need for "institutional strengthening" in CARICOM and he urged his colleagues to consider again some of the novel features of European Union modes of governance (CARICOM, 2009). Buthe needs support and, above all, other leaders also to speak out and work with him on such a project.

What might the leaders do, if so minded? We propose a series of six steps, to be undertaken with urgency and in the order set out below:

a) Declare at the next inter-sessional meeting to be held in Dominica in March 2010 that, as a group of heads of government, they wish to initiate a region-wide debate about the Caribbean's actual experience of the benefits of sovereignty after a significant period in possession of it;

b) Set up a small commission of the regional "great and good," staffed by the Secretariat and drawing upon the expertise of the University of the West Indies, to take evidence on this matter with all speed, holding public meetings in all of the CARICOM member states and reporting quickly to the next scheduled summit in July 2010;

c) Initiate by their own contributions a major media campaign to generate further discussion of the meaning and merits of sovereignty at the grassroots level of regional society whilst the commission goes about its work;

d) Respond to this debate at the next Heads of Government meeting in July 2010 by declaring that it is their view that the moment has been reached when the Caribbean has to move on from its inherited narrow, outdated view of sovereignty to a more nuanced, modern and region-specific conception that will permit serious substantive strengthening of collective sovereignty via its creative pooling;

e) Review immediately all of the many excellent recent reports on how the CARICOM system of governance might be improved on this basis; and

f) Announce and implement at the inter-sessional meeting scheduled for early 2011 a new set of CARICOM governance arrangements that give the region at least a fighting chance of charting a course of survival and development amid the many difficulties and pressures presented at the moment by global change.

Will this happen? On the pessimistic side of the argument, one might ask: where are such leaders as the Manleys or Williams or Barrow now? Do they exist? Will any single current leader or group of leaders have the commitment and courage to act in this way? One may be doubtful. On the optimistic side, as Gordon Lewis (2004: 12-13) once noted, "insularity is an accident of history" and, as such, is "not necessarily a permanent law of Caribbean society," This means that the opportunity does therefore exist, with the right application of politics, to overcome this long-standing Caribbean affliction.

We would stress that it is only with the fruits of such a broadly-based, popular discussion fully in hand – by which we mean the genuine embedding into the regional political culture of a more sophisticated understanding of the core concept of sovereignty – that attempts to advance

the process of constructing the institutions of regional governance will have impact, whether these comprise the establishment of a Caribbean Commission or whatever else. We suggest that the character of the process which has hitherto held sway – "top-down" fixes proposed by the *técnicos* – is no longer sustainable. It is clear that the EPA bargaining process with the EU, in particular, has been seriously compromised by the lack of an effective regional governance settlement and the dominance of the debate by the CRNM, the Heads of Government and the technocratic elite. Much of the intellectual elite, along with the wider population of the region, has not "bought in" to the eventual agreement. This gap between leaders and led is, in the long term, highly detrimental to the wider developmental and democratic prospects of the region. We argue that greater popular awareness is a fundamental pre-requisite of an effective and democratic integration process. As Alleyne (2007: 29) has noted, "once there is a genuine demand for deeper integration from the Caribbean people as they link integration and develop-ment, so too will there be a demand for institutions to add certainty and credibility to the movement." This advice could and should have been heeded 40 years ago; it would certainly have been less pressing then than it is today. It is vital that this basic political insight is grasped before the region's social and political cohesion falls foul of its many serious development problems.

Acknowledgements

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