

Rethinking United States–Caribbean relations: towards a new mode of trans-territorial governance

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Introduction

United States–Caribbean relations over the period of the last thirty or forty years have rarely—if ever—been analysed in a thoroughly satisfying way. It is a strange omission in the international relations literature given the proximity of the United States to the Caribbean, and *vice versa*. But the fact is that most accounts of the relationship have fallen prey to a powerful, but ultimately misleading, mythology by which small, poor, weak, dependent entities in the Caribbean have either created trouble for, or alternatively been confronted by, the ‘colossus to the north’ that is the United States in whose ‘backyard’ they unfortunately have to reside. Virtually all analysts of the US–Caribbean relationship have thus drawn a picture marked at heart by the notion of an inherently unequal struggle between forces of a different order and scale. Within this broad metaphor the only major difference of interpretation has reflected the competing theories of power in the international system developed by the realist and structuralist schools.

From the realist perspective, which has always dominated US-based analyses of the relationship, the most immediate and noteworthy feature is the huge disparity in power resources between the US on the one hand, and the Caribbean on the other. States in the Caribbean (which is generally defined here in conventional terms as the islands located in the Caribbean Sea, plus Belize and the three ‘Guianas’ which have been linked historically to the islands in so many ways) are obviously small in a variety of senses. Their territory is limited in size: Guyana and Suriname are the largest (at 214,970 square kilometres and 163,270 square kilometres respectively), but substantial parts of their land-areas are uninhabited and unexploited. Of the islands, Cuba is the largest (114,524 square kilometres), but the norm is much smaller. Many eastern Caribbean states are no more than 300–600 square kilometres in size, the smallest independent state in the region, St Kitts-Nevis, being only 269 square kilometres in area. Their populations are also equally tiny by global standards. Cuba is again the most populous, with over 10 million people, followed by the Dominican Republic and Haiti with about 7.0 million and 6.3 million respectively. At the other end of the spectrum come St Kitts-Nevis (46,500), Dominica (81,100) and Antigua-Barbuda (81,200).¹ As a consequence, the gross

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¹ Anthony Payne and Paul Sutton (eds.), *Modern Caribbean Politics* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), Appendix: Statistical Data on the Countries of the Caribbean, pp. 294–5.

domestic products of Caribbean states are bounded. Taking 1978, more or less at random, as the basis for comparison, the range ran from Cuba (US\$15,400m), through the Dominican Republic (US\$5,700m), Trinidad and Tobago (US\$3,896m) and Jamaica (US\$2,729m), down to St Vincent (US\$47m), Dominica (US\$36.9m) and St Kitts-Nevis (US\$35.2m).² These are, even so, not the poorest states in the world, especially if economic well-being is measured in *per capita* terms. But what is manifest is that, by comparison with the US (which measures 9,372,614 square kilometres in area, had a population in the late 1980s of some 244.4 million people, and has long possessed the largest gross domestic product in the world),³ they possess the most minimal resources with which to pursue their interests in international politics.

All of this means that Caribbean states have not been able to wield much power in the international system, at least as traditionally understood. From the realist perspective, the formal sovereignty of the sixteen fully independent states in the region is one of their few power resources. Thanks to the centrality of the concept in the post-1945 organization of the international system, even the smallest and weakest states in the world, such as those in the Caribbean, have been given a weapon they can use. It has worked for them both as a vote in international organizations and as a symbol in international debates. The argument in defence of sovereignty has become one with which offending states can be brought to the bar of international opinion, and to some degree restrained. In this connection, it is significant, to say the least, that all Caribbean states have survived as states in the post-Second World War era despite their proximity to the US and their emergence into statehood during some of the mostly highly charged phases of the Cold War. Even so, there unavoidably remains something deceptive about their situation, even in realist terms, which is that the benefit which can be derived from the legitimizing appeal of sovereignty may be more apparent than real. In the Caribbean context, this is well illustrated by the US invasion of Grenada in October 1983. No amount of appeals to the shrine of sovereignty in international law—and the action was condemned in the United Nations General Assembly by an overwhelming vote of 108 to nine—could effect the removal of the marines or block the wider political purpose of the US in reasserting its power over the Caribbean. Washington simply refused to play the new post-colonial game of respecting the sovereign rights of the weak, and got away with it.⁴

From the structuralist perspective, which has equally predictably shaped most Caribbean-based commentary on the region's relationship with the US and the rest of the world, the key organizing notion has been the Caribbean's peripheral status in a world capitalist economy controlled after 1945 by the US. As the considerable literature of the Caribbean dependency school attests, the development of the region's economy has been conditioned by its integration into a system not of its making and not to its advantage. All such analysts have stressed the dependence of the Caribbean people on the rest of the world: for markets and supplies, transfers of

² All gross domestic product figures are taken from International Monetary Fund, *International Financial Statistics* (Washington, DC: IMF, 1982).

