

**The United States and the Caribbean 30 Years after the Grenada Invasion  
Dynamics of Geopolitics and Geonarcotics**

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## Foreword

In this Perry Center Occasional Paper, Dr. Ivelaw Griffith, President of Fort Valley State University in Georgia, presents a timely reflection on the current geopolitical and “geonarcotic” forces at work in the Caribbean. Focusing on both continuity and change, he highlights aspects of the problem that fundamentally defines the region and its relationship with the United States. Having coined the term *geonarcotic* in the 1990s as an empirical tool to explore the wide-ranging effects of the drug issue, he continues to find this framework of great use to explain the internal dynamics of the region, as well as its troubled relationship with the circum-Caribbean.

Taking the reader back to the 1983 invasion of Grenada, Dr. Griffith traces the most important trends that have evolved throughout the past thirty years. While geography is not necessarily destiny, it does weigh heavily on the internal and external developments taking place. Size also limits some of the individual efforts of the region’s states. Cooperation among each nation and with the broader world is difficult to sustain. The presence of new actors such as the People’s Republic of China and an activist Venezuela has heavily influenced the political and economic realities of each country. At the same time the violence associated with geonarcotics has eroded governance and governability, making development difficult. While the region is not short of resources, particularly natural ones, benefiting from their wealth has not been possible for all.

This is an important contribution to the literature on the Caribbean, a region of tremendous geopolitical and “geonarcotic” importance. While the attention of many has turned elsewhere, the trends explored by Dr. Griffith are of interest to the practitioner and scholar of not only the particular region, but the wider Hemisphere. Even if not on the current international political and economic radar, what happens in the Caribbean has an important impact on much of the world, owing to its geographic position and the strategic lanes of navigation that cross it, the Panama Canal.

The Perry Center is proud to present this publication to you and looks forward to a resultant lively, and much needed, debate on the Caribbean, its problems and possibilities. A conversation on current and future developments will help concerned policymakers and scholars ask important questions: What is really taking place in the region? How does the region respond to the challenges it faces? What is the impact of the region’s political and other realities on the wider Hemisphere? What can the United States do at a time when demands and needs are greater than resources available? These and other questions are important so that Dr. Griffith’s warning that an “engagement vacuum” may leave room for more than uncertainty.

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# **The United States and the Caribbean Thirty Years after the Grenada Invasion Dynamics of Geopolitics and Geonarcotics**

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## **I. Introduction**

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt declared December 7, 1941, “a date which will live in infamy.”<sup>1</sup> That date marked a geopolitical milestone for the United States and for the Allies. While October 25, 1983, is likely not viewed in the same way by historians the world over, it is a fateful one for the Caribbean. It marked the start of the invasion of Grenada (the Lilliput) by the United States (the Leviathan). A date of infamy for many in the Caribbean and elsewhere, it represented a geopolitical milestone in U.S.-Caribbean relations. Among other things, it altered the tenor of relations between the United States and the Caribbean, and helped to reorient intraregional dynamics in terms of ideological pursuits. Moreover, it exacerbated fissures within the region for a while, as several Caribbean nations had joined the invasion, thereby providing the United States some “political cover” and a modicum of credibility for its otherwise widely condemned action.<sup>2</sup>

The geopolitical calculus by the United States involved factors that extended beyond the Caribbean; the region could not escape the vicissitudes of the Cold War raging through the Hemisphere.<sup>3</sup> As this writer noted almost two decades ago (Griffith 1995, 9-10), intervention was a major theme of security discourse during the 1980s in the Caribbean Basin and the Americas overall. This was not because there were many intervention episodes during that period, but because of the power asymmetries of the states involved and the ideological backdrop against which the Grenada engagement occurred. By its action in Grenada, the United States made it pellucid—again—in relation to the Caribbean as it had earlier in other parts of the Americas and other regions of the world that it was prepared to act condignly when it perceived ideological and geopolitical threats within its geostrategic space.

As might be expected, there have been other milestones in U.S.-Caribbean relations over the years since 1983, although none with the same military resonance. One was the signing, over several months in 1996, of “Shiprider Agreements” with nine countries. Although Jamaica and Barbados refused to sign the “Model Agreement” signed by the others, they later signed slightly different agreements. Another was the May 1997 U.S.-Caribbean Summit in Barbados, which marked the first time

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Photo 1. Grenada's main port in the capital, St. George's.

ever that a sitting United States president—Bill Clinton—went to the region to confer with regional leaders as a group. (The day before the May 10 Caribbean summit, Clinton met with the leaders from Central America in Costa Rica.)

Significant, too, was the participation of the first CARICOM Battalion alongside U.S. forces in “Operation Restore Democracy” in Haiti in September 1994, with troops from Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago, and logistical support from the United States. The engagement ended in January 1996. Still another milestone was the April 2009 visit of President Barack Obama to Trinidad and Tobago for the Fifth Summit of the Americas, where he met with Caribbean leaders and announced what would become the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI).

The end of the Cold War led to both symbolic and substantive adaptations in U.S. engagement in the Caribbean, as was the case in dealings with nations elsewhere in the Americas and around the world. However, there also have been elements of continuity over the years since the 1983 invasion and the end of the Cold War. This Occasional Paper probes some key areas of continuity and change, highlighting (a) some geopolitical aspects that reflect continuity (and change) since the 1980s, and (b) many geonarcotics ones that have been accentuated since then, reflecting change.

## II. Dynamics of Continuity and Change

Within two months in 2010, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton

visited the Caribbean separately for multi-lateral discussions, in April and June, respectively. A year earlier—in May 2009—Barbadian descendant Attorney General Eric Holder also visited for a similar purpose. In November 2011 Holder also traveled to the Dominican Republic for bilateral discussions, and to Trinidad and Tobago to participate in the Third Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Public Security in the Americas. In addition, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano visit-



Photo 2. Cold War Geopolitical Adversaries: President John F. Kennedy and General Secretary Nikita Khrushchev of the former USSR.

ed the Dominican Republic in July 2012, and Secretary Clinton went to Haiti three months later. Both visits were for bilateral talks. Holder’s visit to Haiti in February 2013 had a multilateral intent; it was to attend the inter-sessional summit of CARICOM leaders.

In May 2013, the visit of U.S. Vice President Joe Biden to Trinidad and Tobago took things one step further. It was the second stop of Biden’s three-country Latin American and Caribbean tour, which started in Colombia and ended in Brazil. The primary aim was to discuss security, drugs, and trade matters with Caribbean leaders, with the exception of Cuba, of course. Joining host Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar were President of Haiti and then-CARICOM Chairman Michel Joseph Martelly; President of Guyana Donald Ramotar; Bahamas Prime Minister Perry Christie; President of Suriname Desi Bouterse; Grenada Prime Minister Dr. Keith Mitchell; Prime Minister of St. Kitts and Nevis Dr. Denzil Douglas; and Barbados Prime Minister Freundel Stuart.

Also attending were St. Vincent and the Grenadines Prime Minister Dr. Ralph Gonsalves; President of the Dominican Republic Danilo Medina Sánchez; Deputy Prime Minister of St. Lucia Philip Pierre; National Security Minister Peter Bunting of Jamaica; Prime Minister of Antigua and



Photo 3. President Barack Obama at the Fifth Summit of the Americas in Trinidad, April 2009.

Barbuda Baldwin Spencer; Deputy Prime Minister of Belize Gaspar Vega; and Agriculture Minister of Dominica Matthew Walter. CARICOM Secretary General Irwin LaRocque was also present. Of great importance, the meeting was touted as a precursor to a summit with President Barack Obama. Secondly, Biden held bilateral talks with Trinidadian officials on energy and security, and the two nations renewed their Status of Forces Agreement. (McFadden, 2013; Taitt, 2013; Alexander, 2013)

The flurry of activity described above signifies United States reengagement with the Caribbean, something President Barack Obama had promised while in Trinidad and Tobago in April 2009 for the Summit of the Americas, just months after his inauguration as the first African-American leader of the United States. Obama's election was epochal at home and abroad, and it raised expectations throughout the Caribbean about changes in the tone and substance of America's global engagement. His reelection in 2012, against many odds, has added to this hope.

The exuberance over Obama's initial election was demonstrated throughout the region (and in most other parts of the world). Actions in Antigua and Barbuda likely topped all others in the region; the government renamed the country's highest geographic point, called Boggy Peak, Mount Obama. This was done in August 2009 to coincide with Obama's August 4 birthday. (Bear, 2009) Nevertheless, it must be noted that the global pursuits of powerful nations are not driven just by the vicissitudes of power related to individual leaders, no matter how significant their election or reelection. The country's national interests and the pursuit of those interests are key considerations. Needless to say,

presidents help to define those interests.

General George Washington, the first president of the United States, addressed the centrality of “the national interest” in his 1778 letter to fellow revolutionary Henry Laurens: “It is a maxim founded on the universal experience of mankind that no nation is to be trusted further than it is bound by its interests, and no prudent statesman or politician will venture to depart from it.” (Morgan, 1980: 16) Washington’s advice still resonates powerfully, and not just for the United States. Indeed, it is a fundamental principle of state action on the international stage. And, irrespective of one’s political estimation of Obama, he clearly is a prudent statesman and politician. As such, he would be mindful of national interests in his foreign and security policy dealings.