³ World Bank, *World Development Report 1989* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the World Bank, 1989).

⁴ For a discussion of the invasion of Grenada, see Anthony Payne, Paul Sutton and Tony Thorndike, *Grenada: Revolution and Invasion* (London: Croom Helm, 1984).

income and capital, banking and financial services, business and technical skills, and ‘even for ideas about themselves’.⁵ Clearly, multinational capital has flowed in and out of the region with few restraints. Regional states have long vied with each other to offer the more attractive package of incentives to external investors in a competition to embrace what was once tellingly, and scathingly, referred to as ‘industrialization by invitation’.⁶ The particular terms on which each state has sought to make its peace with the capitalist system—‘living with dependency’, as it has been described⁷—have naturally varied, but all have in the end succumbed, with the single important exception of Cuba. Whatever may have been the debate about the ‘socialist dependency’ on the Soviet Union with which revolutionary Cuba had to live from the early 1960s until relatively recently,⁸ it was unquestionably a different relationship from that to which structuralists have pointed in respect of the rest of the Caribbean.

The political dimension of this system has generally been seen to have been a willingness on the part of the US to ‘defend’ it against all forms of ‘attack’ from radical and socialist politics in whatever form they emerged. The instances of such a response in the Caribbean have been many and varied over the modern period: Cuba 1959 onwards, the Dominican Republic 1965, Jamaica 1972–80 and Grenada 1979–83 are only the most notorious. The techniques of intervention have ranged from ‘destabilization’, involving economic and other threats to undermine the legitimacy and effectiveness of allegedly subversive governments, via the attempted assassination of key political opponents, to outright invasion if all else fails and the opportunity arises. In all cases, local allies and regional supporters were required. Nevertheless, the way that the Caribbean’s part in such a process of neocolonial management is described has to be carefully modulated. The region has never contained many key US economic interests, which means that a simple economic determinism has always been too crude a conceptual basis on which to explain the assertion of US power over the Caribbean. For the best part of the post-1945 period, the region’s significance was, as Sutton has argued, primarily ‘political—as proof of American power’. The Caribbean mattered, he wrote, ‘because of what it represents to the people of the USA and to the outside world . . . a belief that if the USA cannot deal effectively with events in its own sphere of influence it will not deal effectively with events elsewhere’.⁹ President Ronald Reagan, from this perspective, was quite right to decry those who denigrated the importance he attached to Grenada because its best-known export was nutmeg. ‘It is not nutmeg that is at stake down there,’ he declared in March 1983, ‘it is the United States’ national

⁵ Alister McIntyre, ‘Some Issues of Trade Policy in the West Indies’, in Norman Girvan and Owen Jefferson (eds.), *Readings in the Political Economy of the Caribbean* (Kingston: Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of the West Indies, 1967), p. 165.

⁶ Norman Girvan and Owen Jefferson, ‘Introduction’, in Girvan and Jefferson (eds.), *Readings in the Political Economy of the Caribbean*, p. 2.

⁷ Paul Sutton, ‘Living with Dependency in the Commonwealth Caribbean’, in Anthony Payne and Paul Sutton (eds.), *Dependency under Challenge: The Political Economy of the Commonwealth Caribbean* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 281.

⁸ See Robert A. Packenham, ‘Cuba and the USSR since 1959: What Kind of Dependency?’, in Irving L. Horowitz (ed.), *Cuban Communism*, 6th edn. (New Brunswick and Oxford: Transaction Books, 1988), pp. 109–39.

⁹ Paul Sutton, ‘The Caribbean as a Focus for Strategic and Resource Rivalry’, in Peter Calvert (ed.), *The Central American Security System: North-South or East-West?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 39–40.

security'.¹⁰ As this example shows, national security, understood in structuralist terms, was truly all-encompassing.

These conventional accounts of US–Caribbean relations in the postwar era have undoubtedly had their value. The best of them have illuminated important aspects of the uneasy but unavoidable embrace which geography and history have imposed on both the US and the Caribbean. That said, realism and structuralism in their most uncompromising terms have never been totally convincing in their attempts to catch all the nuances of the modern US–Caribbean relationship. The former, with its inherent emphasis on the capacities of states as actors in international relations, has in principle enabled analysts to assess the ‘foreign policy’ options open to the various contending governments, only to snatch them away again almost instantly by insisting on the tremendous disparities of power at work in the contest. The latter, by necessarily grounding itself in an identification of the underlying structures of power, generated a similar inevitabilism—the US destined to rule, the Caribbean destined to dependence. It is also the case, very importantly, that neither theoretical approach can be said to travel well into the new milieu created by the collapse of the Bretton Woods system, the end of the Cold War and the many other significant changes which have lately taken place in the nature of the contemporary world order.

All of this was fully recognised by the author of the most recent—and unquestionably one of the best—accounts of the complex and changing relationship between the US and the Caribbean, Anthony Maingot. He explicitly makes ‘the asymmetry in power’ between the US and the Caribbean the ‘central point’ of his analysis, but he ‘does not assume that this *ipso facto* means total control’; rather, ‘the degree of direct or indirect coercion or undue influence has . . . to be empirically established’.¹¹ In Maingot’s view, the best way to describe the relationship is to conceive of it as one of ‘complex interdependence’ in the sense of that term pioneered by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye.¹² In other words, the societies in question are and have historically been connected through multiple transnational relations; there has been no consistent hierarchy in the agenda of relations; and military force at least declines in importance as a policy option to the extent that complex interdependence grows. More generally, such an approach enables Maingot to see that Caribbean states and societies do have options, that influences between the US and the Caribbean run in both directions, that the US is a most complex democracy and, not least, that the US is itself now yielding to new cultural pressures deriving from the Caribbean.

None of this can be denied. Indeed, the insights that Maingot offers are considerable. The danger is that, in his hands, the search for synergies in the US–Caribbean relationship (which he admits to being one of the aims of the book) leads to him at times taking too generous a view of the nature of this interdependence. Revealingly, at one point he talks of ‘a *coincidence* . . . of interests’ shared by US and Caribbean leaders.¹³ At best, this causes him to underplay the capacity of both public and

¹⁰ President Reagan’s speech to the National Association of Manufacturers, cited in *Caribbean Contact*, Bridgetown, April 1983, p. 3.

¹¹ Anthony P. Maingot, *The United States and the Caribbean* (London: Macmillan, 1994), p. 3.

¹² Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye (eds.), *Power and Interdependence* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1977), pp. 33–7.

¹³ Maingot, *The United States and the Caribbean*, p. 3. My emphasis.

private forces within the US to create within the Caribbean a sense of the possible, of what is thinkable and doable, which substantially reflects US interests; at worst, it disguises, even obscures, important elements of conflict in the relationship which the conventional realist and structuralist approaches did highlight. In short, Maingot accurately recognises the limitations of the existing literature, but builds his attempt to transcend these problems on a pluralist international relations discourse which is in the end too narrow to carry the full weight of the enquiry.

The remainder of this article seeks to continue the rethinking of US–Caribbean relations started by Maingot. It aims to build an analytical framework which incorporates his insights, but is at the same time more wide-ranging in its intellectual reach and thus ultimately more robust in its explanatory power. To this end, it deploys elements of what has lately been called the ‘new political economy’. As set out more generally in a founding statement, the central feature of such an approach is that it rejects ‘the old dichotomy between agency and structure’ and recognises instead the need to ‘develop an integrated analysis, by combining parsimonious theories which analyse agency in terms of a conception of rationality with contextual theories which analyse structures institutionally and historically’.¹⁴ In practice in the particular context of this enquiry, this means working eclectically with arguments drawn, on the one hand, from international political economy and, on the other, from comparative public policy analysis. The resulting framework in effect seeks to embed agency-oriented (or political) concepts inside structural (or political economy) concepts and, precisely by integrating these levels of analysis, is perhaps able to come to a better understanding of the possibilities for action open to both state and non-state actors in any given structural situation. Arguably, it has more to offer to the study of contemporary US–Caribbean relations than either classical realism, or structuralism, or even Maingot’s more subtly pluralist approach. The next, and main, section of the article endeavours therefore to relate the insights of the new political economy to the reality of these relations in the 1990s. It builds its argument in five stages.

US–Caribbean relations in the 1990s

US hegemony and the Caribbean

From such a perspective, the point of entry into discussion of contemporary US–Caribbean relations has to be the wider question of US hegemony. The concept of hegemony has been much debated in the international political economy literature but it is best theorized in neo-Gramscian terms as ‘dominance of a particular kind where the dominant state creates an order based ideologically on a broad measure of consent, functioning according to general principles that in fact ensure the continuing supremacy of the leading state or states and leading social classes but at the same time offer some measure or prospect of satisfaction to the less

¹⁴ Andrew Gamble, Anthony Payne, Ankie Hoogvelt, Michael Kenny and Michael Dietrich, ‘Editorial: New Political Economy’, *New Political Economy*, 1:1 (1996), pp. 5–6.

powerful'.¹⁵ Thus, again to cite Robert Cox, 'there can be dominance without hegemony; hegemony is only one possible form dominance may take'.¹⁶ Crucially, in this definition hegemony is seen as bringing together both coercive and consensual dimensions of power, which is what gives it that greater richness compared to mainstream accounts which emphasise only the preponderance of material resources.