Photo 4. Vice President Joe Biden with Caribbean leaders in Trinidad, May 2013.

Thus, the contemporary Caribbean is of importance in the U.S. foreign and security policy calculus not simply because of Obama’s election (and reelection), but because of America’s interests in the region and because Obama understands the need to recalibrate his nation’s engagement to maximize those interests, which revolve around democracy, geoeconomics, geopolitics, and geonarcotics. The four interest areas are linked in many ways, although some are accentuated from time to time, depending on varying circumstances. Indeed, geonarcotics was mostly the *raison d’être* for the visits by the top officials mentioned earlier, although the three other factors—democracy, geoeconomics, and geopolitics—also featured to some degree. Democracy and geoeconomics are beyond the purview of this Occasional Paper; the focus here is on geopolitics and geonarcotics.<sup>4</sup>

Accordingly, we first ask: What are some relevant geopolitical dynamics of U.S. interests and engagement in the contemporary Caribbean?

### ***II. A. Continuity Dynamics: The Landscape of Geopolitics***

The post–Cold War period has witnessed a reduced discussion of the subject of geopolitics in both the scholarly and the policy discourse about Caribbean (and Latin American) security. Essentially, there are two reasons for this. First, although the concept of geopolitics predated the twentieth century, during that century geopolitics became deeply associated with traditional security analysis, which largely was predicated on Realist theory. Second, post–Cold War security realities in the Americas have accentuated nontraditional issues. Nevertheless, the subject of geopolitics is still relevant in the security discourse of the contemporary Caribbean (and other areas), especially when the United States is involved.

My approach to geopolitics views it as the relationship between physical and political geography on the one hand, and national power on the other, with key factors being the possession of strategic materials, ownership of or access to strategic waterways, and the possession or location of military bases and other security installations. Geopolitics provides the context in which national power can be enhanced directly or indirectly, or threats and vulnerabilities may develop or be heightened. Thus, as several scholars have explained, the geopolitical importance of the Caribbean revolves mainly around its natural resources, sea lanes of communication, and security installations. (Ronfeldt, 1983; Serbín, 1990; Griffith, 1993, ch. 7; and Griffith, 2011a) During the second half of the twentieth century these factors featured prominently in Cold War strategic designs.

Even though the United States does not import oil from many Caribbean Basin nations, oil production in Barbados, Cuba, Suriname, Venezuela, and Trinidad and Tobago is of importance to the U.S. and its allies. Cuba's oil operations highlight the geopolitical and geoeconomic foolhardiness of the U.S. policy toward Cuba. One BBC report in November 2011 noted: "A massive \$750m (£473m) Chinese-built oil rig, the *Scarabeo 9*, is due to arrive in Cuba before the end of the year, to begin drilling a series of exploratory wells." (Voss, 2011) Voss also indicated that "A whole range of international oil companies from Spain, Norway, Russia, India, Vietnam, Malaysia, Canada, Angola, Venezuela, and China—but not the United States—are lining up to hire the rig and search for what are believed to be substantial oil deposits." Surely, U.S. oil entrepreneurs and corporate operators in allied sectors cannot be happy with these developments and the official policy that precludes their participation in this economic bounty.<sup>5</sup>



Photo 5. Oil: Liquid Gold

Guyana's off-shore oil deposits currently are being explored by British, Canadian, Spanish, and U.S. companies. Beyond this, while several territories have no energy resources, they provide invaluable refining, storage, and transshipment functions. However, as elsewhere in the world, the geopolitics of energy involves more than oil production, refining, storage, and transshipment. Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), which is produced in Trinidad and Tobago, is also part of the geopolitical equation. In 2012 the U.S. Energy Information Administration (USEIA) reported as follows:

Trinidad and Tobago is the largest supplier of LNG to the United States, and the fifth largest exporter in the world after Qatar, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Australia according to FACTS Global Energy 2010 figures. EIA data shows that Trinidad and Tobago exported 129 Bcf of natural gas to the United States in 2011, about 37 percent of total U.S. LNG net imports, but less than 1 percent of total U.S. natural gas supply. In the last five years, U.S. LNG imports from Trinidad and Tobago have declined by almost one-third, which reflects the general decline in total U.S. LNG imports. (USEIA, 2012: 5)

Trinidad's LNG status was boosted in November 2012 with the announcement by British Petroleum that it had discovered an additional one trillion cubic feet of gas. (LNG World News, 2012) Other mineral resources in the Caribbean include bauxite, nickel, diamonds, and gold. In relation to gold, for example, in March 2013 the Dubai-based Kaloti Group, one of the world's largest precious metals refiners and traders, began construction on Suriname's first gold and precious metals refinery and bullion manufacturing plant. The \$20 million operation, called the Kaloti Suriname Mint House refinery, is part of a joint venture with the government of Surinam and local Suriname gold traders. The initial phase is scheduled to begin physical processing in mid-2014, while the second phase is planned to commence in 2016 and produce about 60 tons of refined gold annually. A few months later, in June 2013, Canadian miner Iamgold Corp. and Suriname's government agreed to expand the country's Rosebel gold mine and extend a partnership to develop it until 2042. The mine is reputed to be one of the Toronto-listed company's biggest, producing 385,000 ounces of gold in 2011. (Trade Arabia, 2013; Kuipers, 2013)

Guyana also has gold. Moreover, it has uranium reserves that a Canadian company, U308 Corp., is currently prospecting. Iran has expressed interest in those reserves for its nuclear pursuits, and this was a subject of discussion between Presidents Bharrat Jagdeo and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad when Jagdeo visited Tehran in January 2010. (Marks, 2010; Chickrie, 2010; U308CORP, 2011) China, too, is interested in Guyana's uranium. Indeed, in January 2013, China took the opportunity of the accreditation of a new ambassador to Guyana to renew conversations with the authorities in Georgetown about a broad range of the country's minerals. (*Caribbean Journal*, 2013) Moreover, in March 2013 the New York-based Uranium Hunter Corporation announced the acquisition of holdings in Guyana. Through a wholly owned subsidiary called Cuyuni Mining, it planned to build a "fully-integrated uranium, gold, precious metals, and gemstone production company that incorporates explora-



Photo 6. LNG tanker with precious cargo.



Photo 7. US Coast Guard protects LNG tanker.

tion, development, acquisition, mining, ore processing and sales.” (*Yahoo! Finance*, 2013)

The Caribbean Basin has two of the world’s major choke points, the Panama Canal and the Caribbean Sea. The former links the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and saves 8,000 miles and up to 30 days of steaming time. The Canal has military and civilian value. While it is less important to the United States than it was several decades ago, other countries remain very dependent on it. Moreover, many of its users, such as Chile, Ecuador, and Japan, are strategically important to the United States.

The Canal has been undergoing a \$5.25 billion expansion project since 2007, and the “new” Canal is expected to be ready for business in April 2015. The expansion will double its existing capacity and facilitate passage of vessels with three times the cargo, significantly impacting global trade into the future. According to one report, “Post-Panamax ships make up 16 percent of the world’s container fleet today, but they carry 45 percent of the cargo. By 2030, these larger ships will carry more than 60 percent of all containers crossing the oceans.” (Booth, 2013) Once ships enter the Atlantic from the Canal they must transit Caribbean passages *en route* to ports of call in the United States, Europe, and Africa. The Florida Strait, Mona Passage, Windward Passage, and Yucatan Channel are the principal sea lanes, but, as Table 1 shows, there are many others.<sup>6</sup>

During much of the twentieth century, until the late 1990s, the United States maintained a considerable military presence in the Caribbean Basin, mainly in Puerto Rico at the Atlantic threshold, in Panama at the southern rim, and in Cuba at Guantánamo on the northern perimeter. In 1990, for instance, there were 4,743 military and civilian personnel in Puerto Rico, 20,709 in Panama, and 3,401 in Cuba. Much has changed since 1990, requiring strategic redesign and force redeployment. For example, the Pentagon relocated the U.S. Southern Command’s headquarters from Panama to Miami, Florida, in September 1997, leaving behind only small components. Puerto Rico, too, is now home to fewer forces.