As regards the United States, this conceptualization implies that over the course of the postwar period 'hegemony has given way to domination'.¹⁷ In brief, *Pax Americana* was established after 1945; ran with growing confidence until the late 1960s and early 1970s; was broken by the economic and political crisis of Vietnam; could not be fully reconstituted by Reagan, even though the effort was made; and thereafter has visibly faded in both reach and strength. Within a new non-hegemonic world order, the power of the US unquestionably remains preponderant—certainly in the military sphere given the demise of the Soviet Union, substantially too in the ideological domain given its continuing leadership of old and new organs of international management such as the IMF and the Group of Seven (G7), and also, not least, to a considerable degree still in economic matters. The size and technological vigour of the US economy, the origins of much international capitalist enterprise in the US and the continuing centrality of the US dollar as an international currency are all factors which continue to make the US the most formidable single player in the global economy. What is different is that the US is no longer powerful enough to shape on its own the rules of a consensual hegemonic order. It has not been willing or able to initiate a new Bretton Woods; it has not even sought consistently to use the G7 process to shape the economic policies of the leading Western states; and although it did succeed in putting together a powerful coalition to fight the Gulf War in 1991 it also drew upon German, Japanese and Arab funds to pay for its military effort. In short, the US no longer possesses that self-reinforcing and largely unchallenged primacy across *all* the necessary constituent elements of hegemonic power. Without this, it has been reduced to mortal status, increasingly likely to behave in the same fashion and be constrained in the same way as other leading states in the world.

Viewed in this way, it is easy enough to understand the US turn towards regionalism and its energetic re-engagement with Latin America and the Caribbean from the end of the 1980s onwards. Like every other state, the US also had to make a response to the ending of its global hegemony. What is obvious is that under both Bush and Clinton the US has seen Latin America and the Caribbean as a part of the world where it has a greater natural trading advantage than its main economic rivals in Europe and Asia and it has thus envisaged freer hemispheric trade as working to its particular benefit. It has also recognised the merits of a flexible political framework (the so-called 'Miami process' initiated by the Summit of the Americas held in that city in December 1994) within which it can manage other hemispheric problems. In short, the US strategy has not been to create a closed regional bloc (as some have feared), but rather to organise the Americas in a way consistent with and supportive

¹⁵ Robert Cox, *Production, Power and World Order: Social Forces in the Making of World History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 7.

¹⁶ Robert Cox, 'Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 10:2 (1981), p. 153.

¹⁷ Cox, *Production, Power and World Order*, p. 299.

of US interests in a post-hegemonic world order.¹⁸ It has also been the case that in this new vision of its interests within the hemisphere the US has necessarily had to concern itself increasingly with those parts of Latin America geographically closest to itself, another important shift of perception from the Cold War era.

The Caribbean has not been a high priority in this process—Mexico has always been the key—but it has been embraced by the various initiatives and been forced to react, in one way or another, to the new US agenda for the hemisphere as a whole. Indeed, it has arguably been affected more profoundly than any other part of the hemisphere. Brazil has had a big enough domestic market to be able to preserve elements of its old import-substitution development model; Chile has been a successful enough international trader not to have to rely predominantly on the US market; Colombia has proved to be resistant to a range of US initiatives on narcotics. By comparison, the economic and political agenda of the various small states of the Caribbean has been steadily reshaped over the course of the last two decades to the point where the US is now able to lay down the parameters of what can be done in almost every policy arena. Leaders of states located just off the southern shore of the US that seek to pursue export-oriented economic development policies have little realistic choice but to do what is necessary to secure access to the US market and US investment flows.¹⁹ The conditionalities imposed reach well beyond the broad outlines of macroeconomic policy right into the detail of tax law, investment codes, tariff arrangements, intellectual property rights legislation and so on. They have even extended to maritime and overflight arrangements—the so-called ‘shiprider’ agreements—proposed by the US in early 1996 to try to stem the intra-regional flow of narcotics.

As a consequence, although it cannot really be said that the US has put in place an alternative regional hegemony over the *whole* of the Americas, the special type of coercive and consensual power identified as hegemony by Cox does still aptly characterize its relationship with the territories of the Caribbean. The one remaining exception to this generalization, namely Cuba, in fact proves the point, because what it is now grappling to do, with an ever decreasing likelihood of success, is to stay outside the embrace of US hegemonic power over the whole of the Caribbean. Due recognition of the continuing existence of US hegemony over the region is thus the *first* essential building block of a new approach to the analysis of contemporary US–Caribbean relations.

The US policy apparatus

The United States has always had a domestic policy apparatus singularly unsuited for a hegemonic power. The commitment of the Founding Fathers to a balanced constitution with ample checks and balances was not designed to facilitate decisive

¹⁸ For a fuller discussion of this strategy, see Anthony Payne, ‘The United States and its Enterprise for the Americas’, in Andrew Gamble and Anthony Payne (eds.), *Regionalism and World Order* (London: Macmillan, 1996), pp. 93–129.

¹⁹ For a discussion of alternatives, see Carmen Diana Deere, et al., *In the Shadows of the Sun: Caribbean Development Alternatives and US Policy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press for Policy Alternatives for the Caribbean and Central America, 1990).

global leadership. During the bulk of the era of *Pax Americana* this did not matter too much because the ideological pressure of Cold War served to generate the necessary national will to drive the policy process in a coherent direction. Yet, when the machinery of the US state is dissected in a detached way outside the peculiar environment of Cold War, there is revealed an extraordinarily complex and essentially *weak* state structure.²⁰ In any analysis of US state strategy it is necessary to consider the relationship of US state policymakers to the power of US national and transnational capital, to assess the role of various domestic and foreign pressure groups, to bear in mind all the time the balance of power between the legislative, the executive and the judiciary and between the different parts of the federal system, to weigh up the competing bureaucratic claims to represent the US of the White House, the State Department, the Pentagon, the CIA, the Treasury, the Federal Reserve, the Drugs Enforcement Agency and so on. In sum, one has quickly to move on and away from the easy notion of there ever being a single US state strategy towards anywhere or anything and grapple instead with the many contradictions and variables—the many messy policies—that actually exist. In this sense, the marvel is indeed that the US policy apparatus moves in any discernible direction at all and, of course, the notion of ‘gridlock’ has entered common parlance as a means of expressing the entropy that is increasingly at the core of the US state.²¹

Needless to say, these sorts of observations are meat and drink to that part of the comparative politics field which focuses on the United States.²² But they are still too often neglected by that part of the international relations field which focuses on US ‘foreign policy’. Even approaches which purport to appreciate the so-called ‘domestic sources’ of foreign policy frequently fail to take on board the full significance of the plural character of the US state/society complex and its attendant institutional structures. For, just as with so-called domestic issues, what tends to emerge in relations with all parts of the world is a whole series of different policy communities—related to trade, or debt, or particular commodities, or narcotics, or arms, or migration, or the environment—which do not easily connect one with the other and which in fact often conflict with each other over resources and priorities. That these diverse policy communities are difficult to lead in any single direction by even a charismatic or popular president almost goes without saying; when no serious and sustained attempt is even made to achieve coherence the scope for confusion and contradiction is consequently the greater. The latter is what has lately applied to the making of policies towards the Caribbean, thereby bringing about a situation where, for example, the policies of trade competitiveness pursued by the Trade Representative’s Office imperil the future of the Caribbean banana industry in ways that alarm the Department of Defense which is charged with policing the consequences for the US of increased Caribbean drugs production.²³ Appreciation of the complexity, diffusion and endemic incoherence of the US policy apparatus is,

²⁰ For an interesting discussion of the historical emergence of the US state, see S. Skowronek, *Building a New American State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

²¹ See Philip G. Cerny, ‘Political Entropy and American Decline’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 18: 1 (1989), pp. 47–63.

²² See, for example, the various chapters in Gillian Peele, Christopher J. Bailey, Bruce Cain and B. Guy Peters (eds.), *Developments in American Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1994).

²³ For an early discussion of the politics that attach to these contradictions of policy, see Anthony Payne, ‘The New Politics of “Caribbean America”’, *Third World Quarterly*, 19: 2 (1998), pp. 205–18.

then, the *second* essential building block of our new approach to the analysis of US–Caribbean relations.

Caribbean actors within the US

These two core features lead on to three other secondary characteristics of the current modalities of US–Caribbean relations. The first of these draws attention to the considerable opportunities presented to Caribbean actors based *within* the US to play a major part in the making of US policies towards their ‘home’ region. The involvement of such groups is not only legitimized by the general ethics of American democracy but is facilitated by the treatment of ‘foreign’ policy issues as if they are at heart ‘domestic’. The classic case of the exercise of such influence is the role of the Cuban community in Miami. Through such organizations as the Cuban American Foundation, anti-Castro Cubans in that city have brought enormous pressure to bear on successive US administrations to maintain hardline policies on the Cuban embargo, even after the ending of the Cold War. They have also always found ready allies in the US Congress and can point to the passage of specific pieces of legislation, such as the ‘Cuban Liberty and Democracy Act’ (popularly known as Helms-Burton) passed in March 1996, as the direct outcome of these Congressional links. By comparison, other more reformist Miami-based Cuban bodies have found it an uphill struggle to get any part of the US state machine to listen to the case for a shift of policy in a less hostile direction. In effect, US policy towards Cuba for the past several years has been no more than a product of the outcome of this domestic battle for influence between different groups of exiled Cubans living in the US. In such a highly charged context rational arguments made within, say, the State Department about the irrelevance, indeed counterproductiveness, of the continued embargo have had little, if any, political purchase.²⁴