Between the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 and the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack, the Guantánamo Bay base was considered to have little strategic value, serving es-

**Table 1. Principal Straits and Passages in the Caribbean**

<b>Passage</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Sovereignty on Each Side</b>	<b>Minimum Width (Nautical Mile)</b>
Anegada Passage	Between Anegada & Sombrero	U.K	48
Aruba-Paraguana Passage	Between Aruba & Venezuela	Netherlands/Venezuela	15
Dominica Channel	Between Guadeloupe & Dominica	France/Dominica	16
Dragon’s Mouth	Between Trinidad & Venezuela	Trinidad/Venezuela	6
Florida Strait	Between Key West & Cuba	U.S./Cuba	82
Guadeloupe Passage	Between Guadeloupe & Montserrat	France/U.K.	28
Martinique Passage	Between Dominica & Martinique	France/Dominica	22
Mona Passage	Between the Dominican Republic & Mona Island (Puerto Rico)	U.S./Dom. Republic	33
Serpent’s Mouth	Between Trinidad & Venezuela	Trinidad/Venezuela	8
St. Lucia Channel	Between Martinique & St. Lucia	France/St. Lucia	17
St. Vincent Passage	Between St. Lucia & St. Vincent	St. Lucia/St. Vincent	23
Virgin Passage	Between Culebra (Puerto Rico)	United States	8
Windward Passage	Between Cuba & Haiti	Cuba/Haiti	45
Yucatan Channel	Between Cuba & the Yucatan	Cuba/Mexico	105

*Source:* Jorge Heine and Leslie Manigat, eds., *The Caribbean and World Politics* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1988), 31.

essentially as a political outpost in the Hemisphere’s last remaining communist bastion. But the view by the United States about Guantánamo was altered dramatically with 9/11 and the housing there of individuals accused of terrorism. For a variety of reasons, President Obama has not been able to keep a key promise of his first presidential campaign—to close the Guantánamo Bay prison. Indeed, there were signs in early 2013 that the closure project has been suspended, if not shelved.<sup>7</sup> The 45-square-mile Guantánamo Bay base has been operated by the United States since 1903, without an ending date for the American military presence there, at least as long as it continues to pay the lease.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, closure of the base requires the consent of both parties.

Other Caribbean territories also are essential to the United States in terms of basing operations. These include the Bahamas, with the Atlantic Underwater Testing and Evaluation Center (AUTECH) on Andros Island. AUTECH is used to test new types of weaponry and is reputedly the Navy’s premier East Coast in-water test facility. It is affiliated with the NATO FORACS (Naval Forces Sensor and Weapon Accuracy Check Site) program and the eight participating NATO member nations: Canada, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Italy, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Albeit small, there is an air operation at Coolidge in Antigua and Barbuda that dates to World War II, and Aruba and Curaçao are among the Forward Operating Locations maintained as part of U.S. counternarcotics efforts.

Clearly, geopolitical factors long have been central to U.S. thinking about and engagement in the Caribbean. Such factors predated the invasion of Grenada, and some of them—and their Cold



Photo 8. Ships moving through the Panama Canal from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans.

War global connections beyond the Caribbean—were uppermost in the minds of U.S. policymakers in the early 1990s. Indeed, as respected scholar and former policy wonk Robert Pastor (1990: 201) explained: “The year 1983 began as a war of words and ended as a war. President Reagan’s rhetorical assaults on Grenada at the beginning of the year, however, had less to do with Grenada than it had to do with Central America. To mobilize domestic support for his increased aid requests for Central America, Reagan dramatically described the Soviet-Cuban attempt to take over the Caribbean, and he used Grenada as proof of the malign intentions of the Soviet Union.”

However, over the last decade or so, the Caribbean’s geopolitical landscape has developed elements of change because of the interests and pursuits of other actors, which have begun to influence the tactical pursuits, if not also the strategic interests, of the United States in the region. Aside from actions by the European Union (Mountoute, 2011), the notable actors include Brazil, China, India, and Russia, four members of the BRICS (made up of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), and Iran and Venezuela, which, though not in the BRICS group, have suggested through their engagement over the last decade that they aspire to be global players. These actors compete with the United States at various levels. Some, notably Iran and Venezuela, are among its most vitriolic contemporary antagonists. We cannot examine here all the dynamics involved, but it is useful to briefly discuss two actors

with the most aggressive engagement postures: the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Venezuela.

The PRC has increased its geopolitical competition with Taiwan in the Caribbean over the years. This has resulted in several nations changing allegiances over time, as attractive, albeit often small, aid, trade, and other offers were made by the competing parties. As of June 2013, the diplomatic line-up was as follows:

- PRC: Antigua and Barbuda; Bahamas (switched from Taiwan in 1997); Barbados; Cuba; Dominica (switched in 2004); Grenada (switched in 2005); Guyana; Jamaica (switched in 1972); Suriname; and Trinidad and Tobago.
- Taiwan: Belize; Dominican Republic; Haiti; St. Kitts and Nevis; St. Lucia (switched from PRC in 2007); and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

St. Lucia is one of the nations that most recently reviewed its China Policy. To honor an elections campaign promise, Prime Minister Kenny Anthony commissioned a review of his country's foreign policy following his party's victory in November 2011; the country's China Policy was a central aspect of the review. The project was led by former Prime Minister and distinguished political scientist Vaughan Lewis, now Special Adviser in the Ministry of External Relations, International Trade, and Civil Aviation.<sup>9</sup>

The report was submitted to the Cabinet in August 2012. (*Caribbean Journal*, 2012a) Prime Minister Anthony announced the China Policy decision in a National Address the following month. Among other things, he noted: "We also recognize the present circumstances in which we have been placed over these last many years, and the necessity to move, not like a Jack-in-the-Box, jumping from one country to another every few years, but to follow the evolution of relations between China and Taiwan, and then to act accordingly." (Anthony, 2012) Next came the key sentence: "Against this background, the Government of Saint Lucia has decided to maintain diplomatic relations with Taiwan and to explore new avenues for mutual support and bilateral cooperation in the interest of both sides." (Anthony, 2012)

Needless to say, St. Lucia is not the only nation facing these practical geopolitical realities in relation to "the Two Chinas." Moreover, as might be expected, the PRC's pursuits and impact have extended beyond the diplomatic arena. (Ellis 2011, 2012; Jessop, 2011; Archibold, 2012; and *The Economist*, 2012) Evan Ellis is one of the scholars who have probed some of those pursuits in the areas of military activities, finance and investment, organized crime, telecommunications, and political and cultural relations. He observed, for instance, that "the first deployment of Chinese military forces into Latin America was the sending of a detachment of Popular Liberation Army (PLA) security police to Haiti in September 2004." (Ellis, 2011: 2) Also, since that deployment the force presence has been sustained, facilitated by troop rotations.

Indeed, Ellis explained that several PLA and other officials were killed in Haiti's devastating January 2010 earthquake, becoming the first PRC military ranks to die officially in Latin American/Caribbean territory in modern times. Also, in September 2011 the Caribbean was chosen to be the

destination of the PRC's first-ever military hospital ship visit to the Western Hemisphere. Ellis (2011: 2) noted: "The first and only such ship built by the PRC, given the name *Peace Ark*, was scheduled to make port calls in Jamaica, Cuba, and Trinidad, and Costa Rica, as part of the Harmonious Mission 2011."

It is reasonable to expect that the United States would have anxieties over this deep engagement, although there has been no official voicing of such. Sir Ronald Sanders, a former Caribbean diplomat and keen observer of the region's international affairs, is perceptive, if hyperbolic: "They are buying loyalty and taking up the vacuum left by the United States, Canada, and other countries, particularly in infrastructure improvements. . . . If China continues to invest the way it is doing in the Caribbean, the U.S. is almost making itself irrelevant to the region." (Archibold, 2012). One doubts the United States will ever become or allow itself to become irrelevant in the Caribbean. However, the chords of concern that are struck by Sanders are not to be underestimated.

Given all this, it is reasonable to ask: does the PRC have a strategic design in mind and, if so, what is it? Close China observers generally answer the first question affirmatively, and one such observer (Ellis, 2011: 9-10) offers a plausible three-point answer regarding the second question:

First, by capturing the attention of Caribbean governments, and providing an alternative source of investment and trade, Chinese engagement undercuts the ability of the U.S. to advance its own agenda in the region, including issues such as human rights, democratization, respect for law, and fiscal accountability. While the PRC may not promote an anti-U.S. agenda in the region, it does serve as an enabler for vulnerable states in the region to follow the alternative path advocated in the region by states such as Venezuela and Cuba.

Second, over the longer term, PRC activities in the Caribbean may interact with other regional dynamics to give rise to new security challenges. The importation of Chinese laborers for work projects, logistics hubs which create opportunities for the distribution of Chinese contraband goods, and the use of the region as a tax shelter by Chinese investors, for example, each nurtures a small but dangerous presence by Chinese organized crime groups in the region. As such groups potentially grow in strength and diversify into other activities; they may interact in difficult to predict ways with other transnational criminal entities currently engaged in operations in the Caribbean, such as Mexico- and Colombia-based narco trafficking organizations, as well as local Caribbean gangs.

Finally, the PRC presence in the Caribbean has the potential to take on a much more menacing character should Sino-U.S. relations degenerate into a hostile geopolitical competition. Under such undesirable circumstances, the presence of substantial Chinese naval facilities and telecommunications infrastructure (albeit commercial), and thousands of Chinese personnel, many less than 100 nautical miles from U.S. shores, and the associated potential to observe or disrupt key maritime routes and nearby U.S. facilities would become a major liability for military planners.

China's Caribbean engagement reached new heights with the June 1-2, 2013, state visit to Trinidad and Tobago of President Xi Jinping, just days following the departure of U.S. Vice President Biden. Not only was it his first time visiting the Caribbean, but Port-of-Spain was the first leg of a four-nation tour, the other countries being Mexico, Costa Rica, and the United States. Quite interestingly also, President Xi did not visit Cuba, which suggests a diminution of ideology and an accentuation of pragmatism.<sup>10</sup> As had been the case with the Biden visit, Xi's visit had both multilateral and bilateral elements. In relation to the former, six other Caribbean leaders converged on Trinidad and Tobago for the meeting, among them Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller of Jamaica, Prime Minister Dr. Keith Mitchell of Grenada, and President Donald Ramotar of Guyana.