The influence of Cuban Americans is, nevertheless, still exceptional. As indicated, they shape US policy towards Cuba itself, but they do not yet seek to carry that influence over into policies towards other parts of the region or regional issues in general. For the moment the unique position of Cuba in US foreign policy is a sufficient preoccupation. Nor do other groups of Caribbean Americans involve themselves as energetically or as effectively in the making of US policies towards their home country in the region as do the Cubans. Indeed, many nationalities are still notably disorganized and ineffective in this respect; some also suffer from debilitating public images, such as the Jamaicans who are widely and indiscriminately viewed in the US as ‘criminals’, courtesy of the bad publicity attracted by the criminal activities of the gangs of Jamaican *posses* living in cities like New York,²⁵ or the Haitians who were often condemned in popular debate in the US at the time of the US military intervention in Haiti in 1994 as somehow too ‘primitive’ to be able to learn to operate a democracy. For all these problems, Cuban Americans have

²⁴ Most previously published analyses of US–Cuban relations have not emphasised this domestic aspect, preferring to treat them in orthodox state-to-state terms. See, as illustration, Jorge I. Domínguez and Rafael Hernández (eds.), *US–Cuban Relations in the 1990s* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989).

²⁵ For a discussion of the *posses*, see Ivelaw L. Griffith, *Drugs and Security in the Caribbean: Sovereignty under Siege* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), pp. 123–8.

shown the way and demonstrated that there are opportunities to influence US policy towards the Caribbean from inside the US in accordance with different visions of what is in the best interests of the Caribbean state and society in question. Given the openness of the structures of US government, such interventions can only grow in number and significance in the future.

US actors 'for' the Caribbean

Another secondary characteristic of contemporary US–Caribbean relations is the role being played by US actors on behalf of the Caribbean. This sounds paradoxical, but it serves to highlight the impact being made within US Caribbean policy by such official sub-state actors as the state of Florida. Of course, Florida has been acting in its own interests, rather than those of the Caribbean, but on several occasions and issues they have lately amounted to the same thing. Although US foreign trade with the Caribbean (defined here as the Caribbean Basin, thereby including the countries of Central America as well as Colombia and Venezuela) only amounts to about 2 per cent of total US foreign trade, Florida's leading trade partners are those countries in the Caribbean Basin. According to a study by Rosenberg and Hiskey, Florida counts three Basin countries among its top ten export markets, with the Dominican Republic ranking third in the dollar value of exports leaving the US through Florida. In 1992 Florida's exports to Caribbean basin countries totalled close to US\$ 4bn, creating an estimated 80,000 jobs in the state. A lot of so-called 'twin plant' activity also links the state to its nearest external region.²⁶ In short, Florida and its inhabitants benefit from healthy economic links with Caribbean Basin countries and have received as great a boost as anywhere in the Basin from the consequences of the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) introduced by President Reagan in the early 1980s as a means of forging closer trading and investment links between the US and the Caribbean Basin and thereby stemming the apparent tide of radical political change flowing through the region. However, the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) promised to shift US trade and investment towards Mexico and away from the Basin countries and so imperilled not only the prospects of the Caribbean Basin but also those of Florida.

The emergence of a more active political stance by representatives of Florida can be traced directly back to this threat to its position as the key US 'gateway to the Caribbean', the source of so much of its extraordinary economic growth since the 1970s. The effort has been disparate and unstructured in nature and has been mediated at different times via the state's Senators and House representatives, the state governor and his executive agencies and various government/business partnerships like Enterprise Florida and the Florida Partnership of the Americas. Nevertheless, by these diverse means and agents 'Florida' as a political actor has taken a lead in putting the case for some kind of NAFTA-parity for the CBI countries, including the tabling of bills in the Congress; lobbied successfully to host President Clinton's Summit of the Americas in 1994; and has continued thereafter to play a

²⁶ See Mark B. Rosenberg and Jonathan T. Hiskey, *Florida and the Caribbean Basin Countries in the 21st Century: Is Geography Destiny?*, Florida Caribbean Institute, Florida International University, Dialogue no. 137, November 1992.

leading role in discussions of the future likely shape of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) agreed to in principle by the heads of state at that Summit.²⁷ Its agenda is business-driven and no guiding principles have ever been enunciated by an official organ of the state to give meaning to these various initiatives. But, as Rosenberg observed in a recent magazine commentary, this kind of involvement in the ‘Miami process’ has ‘empowered the state’s leaders to declare boldly that Florida is one of the few states in the US with a foreign policy’.²⁸ What is more, there will be no retreat from such developments: Florida’s ‘foreign policy’ is likely to become an even more significant factor in the making of US Caribbean policies over the next few years than it has already begun to be during the 1990s.