As was noted earlier, several Caribbean nations are aligned diplomatically with Taiwan; they were not invited to the historic visit, a major outcome of which was agreement to provide 10 Caribbean countries with concessionary financing amounting to some \$3 billion. At the bilateral level, President Xi held talks with several leaders. In relation to Trinidad and Tobago, he announced the award of a \$250 million loan to build a children's hospital and that he and Prime Minister Persad-Bissessar had signed a wide-ranging memorandum of understanding. Later, the Trinidad leader also announced plans to visit China in November 2013, open an embassy there, and co-host an annual Caribbean Music Festival in Beijing, among other things. (Fraser, 2013; Ramdass, 2013)

For Venezuela, officially the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela since the 1999 name change proposed by the late president Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías, oil has been the instrument used to pursue the national interest desire to expand its zone of influence. This has been part of its Bolivarian strategy, central to which is ALBA—*Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América* (The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America, also called the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas)—of which Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivia, Cuba, Dominica, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines are members, along with Venezuela.

With regard to the Caribbean (and Central America), the main strategy device has been PetroCaribe, which was established in 2005 and finances a portion of the value of imports of Venezuelan crude oil on a sliding scale: above \$30 per barrel, 25 percent; above



Photo 9. President Xi getting full military reception on arrival in Trinidad in June 2013.

\$40, 30 percent; above 50, 40 percent; and above \$100, 50 percent. Participating nations pay the balance over 25 years at 2 percent interest, which reduces to 1 percent at prices above \$40 per barrel along with a two-year repayment grace period. (Girvan, 2011: 122) As of June 2013 the following 17 countries were PetroCaribe participants: Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Suriname, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. They receive about 145,000 barrels daily, down from the 300,000 barrels first envisaged, 95,000 barrels of which go to Cuba alone.

Many Caribbean countries benefit from other Venezuelan largesse as part of what might be called Chávez's Bolivarian Agenda, part of which was to provide a countervailing power to the hegemony of the United States. Ronald Sanders (2013) explained: "The attendant ALBA Caribe Fund (ACF) and ALBA Food Fund (AFF)—both financed almost entirely by Venezuela—are also significant contributors to the welfare of the beneficiary states. In the past six years up to 2012, the ACF had invested \$178.8 million on 88 projects ranging from education to water. In 9 countries, the AFF had invested in 12 projects worth \$24 million."

In 2012 President Chávez's ill health and the run-up to the October 7, 2012, elections caused justifiable anxiety within the Caribbean. The elections-related anxiety was prompted by the strengthening of the political opposition and the fact that opponent Enrique Capriles had vowed to end PetroCaribe were he elected. Venezuela's own economic deprivation, crime, and other problems make it understandable that Chávez opponents would want to end the petro largesse, estimated to cost Venezuela \$12 billion since its establishment in 2005. (Ellis, 2013 regarding the estimate.)

The economic ramifications are considerable. For example, Wesley Hughes, then Jamaica's Financial Secretary,<sup>11</sup> told the August 24, 2012, *Gleaner's* Forum that his government had estimated that the country would suffer a \$600 million annual impact on its balance of payments if Venezuela discontinued its deferred financing under the PetroCaribe Energy Cooperation agreement. (Thompson, 2012) Thus, Caribbean leaders must certainly have been relieved at Chávez's reelection, despite the smaller majority than in the previous election.<sup>12</sup>

One post-election editorial of Jamaica's influential *Gleaner* newspaper observed: "Whatever else might have been the relevance of Venezuela's presidential election to Jamaica, most immediate concern for Kingston was the future of the PetroCaribe energy agreement. It is little wonder, therefore, that our government—particularly the energy minister, Mr Phillip Paulwell—has hardly masked its glee at President Hugo Chávez's retention of power and, in all likelihood, the survival of the PetroCaribe accord." (*Jamaica Gleaner*, 2012). The editorial captured the essence of the nervousness: "Mr. Chávez's rival, Mr. Henrique Capriles, had vowed to abandon the program if he won Sunday's poll, saying the cash foregone under the scheme would have been better used in developing Venezuela's economy, rather than—as he felt it was—frittered away in Latin America and the Caribbean. That would have been bad news for Jamaica" (*Jamaica Gleaner*, 2012). Of course, it would have been bad for many other nations also.

The future of the largesse began to be placed in doubt, however; while there was victory on the electoral front, the situation grew increasingly bleak on the medical front. The worst fears of Caribbean leaders, not to mention Chávez supporters in Venezuela and elsewhere, came to pass on March 5, 2013, when the 58-year-old Chávez succumbed to the cancer he had been battling. (See Neuman 2013; Whitefield and Charles, 2013; and Ransome, 2013) The depth of gratitude for the largesse and leadership of the charismatic but controversial Chávez was reflected not only in the narratives of the condolence messages from political figures throughout the Caribbean (and around the world), but also in the number of heads of state and government from the region who attended the funeral on March 9, 2013, in Caracas. In attendance were the leaders of Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Cuba, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. Belize was represented by Deputy Prime Minister Gaspar Vega.<sup>13</sup>

For this writer, pursuit of the Bolivarian Agenda has long had major implications for the Caribbean countries involved. One is the likelihood that they might become collateral victims of the geopolitical tussle between middle-power Venezuela under Chávez and hyper-power United States. Perhaps this might attenuate with the death of Chávez. Undoubtedly, though, there has been a second implication: the significant vulnerability that Caribbean rulers have created for their nations by accepting Venezuelan generosity, especially the PetroCaribe lifeline.<sup>14</sup> Arguably, several countries were caught between an economic rock and a hard place, and they took some calculated risks, not having too many credible options given the high price of oil and the harsh economic realities they faced—and still do face.

Whatever the calculus or circumstance, increased vulnerability has been an unintended—and certainly undesired—consequence, whether or not leaders care to acknowledge it. The vulnerability has the potential for domestic political consequences in that governments may lose the confidence of their citizens if there is negative unintended economic fallout from PetroCaribe that increases their socioeconomic burdens and lead them to jettison incumbents from power. Thus, vulnerability to Venezuelan aid likely will persist for a while, even if PetroCaribe survives the next three to five years.

Hugo Chávez pursued bold geopolitical agendas that extended beyond the Caribbean. Therefore, his death has precipitated not just anxieties about the long-term survivability of PetroCaribe, but also of ALBA. Moreover, beyond those multilateral pursuits,



Photo 10. Nicholas Maduro at his March 9, 2013, swearing in as acting president.

there are “known unknowns” in relation to key bilateral relationships, especially those with Iran, Russia, Cuba, and the United States. Not to be forgotten is the territorial dispute with Guyana. There have been far fewer tensions between the two nations over recent decades compared to the 1970s and 1980s, but Venezuela has not renounced its claim to five-eighths of Guyana’s 83,000 square miles—the entire Essequibo region of Guyana—which it identifies on internal maps as *la Zona en reclamación*.<sup>15</sup>

As a military officer, Chávez once was part of a group tasked with planning a military campaign against Guyana over the disputed territory. As president, he initially was bellicose in his posture toward South America’s only English-speaking republic, but he moderated over time, much to the chagrin of some of his political rivals. One fairly recent episode shows this. On September 6, 2011, Guyana filed with the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, for an extended continental shelf of 150 nautical miles—a right that it has. Several Venezuelan nationalists argued that such a pursuit compromised Venezuela’s claim against Guyana and pressed for a “tough response” by Chávez, who ignored their demands. (Camacho, 2011; and Univision Noticias.com, 2011) Thus, over time in his dealings with Guyana, Chávez practiced more pragmatism and less revanchism. Whether the post-Chávez era witnesses a similar approach is one of the “known unknowns.”<sup>16</sup>

Moving beyond the landscape of geopolitics, it remains for us to ask: What are some relevant observations we might offer about U.S. interests and engagement in the geonarcotics arena?

## **II. B. *Change Dynamics: The Landscape of Geonarcotics***

In many respects, the matter of geonarcotics has rivaled, if not surpassed, that of geopolitics in the Caribbean since the invasion of Grenada. Both geopolitics and geonarcotics are connected to the broader matter of security; the former has been associated with the traditional Realist conceptual paradigm, and the latter with other propositions. As such, a word about security is necessary.

A little over two decades ago, respected political scientist Barry Buzan noted the following in his influential *People, States, and Fear*: “It is almost no longer controversial to say that traditional conceptions of security were (and in many minds still are) too narrowly founded.” (Buzan, 1991: 14) That statement still holds, and it applies across geographic spectrums. The dominant twentieth century conception of security, founded on Realist propositions about the state as the central actor in an anarchic world, defense against external threats coming from other states, and the military as the instrument to safeguard sovereignty, has been largely debunked. Generally, these scholars do not completely repudiate thinking about the state, external threats, and the military’s role, but they broaden the conceptual map to recognize contemporary realities where states face serious threats from non-state actors, and where traditional military assets generally are ill-suited as protective instruments.

Even before the end of the Cold War, which precipitated the theoretical reevaluation, Realism did not circumscribe the thinking about security in the Caribbean, as Young and Phillips, 1986, and Bryan, Greene, and Shaw, 1990, show. For my part, I never was wedded to Realism, having long

viewed security as “protection and preservation of a people’s freedom from external military attack and coercion, from internal subversion, and from the erosion of cherished political, economic, and social values.” (Griffith, 1991: 11) Following this approach, I have viewed security as multidimensional, with attention needing to be placed on protection of both the national interests of the state and the safekeeping of its individual and corporate citizens. Thus, both traditional and nontraditional matters become relevant.<sup>17</sup>

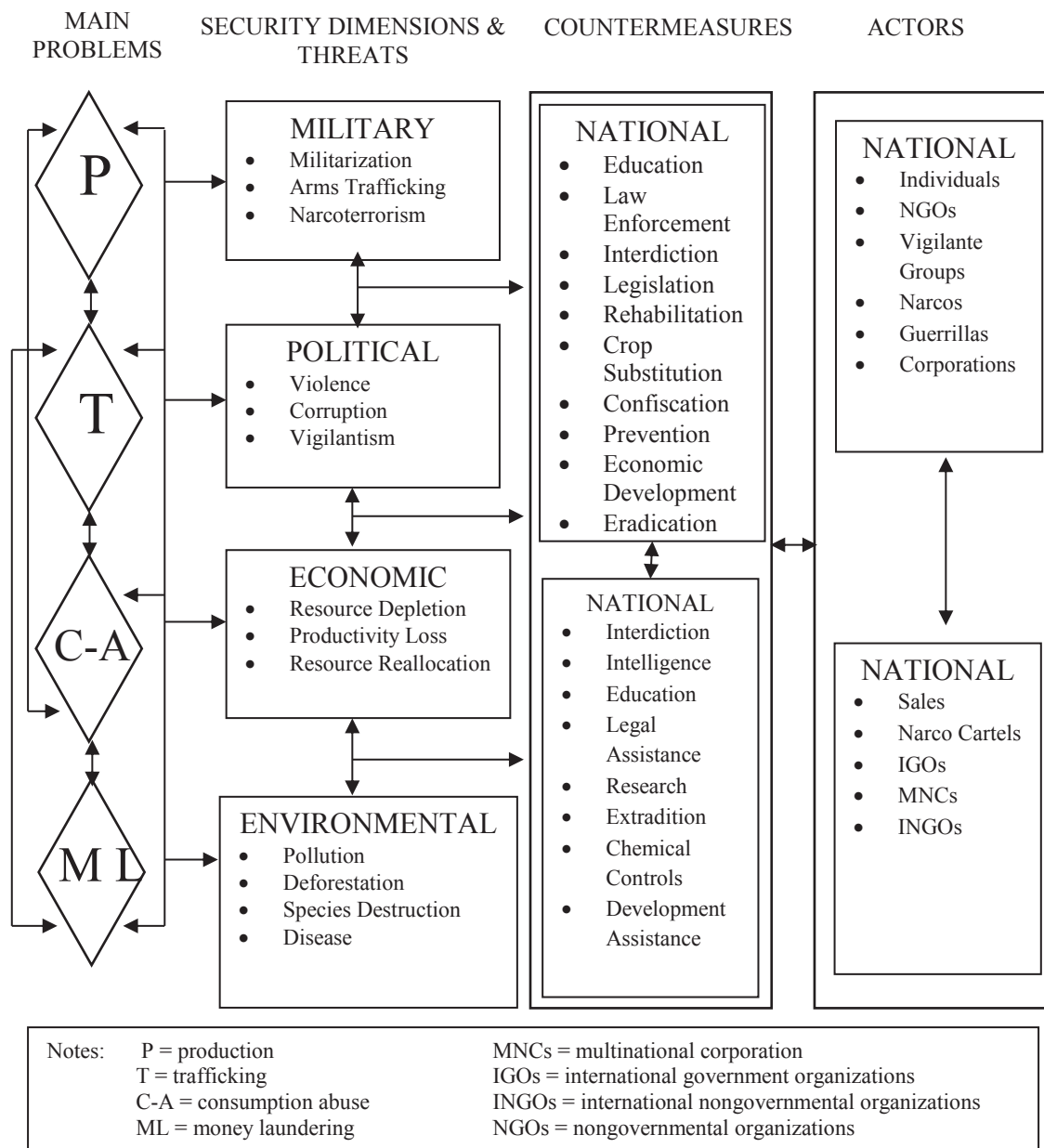
This is the context in which the concept of geonarcotics was originated by this writer in the early 1990s in an article in *International Journal*, and later applied empirically in a study of the Caribbean in a book entitled *Drugs and Security in the Caribbean: Sovereignty under Siege*. (Griffith, 1993-94; and Griffith, 1997) As I explained in the article, the framework was proposed as a heuristic device that can be applied in studying the drug phenomenon in different national or regional contexts. Thus, it is noteworthy that although the book offered an empirical application to the Caribbean, other scholars have found the concept useful in analyzing drugs in other areas, or as a point of departure for their own conceptual endeavors.<sup>18</sup>

The framework, which is captured in Figure I, posits the dynamic interaction of four factors: narcotics, geography, power, and politics; that the narcotics phenomenon is multidimensional, with four main problem areas (drug production, consumption-abuse, trafficking, and money laundering); that these problem areas give rise to actual and potential threats to the security of states; and that drug operations and the activities they spawn precipitate both conflict and cooperation among various state and non-state actors. Crucially, too, my approach does not view the “war on drugs” purely as a military matter.

Geography is a factor in this schema because certain physical, social, and political geography features of some countries facilitate drug operations. Power involves the ability of individuals and groups to secure compliant action. This power is both state and non-state in origin, and in some cases non-state power holders command relatively more power than state power holders. Politics entails the ability of power brokers to determine who gets what, how, and when through the allocation of resources. Since power in this milieu is not only state power, resource allocation is correspondingly not exclusively a function of state power holders. Moreover, often politics becomes perverted, and more perverted in situations where there were preexisting conditions that facilitated such. Indeed, the geonarcotics volcano involving Jamaica and the United States over Shower posse leader Christopher “Dudus” Coke that erupted in May 2010, and still has ashes smoldering on the island, highlights some of the political perversions and dangers to public security that are involved.<sup>19</sup>

Reflecting the contemporary preeminence of geonarcotics interests, the CBSI, which President Obama had promised in his April 2009 visit to Trinidad and Tobago, topped the agenda of the discussions by Secretaries Gates, Clinton, and Napolitano, and crime and arms trafficking have been front and center in the talks with Attorney General Holder. CBSI has three key objectives: to substantively reduce drug trafficking, to increase public safety and security, and to promote social justice. These

**Figure 1. Geonarcotics: A Framework**



Source: Ivelaw Lloyd Griffith, "From Cold-War Geopolitics to Post-Cold War Geonarcotics," *International Journal*, vol. 49 (Winter 1993-94): 32.

are laudable—and necessary—goals. Still, we should temper expectations about how much CBSI can help reduce drug and arms trafficking and ameliorate Caribbean criminality given the severity of the situation and because of what CBSI entails. (U.S. Department of State, 2009)

In December 2009, the Committee on Foreign Relations of the U.S. House of Representatives held hearings on the Caribbean security situation and the prospects of CBSI making a difference to which they invited this writer to provide expert testimony. As I told Congress, the \$37 million initial appropriation—down from the administration’s \$45 million request—was insufficient. Yes, the administration envisaged increasing the second-year request to \$79 million. However, considering the scope of the challenges, the overall funding design sets the stage for low-investment–low-results outcomes. Especially because of the small appropriation, I emphasized minimizing the amount of money spent on administrative overhead and having most of the funds channeled into programs *in the region*. Furthermore, I cautioned against diverting funds from valuable existing programs, such as OPBAT (Operation Bahamas and Turks and Caicos) and Tradewinds, to CBSI projects. I suggested that digging holes to fill holes is unproductive. (Griffith, 2009)

Crime and the drugs-crime nexus are major drivers of U.S. reengagement, especially since the region has one of the world’s highest per capita murder rates. It was explained elsewhere (Griffith, 2011b: 6-12) that the crime crucible is dramatized by the high—and in many cases, increasing—murder rates. The focus on murders does not mean that assault, rape, domestic violence, praedial larceny, and other crimes are unimportant, or that they have not increased in some places. In fact, over the past



Photo 11. Major cocaine bust.