The foreign policies of Caribbean states

The last feature to be highlighted as part of the process of contemporary US–Caribbean relations is perhaps that most commonly cited in existing accounts, namely, the foreign policies towards the US adopted by the independent states of the Caribbean themselves. But, if the new modalities of the relationship have worked, as we have said, to privilege both Caribbean actors in the US and US actors ‘for’ the Caribbean, so they have also substantially disenfranchised and rendered less relevant many of the traditional tools of state-to-state foreign policymaking. At the very least, the new dynamics of the system must be said to pose the most forbidding challenge to the foreign policy apparatuses of Caribbean states. In any case, these are, almost without exception, small and under-resourced, often having been the last part of the indigenous bureaucracy to be established in the final stages before the granting of independence. Nevertheless, Caribbean states appoint their ambassadors to Washington, seek meetings between their foreign ministers and whatever level of political appointee they are offered within the State Department, and cherish the few moments that they are occasionally able to win in the diaries of US presidents. It was thus presented as something of an achievement in the region when, in May 1997, Clinton came to Barbados for a summit meeting with the heads of government (or their senior representatives) of 15 Caribbean states that lasted for all of a morning session and a working lunch. As it happens, this meeting was not without its gains for the Caribbean.²⁹ Nevertheless, the overall record of the 1990s shows that, in the absence of Cold War incentives, this manner of conventional diplomacy has not succeeded in giving the Caribbean the kind of high profile in US foreign policy circles that it needs and thinks that, as a near neighbour, it deserves.

This argument can, however, be put the other way round. What independent Caribbean states have *not* generally done is to seek fully to insert themselves into the various US-based policy communities through which, as we saw earlier, US policies towards the region are now mostly made. Mexican government and private-sector representatives did this with breathtaking skill and energy in the long run-up to the

²⁷ See Summit of the Americas Center, Enterprise Florida, Inc. and Florida Partnership of the Americas, Inc., *Florida and the FTAA: A Position Paper for Hemispheric Trade Negotiations* (Miami: Florida International University, March 1998).

²⁸ Mark B. Rosenberg, ‘Florida’s Foreign Policy’, *Florida Trend* (February 1996), p. 14.

²⁹ See again Payne, ‘The New Politics of “Caribbean America”’.

negotiation and eventual passage through Congress of NAFTA.³⁰ Admittedly, they had more resources at their disposal than most small Caribbean states and they benefited from the substantial presence of Mexican-Americans living in US society, but they did at least understand that their best chance of shaping US policy in the direction they favoured was to work within, not from outside, the US governmental system. This suggests that at least part of the Caribbean's reluctance to operate in the same way stems from a failure of understanding as much as a lack of resources. The leaders of the English-speaking states, in particular, have grown up politically amidst an Anglophone tradition of centralized government and lack an instinctive feel for the very different, dispersed, even anarchic, US system. This has been recognised. As long ago as the late 1980s, Vaughan Lewis, the former secretary-general of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean states, noted that the small states he represented were unable 'to come to terms, for example, with the intricacies of the American Congress—so increasingly influential in the decision-making of the US government'.³¹

In some ways, very little has changed in the intervening years. Many Caribbean states still pursue singularly ineffective policies towards the US, often giving priority in their tiny diplomatic establishments to traditional postings to places such as London. Yet some states have been learning and have started to reap their rewards in terms of gaining access and getting a hearing in Washington. The best example of this is Jamaica. In his second period in office, from 1989 onwards, Michael Manley determined to secure his government against the fierce hostility from the US which had so damaged his administration in the 1970s. One of his most important acts towards this end was to appoint a non-career diplomat, Richard Bernal, to become Jamaican ambassador to the US. Bernal was in fact an economist with a left-wing background, but he was both able and hard-working and he was ideally placed to understand the threat to the Caribbean represented by the post-Cold War economic agenda of the US towards the Americas. Bernal operated in Washington in a different way from previous Caribbean ambassadors. He went out of his way to get to know key US officials, gave public evidence to Congressional committees, wrote articles and *op.ed.* pieces for US newspapers, and attended and gave presentations at academic and other conferences where new policy initiatives were being discussed.³² It is true that he was also given a considerable freedom of manoeuvre by Manley and Manley's successor as Jamaican prime minister, P. J. Patterson. The consequence has been not only that Bernal is well-known and respected in all policy circles in Washington where the Caribbean crops up (he is, for example, the chair of the 'smaller economies' working group in the FTAA process), but that Jamaica has acquired more influence and standing with the US than any other comparable Caribbean country of its size.

³⁰ See Susanne Presland, 'The Neoliberal Alliance in the Passage of NAFTA', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Sheffield, 1997.

³¹ Vaughan Lewis, 'Closer Political Union', *Caribbean Affairs*, 1:3 (1988), p. 162.

³² See, amongst many possible examples, Richard Bernal, 'The Implications of the NAFTA for Jamaica and the CBI Region: A Policy Proposal', statement by the Ambassador of Jamaica before the House of Representatives Ways and Means Subcommittee on Trade North American Free Trade Hearing, Washington DC, mimeo, 22 September 1992; Richard Bernal, 'From NAFTA to Hemispheric Free Trade', *Columbia Journal of World Business*, 29: 3 (1994), pp. 22–31; and Richard Bernal, *Paths to the Free Trade Area of the Americas*, Policy Papers on the Americas 8: 2, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington DC, January 1997.