**Table 2: Reported Murders in the Caribbean, 2006–2010**

	2006	%	2007	%	2008	%	2009	%	2010	Total
Country	N	Change	N	Change	N	Change	N	Change	N	N
Antigua & Barbuda	11	54.55	17	-5.88	16	18.75	19	-63.16	7	70
Bahamas	62	25.81	78	-7.69	72	19.44	86	9.30	94	392
Barbados	35	-28.57	25	-8.00	23	-17.39	19	63.16	31	133
Belize	92	3.26	95	8.42	103	-5.83	97	36.08	132	519
Dominica	5	40.00	7	0.00	7	85.71	13	7.69	14	46
Dominican Republic	2107	-0.71	2091	24.62	2607	.069	2625	0.50	2638	12069
Guyana	163	-29.45	115	37.39	158	-25.95	117	17.95	138	691
Jamaica	1340	18.13	1583	2.21	1618	3.83	1680	-15.00	1428	7649
Puerto Rico	738	-1.08	730	11.64	815	9.69	894	6.82	955	4132
Trinidad & Tobago	371	5.66	392	38.78	544	-6.43	509	-5.11	483	2299
St. Kitts and Nevis	17	-5.88	16	43.75	23	17.39	27	-25.93	20	103
St. Lucia	44	-18.18	36	8.33	39	0.00	39	23.08	48	206
St. Vincent & the Grenadines	13	176.92	36	-55.56	16	25.00	20	25.00	25	110
US Virgin Islands	42	4.76	44	4.55	46	21.74	56	17.86	66	254

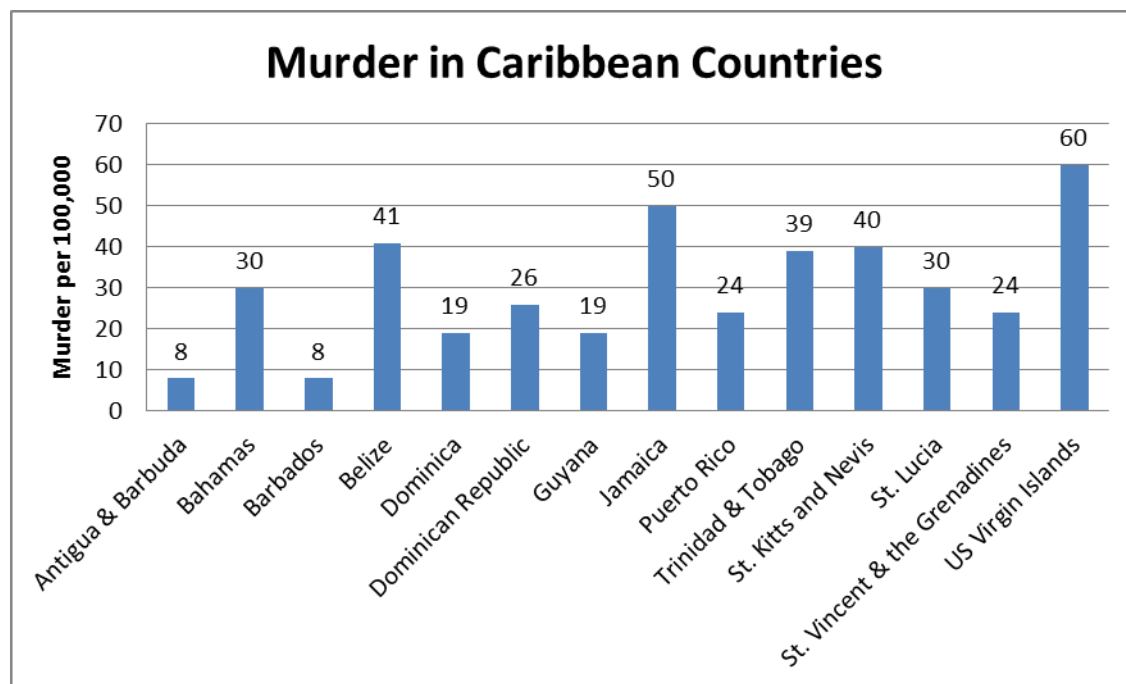
Sources: Figures for Puerto Rico are from <http://www.tenenciaspr.com/violencia.html>; others are from the OAS Department of Public Security, available at <http://www.oas.org/dsp/Observatorio/database/countries.aspx?lang=en>, except for the figures for 2010 for Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Suriname, which are from the offices of the Commissioners of Police for the respective countries.

few years there has been troubling growth in domestic violence in Guyana and Puerto Rico, among other places.

Murders command attention by scholars, policymakers, security officials, and the media because they constitute the ultimate crime, with human finality and powerful economic, social, and other consequences. They also provide indicators about anomie within Caribbean societies and some troubling civilizational dynamics that are occurring. Some of the dynamics relate not just to the crimes that are perpetrated but also to the state and societal responses to them: among other things, police impunity in some places, capital punishment in others, and a clamor for capital punishment in some jurisdictions where it does not exist or is not implemented.

Importantly, as the *Caribbean Human Development Report 2012* rightly observes, the murders are due to the combined effects of several factors, notably low economic growth and poverty, low crime resolution rates, drug trafficking, and the availability of weapons. Although Table 2 does not report on all Caribbean countries, it provides a fairly comprehensive portrait of the startling regional

**Figure 2. Murder per 100,000 Population in the Caribbean in 2010**



crime reality. To highlight two examples, Trinidad and Tobago, which, as noted earlier, supplies the United States with a significant amount of its LNG, had 1,446 murders during the three years 2007 to 2009, with 509 in 2009 alone. Jamaica, important to the United States because of bauxite and drugs, among other things, had 4,881 reported murders during that same period, with 1,680 murders during 2009 alone, the highest ever in any single year.

Table 2 indicates that the reported murders for the five years 2006–2010 total 28,673. That number was more than half of the entire population of the Eastern Caribbean nation of St. Kitts and Nevis, and some 12 times the size of the town of Oistins in Barbados. These are startling realities. Startling, too, is the per capita portrait shown in Figure 2. The U.S. Virgin Islands, Jamaica, Belize, and St. Kitts and Nevis lead. Each had more than 40 murders per 100,000-population during 2010. They are followed by Trinidad and Tobago, Bahamas, and St. Lucia, with between 30 and 39 murders per 100,000 persons. The situation in Belize also has been worsening since 2002. For instance, the reported murders increased from 123 in 2011 to 146 in 2012, amounting to 44 murders per 100,000 persons for 2012. (López, 2013: 1)

Other dangerous dynamics have been developing in Belize. For instance, one analyst (López, 2013:1) reported that in September 2012, “the country’s name surfaced when Rafiq Mohammad Labboun Allboun, allegedly a Lebanese terrorist associated with Hezbollah, was arrested in Mexico. He held a Belizean passport, driver’s license, and birth certificate in the name of a person who [had] died

in 1976. All the documents were issued by Belizean authorities. The case cast a shadow of corruption over the country. It also led to the discovery that Belize had issued passports to two other Lebanese nationals linked to Hezbollah, as well as illicit activities such as drug and arms trafficking and migrant smuggling.”

Thankfully, Jamaica, the Bahamas, St. Lucia, Jamaica, and Barbados had fewer reported murders in 2012 than during the previous year. In Barbados, murders fell from 27 in 2011 to 21 in 2012, and in St. Lucia they declined from 54 in 2011 to 44 in 2012. Although the reported murders in Trinidad and Tobago increased over the same period, officials there take some (small) comfort in the fact that 2012 was the second straight year that the number of murders dropped below 400: from 473 in 2010 to 352 in 2011, although rebounding to 378 in 2012. (Best, 2013; and Clarke, 2013) Jamaica had the most notable reductions. Commissioner Owen Ellington reported:

We will complete the year 2012 with an overall 7% decline in major crimes. Murders are down by 4.7%; shootings down by 9%; sexual assaults down by 7%; robberies down by 13%; and break-ins are down by 11%. The result for 2012 will therefore reflect three consecutive years of decline in the major crimes category. Fatal shootings by the police are also down over last year’s figure and have fallen to the lowest level in seven years. Traffic accidents have also declined, with road fatalities reduced by 50 in 2012, making this the sharpest reduction in many years and the lowest in road fatalities since 1973. While the murder figure remains high, it is noteworthy that the 2012 figures are the lowest in nine years. (Jamaica Constabulary Force, 2013)<sup>20</sup>

Notwithstanding this positive trend in Jamaica and a few other countries, there still is justifiable cause for concern throughout the region, not just about the numbers, but also about the multiple implications involved. As an example, on July 17, 2012, during Jamaica’s 2012 Parliamentary Budget Debate, National Security Minister Peter Bunting made the following sobering remark: “I would like to ask this Honorable House to pause for a moment to soberly reflect upon the loss of the 16,537 Jamaicans who have been murdered in this country since the beginning of the year 2000.” (Bunting, 2012: 2). The minister also observed, “This represents an enormous cost to the society in terms of foregone economic development as well as the fear, grief, pain and misery inflicted on victims, their families and communities. Whilst we celebrate many accomplishments of our 50 years of independence, our performance with regard to the safety and security of our citizens leaves a great deal to be desired.” (Bunting, 2012: 2)

While the number of murders and the anniversary milestones are different for all other Caribbean nations except Trinidad and Tobago, which also celebrated its 50th year of independence from Britain in 2012, Bunting’s remarks are relevant to all Anglophone and Hispanic Caribbean nations. But, the concern should extend beyond the high murder rate, to the heinous nature of some crimes. The following six examples will suffice:

- The attempted assassination of a jurist in St. Lucia is one example. The intended victim was

Jamaican-born Magistrate Ann Marie Smith, known to be tough on drug dealers. The incident occurred in the capital, Castries, in broad daylight on April 8, 2010, as Smith was heading to work with her four-year-old daughter. Two masked gunmen men emerged from the bushes near her house and opened fire. Luckily the gunmen were inept; neither Smith nor her daughter was injured. (Caribbean360, 2010) The following year Smith left St. Lucia and now is chief magistrate in Belize.

- The Dominican Republic offers the second example. Puerto Rico-born José Figueroa-Agosto was arrested there in August 2010. Known as “Junior Capsula” and “Angel Rosa,” Figueroa-Agosto was called the Pablo Escobar of the Caribbean. His arrest led to the discovery of an interesting case of criminal product diversification: Figueroa-Agosto was also a popular porn star. (Fieser, 2010)
- In Trinidad and Tobago, a mother and her sons—Vonetta Haynes-Reyes, 31; Malik, 8; and Maka-si, 4—were massacred in their home in July 2011. Their mutilated bodies were discovered by a friend of the mother. The woman was stabbed repeatedly in the neck, and the children were found bound and gagged with their throats slit. The family’s next door neighbor was charged with the murders. (Trinidad Guardian 2012)
- Another example comes from Jamaica. In September 2012 armed gunmen invaded a home in the early morning, extracted five women, one as young as eight years old, took them to a parking lot, and brutally raped them all. (Jamaica Star Online, 2012).
- Also outrageous was the case in January 2013, also in Jamaica, where two gunmen invaded the May Pen Hospital in Clarendon shortly after 11:00 pm, tied up a security guard, and murdered a patient asleep in his bed with four gunshots to his head and eyes. The murdered individual had been hospitalized after being shot while returning from the Milk River Police Station. He was required to report as a condition of bail in a case where he had been charged for murder and kidnapping. (Tobias, 2013) This case has all the makings of a reprisal killing.
- Children also are victims of heinous crimes. In one despicable case in May 2013, rage spawned by jealousy led to the murder of a four-year-old girl in Trelawny, Jamaica. The child’s decapitated body was retrieved from a 10-foot deep sinkhole. The child had been murdered several days earlier by a woman who was her father’s ex-lover. The father, who had started the new relationship while still living with the accused, had finally left her after 16 years and started a new family. The woman confessed to the killing and later led investigators to the sinkhole.<sup>21</sup> (Frater, 2013)

Sometimes the perpetrators of vicious crime are people who pledge to protect society from the criminals, as the following Jamaican example shows. In September 2012 a police corporal shot—at point blank range and in the head—and killed a 27-year-old woman who was eight months pregnant. Why? Because she cursed at him. He also shot one sister who tried to help her, and then turned the gun on still another sister. Luckily, the gun did not fire. (*Jamaica Observer*, 2012) An earlier incidence in Guyana is an egregious example of the desperation to solve a crime leading to criminality



Photo 12. Military patrol in a Caribbean capital as part of the fight against drugs and crime.

by the authorities. In October 2009 14-year-old Twyon Thomas was tortured at a police station over four days. The police suspected he had been involved in the murder of a local politician, and they were determined to secure a confession so as to be able to “close the case.” The interrogation involved covering the teenager’s head with a T-shirt, tying his hands with wire, and then dousing his genitals

with mentholated spirits and setting him alight.

The two policemen involved were charged, but the cases against them were dismissed after neither Thomas nor his mother appeared for the trial, allegedly having been paid off by the attorneys for the policemen. Still, the Guyana Police Force was sued, and successfully so. In June 2011, Justice Roxanne George ordered a total payment of G\$6.5 million (US \$32,386)—about half for torture and degrading treatment, noting: “The torture and cruel and inhuman treatment meted out to Thomas has demonstrated and established an absolute and flagrant disregard for his constitutional rights.”

The judge also declared unlawful the teenager’s detention and denial of a hospital visit despite his injuries and the intervention of his mother and attorney. “How it was that the police hoped to keep such a horrendous occurrence under wraps was a mystery,” Justice George said. She also noted: “By failing to provide him with any medical examination for over a day after he was burned, the unprofessional medical attention he received, and by failing to permit him to go to hospital for further medical attention for another two days, they displayed a callous indifference, lack of care, and an absence of concern for Thomas as a detainee and as a child.” (Chabrol, 2011) At one point the country’s attorney general threatened to appeal the decision. However, the local and international outrage voiced over the incident caused the government to rethink, and after three years it finally honored the court’s decision and made the settlement of G\$6.5 million (US \$32,386) in December 2012. (*Stabroek News* 2013)

Another remarkable case in Guyana, which still was developing in mid-2013, involves sol-

diers from the Guyana Defense Force (GDF). There had been repeated and credible allegations about GDF soldiers attacking and robbing gold miners, especially in the Cuyuni gold-bearing, north-west part of the country. The impunity is such that in some cases the soldiers were in uniform when they attacked the miners, some of whom were Guyanese and others Brazilians. Earlier, policemen also were reported to have conducted similar acts. (Kaiteur News Online, 2013)

The GDF high command launched a joint inquiry with the police in January 2013. They issued a statement asking the aggrieved miners to cooperate fully with the probe, noting: “The GDF wishes to categorically state that any GDF ranks found culpable of this dastardly act will face the full brunt of Court Martial Proceedings or the Civil Law. The army will apply the maximum penalty for anyone found

guilty, and any suggestion of recrimination by any serving rank must also be reported and those involved will also face the full brunt of the law.” (Demerara Waves, 2013a) The inquiry led to the arrest of one lieutenant and five other soldiers on a variety of charges. Court Martial proceedings were being arranged in early February 2013. (Demerara Waves 2013b)

Sometimes, crime prompts citizens to oust political rulers who fail on the public security front, among other areas. Such was the case with elections in the following countries: Trinidad and Tobago in May 2010; St. Lucia in November 2011; Jamaica in December 2011; and the Bahamas in May

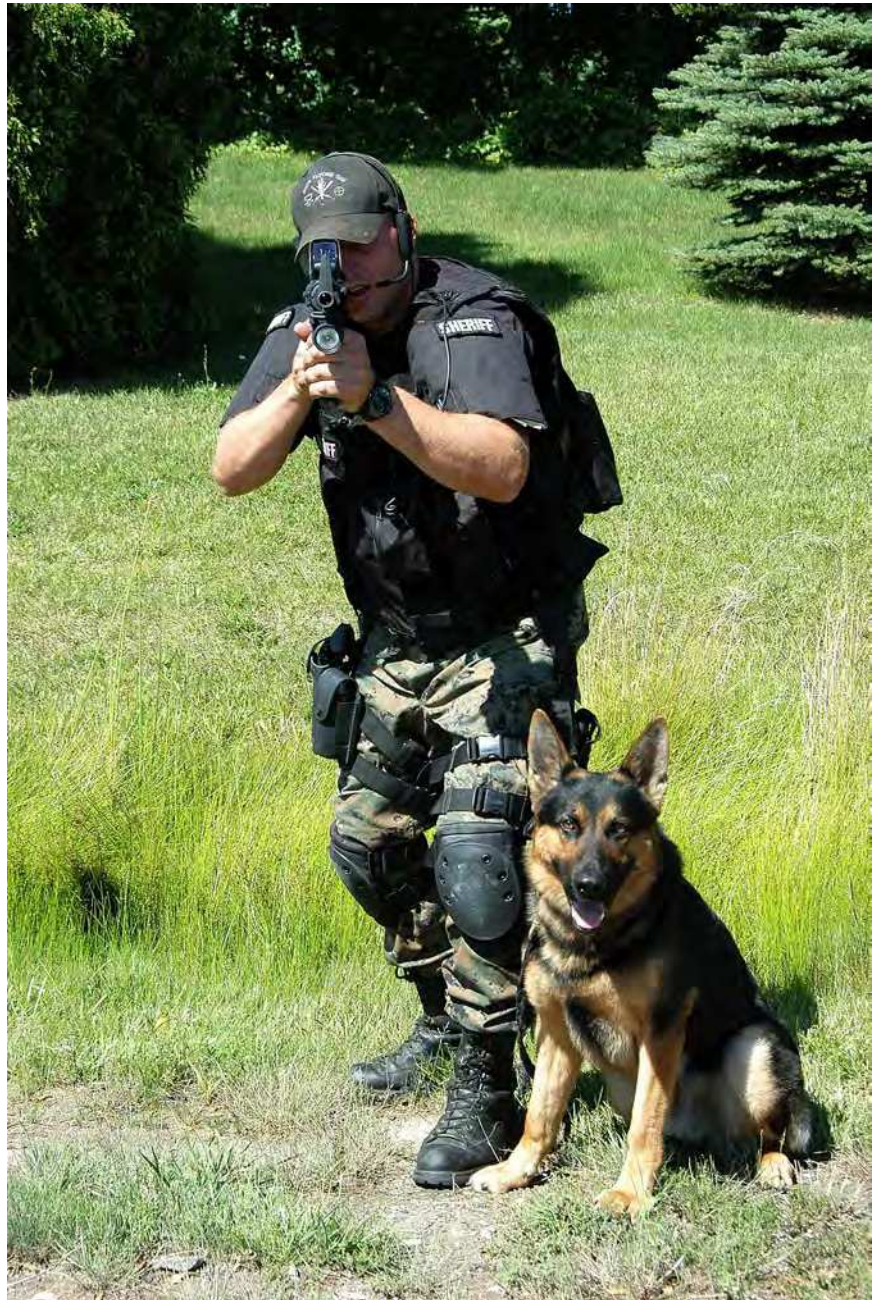


Photo 13. U.S. assistance with canine counternarcotics



Photo 14. U.S. counternarcotics support operations.