This is not to say, of course, that Jamaica has been able to wield a lot of influence in Washington, merely that it has tried—with a measure of success—to utilize the full range of opportunities that are open to Caribbean governmental actors to take part in the US policy game. Some other Caribbean states, such as the Dominican Republic, have sought to follow suit by also choosing non-career diplomats for the US posting and, of course, this sort of lobbying activity need not be confined to the ambassador. It can be pursued by Caribbean bureaucrats in all ministries, as well as by private-sector elites concerned that their interests will also be directly affected by political decisions taken in the US. The nature of the US policy apparatus is such that the more people that seek to put a Caribbean case in the US, the more it will be heard.

Conclusion: towards a new mode of trans-territorial governance

It is time now to construct these various observations into a conclusion. The first point made remains central: the Caribbean is still subject to US hegemony. The argument here derives from neo-Gramscian international political economy and draws attention to the mixture of coercive and consensual forms of control by which the US seeks to manage the region. Viewed from the other end of the relationship, the Caribbean has become so entangled within common patterns of trade, financial flows, migration and narcotics movements that one can genuinely talk of the emergence of a new structural context linking the political economies of the Caribbean and the US, albeit in profoundly asymmetrical fashion. (I have elsewhere described this as ‘Caribbean America’³³). At any rate, the point is that US–Caribbean relations take place within a particular structural setting which has to be understood as framing all subsequent analysis. However, the second point made then becomes relevant: the sheer complexity, the diffusion and the relative openness of the US policy apparatus mean that the manner of US hegemonic control is not imperial in the traditional sense. The argument here derives from comparative public policy analysis and demonstrates that, for all of its impact, US power in the Caribbean is not exercised in a style that can accurately be called authoritarian, in large part because US policies *are* openly debated in different policy communities and *can* be influenced from inside and outside. The third, fourth and fifth points made continue in this vein and serve to illustrate some of the ways in which this has been done by actors representing either the exiled Caribbean, the gateway to the Caribbean or the official Caribbean.

These various arguments are not contradictory. I suggest that what has, in fact, been identified in this article is nothing less than the emergence in the 1990s of a new type of *trans-territorial* political connection between the US and the Caribbean, generated, on the one hand, by the sheer extent of US hegemonic power over the Caribbean and, on the other, by the residual penetrability of the institutions of the US state to different forms of Caribbean influence. Put differently, the US can either be said to have developed an ‘outreach’ capacity to manage the ‘offshore’ economies

³³ Anthony Payne, ‘The New Political Economy of Area Studies’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 27:2 (1998), pp. 253–73.

and societies of the Caribbean *and/or* to have gone a long way towards domesticating the social and political systems of the countries located off its immediate southern border. Both metaphors highlight how much has changed, for it is surely clear that what is now encapsulated within contemporary US–Caribbean relations cannot any longer be conceived as mere international relations. The symbolic rhetoric and behaviour of the state-to-state world still goes on, and is certainly not yet irrelevant, but it does not catch the essence of the contemporary US–Caribbean relationship. This has now been reconfigured as a series of interlocking transnational and transgovernmental policy communities (here using Keohane and Nye’s language) in which different actors within the US state/society complex and within various Caribbean state/society complexes (here using Cox’s language) engage each other in different policy arenas where there are no automatic priorities.

This suggests to me that in international studies we now have to move on analytically to place at the centre of our enquiries the notion of governance. This term has its specialist literature in the public policy field, but it has been introduced to international studies with great effect by Jim Rosenau. He uses the term to refer to ‘spheres of authority . . . at all levels of human activity . . . that amount to systems of rule in which goals are pursued through the exercise of control’.³⁴ Others have begun to pick up the term and, as Higgott and Reich have lately argued in a survey of ‘globalization studies’, more attention needs to be directed towards the public policy aspect of globalization, regionalization and localization processes, focusing, in their words, on ‘the politics of subsidiarity within the wider international political theory of governance’.³⁵ This article has sought to contribute to this emerging debate by bringing forward appropriate evidence from one part of the world. As has been shown, an embryonic system of rule has come into being by which the US–Caribbean interface is now governed and which it makes sense to think of as a new mode of trans-territorial governance. It is obviously far from complete and still requires major adjustments of behaviour by Caribbean actors (in particular) if they are to take due advantage of it. But, notwithstanding those qualifications, there is now unlikely to be any return to the old patterns of international relations in this part of the world and that is both a shift of immense significance in its politics and a sign perhaps of a broader shift in the dominant modalities of interstate linkages in the current era.

³⁴ James N. Rosenau, *Along the Domestic-Foreign Frontier: Exploring Governance in a Turbulent World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 145.

³⁵ Richard Higgott and Simon Reich, *Globalisation and Sites of Conflict: Towards Definition and Taxonomy*, Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation Working Paper no. 1, University of Warwick, February 1998, p. 19.