2012. Crime was not the main reason the people of Grenada jettisoned the ruling National Democratic Congress in February 2013, but public opinion polls showed it to be among the top three concerns, after the economy and health care. Moreover, public security officials have been dismissed in the face of persisting or worsening crime situations. This happened in St. Lucia, where Commissioner of Police Ausbert Regis was “reassigned” in May 2010 to a newly created position of Director of Special Initiatives in the Prime Minister’s Office. (King, 2010)

Although Regis left office, he refused the reassignment, sued for wrongful removal, and won. Curiously enough, the court’s decision was rendered just before the November 2011 elections. It vindicated Regis and contributed to citizens’ repudiation of the incumbent government. Elsewhere, Suriname’s commissioner, Delano Braam, was dismissed in June 2011, and Puerto Rico’s Police superintendent, José Figueroa Sancha, “retired” in July 2011. Intriguingly, he departed shortly before the release of a scathing report on the department by the U.S. Department of Justice that exposed extensive police corruption and human rights violations. (Cairo, 2011; Meade, 2011)

Guns feature in a high proportion of the region’s murders, and most of the weapons are smuggled from the United States. Indeed, illegal arms smuggling was one of the subjects discussed at the milestone U.S.-Barbados summit held in May 1997, and it has featured in numerous bilateral and multilateral talks since then. Interestingly, though, the United States has yet to ratify the hemispheric

treaty on arms trafficking, although it was the first signatory in 1997.<sup>22</sup> One hopes that ratification will occur within the first two years of President Obama's second term. Otherwise, the prospects for ratification during his presidency will diminish considerably.

It should be noted, however, that among other things, the United States does provide invaluable assistance to Caribbean countries in tracing weapons used in crimes within the region and smuggled from the United States. Indeed, in December 2012 the United States cosponsored a major gun smuggling forum in Trinidad and Tobago, with CARICOM IMPACS (Implementation Agency for Crime and Security)<sup>23</sup> as a key participant. However, failure to secure ratification limits the ability of the United States to use its Federal authority to restrict what individual states may do, especially since many states have lax laws on the sale of weapons, a matter that resurfaced powerfully with the fatal shooting of 20 children and 6 adults in Connecticut in December 2012.

### **III. Conclusion**

The 30th anniversary of the geopolitical milestone that was the invasion of Grenada is an opportune time to suggest the following: as the United States strengthens its reengagement with the Caribbean its policymakers and program executives should remember two realities. One is the criticality of arms trafficking in the geonarcotics matrix. Indeed, they need to pursue—and secure—Senate ratification of that vital multilateral treaty signed in 1997, while executing the various important CBSI initiatives and other security programming with Caribbean and other partner nations. In all this, though, U.S. officials must keep in mind a second reality—and it is incumbent on Caribbean officials to remind them of it: significant reengagement should go beyond geonarcotics issues, to trade and investment, education, technology, and the environment. Not only are these areas of mutual interest to the two sides, but failure to enhance engagement in them provides more geopolitical opportunity for the PRC and other actors to fill the “engagement vacuum.” Thus, while accentuating reengagement on the geonarcotics front is necessary because of contemporary realities related to drugs, crime, and guns, it certainly is not sufficient.

## Notes

- 1 That was the date of the Japanese sneak attack on the United States at Pearl Harbor, declaring war on the United States and precipitating its formal entry into World War II. The “date in infamy” declaration was made by President Roosevelt in an address to a joint session of the U.S. Congress the day after the attack.
- 2 There is a rich and varied literature on the ideological and geopolitical antecedents of the invasion, its military component, the political and economic dynamics of the Grenada Revolution, and the political and other aftermath of the invasion. Among the best analysis on military and geopolitical aspects are Adkin, 1989; García Muñiz, 1986; Heine, 1991; Maingot, 1989; and Griffin, 1991. For a comprehensive listing of works on Grenada and related matters, visit <http://www.thegrenadarevolutiononline.com/page15.html>.
- 3 For an absorbing analysis of the region’s involvement in Cold War dynamics related to the United States war in Korea, notably in relation to the resource aspect of geopolitics (particularly bauxite in Jamaica and oil in Trinidad and Tobago), see Parker, 2002.
- 4 There is healthy skepticism about whether some United States policy elites ever have taken the English-speaking part of the region seriously. For example, Richard Bernal, 2013 (146) concluded a recent article as follows: “A review of the memoirs and policy thinking of Presidents and Secretaries of State of the United States published as books for the period encompassing the Kennedy administration through to the administration of George W. Bush reveals that the English-Speaking Caribbean received almost no comments. The fact that little or no reference is made to the ESC (English-Speaking Caribbean) in this voluminous literature, the exception being a few brief references to Jamaica by President Reagan, give credence to the view that the English-Speaking Caribbean was unimportant in U.S. foreign policy.”
- 5 For a fascinating analysis of sociological, political, and economic change in Cuba, including the oil factor, see Gorney, 2012. Also, interestingly, in early June 2013 the Russian company Zarubezhneft announced it was halting oil exploration off Cuba’s northern shores for a year because of “geological” problems.
- 6 On January 24, 2013, this writer had the opportunity to observe ships transiting the Canal from the balcony of the Miraflores Restaurant, which overlooks the Miraflores Locks, on the Pacific side of the Canal.
- 7 One report indicated: “The State Department on Monday reassigned Daniel Fried, the special envoy for closing the prison Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and will not replace him, according to an internal personnel announcement. Mr. Fried’s office is being closed, and his former responsibilities will be “assumed” by the office of the department’s legal adviser, the notice said. The announcement that no senior official in President Obama’s second term will succeed Mr. Fried in working primarily on diplomatic issues pertaining to repatriating or resettling detainees appeared to signal that the administration does not currently see the closing of the prison as a realistic priority, despite repeated statements that it still intends to do so.” (Savage, 2013)
- 8 The initial lease amount was \$2,000 in gold per year. Since the Cuban Revolution, launched in January 1959, only one check has been cashed by the Cuban government. This occurred in 1959, reportedly as a result of the confusion during the early days of creating the revolution’s governmental arrangements.
- 9 The team comprised four other individuals: Dr. Julian Hunte, former Foreign Minister and Ambassador to the United Nations; Dr. Mark Kirton, Senior Lecturer at the Institute of International Relations of the University of the West Indies (UWI), Trinidad and Tobago; Dr. Tennyson Joseph, Senior Lecturer in Government at UWI Barbados; and Malcolm Charles, a prominent St. Lucian corporate and civic leader.
- 10 Of course, both geopolitical and geoeconomic interests are involved here, not just in relation to the Caribbean and Latin America, but in relation to the United States. For two interesting analyses, see *The Economist*, 2013, and Oppenheimer, 2013.
- 11 Hughes became Chief Executive Officer of Jamaica’s Petro Caribe Development Fund from February 4, 2013.
- 12 Chávez beat Henrique Capriles 54 percent to 44 percent, but in the previous election in 2006 he trounced Manuel Rosales, winning 63 percent of the vote.
- 13 Among other foreign leaders attending were: Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Chilean President Sebastian Piñera, Spain’s Prince Felipe, Uruguayan President Jose Mujica, Argentine President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff and her predecessor Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Ecuadoran President Rafael Correa, Bolivian President Evo Morales, and Uruguayan President Jose “Pepe” Mujica. The United States was represented by Congressman Gregory Meeks from New York and former Massachusetts Congressman William Delahunt. Overall, there were 54 foreign delegations.
- 14 Well before Chávez and the Bolivarian Agenda, one noted Caribbean leader was vocal about Venezuelan designs in relation to the Anglophone Caribbean. The leader was Eric Williams, the late distinguished historian and former Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. He saw more than vulnerability to Venezuelan pursuits; he was convinced they had designs to control the area. In 1975 he convened a Special Convention of the ruling People’s National Movement to discuss the political, economic, and territorial jeopardy he felt the

Anglophone Caribbean faced from Venezuela, which then was led by Carlos Andrés Pérez. In his convention speech, Williams spoke of “Venezuela’s Caribbean visions and ambitions, starting off from barren uninhabited rocks to a network of economic arrangements out of which is emerging a Venezuela oil and industrial metropolis and an indebted Caribbean hinterland ...” For the text of the convention speech, see Manigat, 1976.

15 For the map, see <http://www.venezuelatuya.com/geografia/mapavenezuela.htm>.

16 One hopeful sign occurred at the March 9, 2013, swearing in of Nicholas Maduro as acting president. He acknowledged the presence of Guyanese president Donald Ramotar and pledged to continue Chávez’s bilateral policy “which now resolves our outstanding issues based on brotherhood and not hatred and war, which was the wish of the oligarchies and the imperialists.” (*Caribseek News*, 2013)

17 For useful recent assessments of the region’s traditional and nontraditional security challenges, see Rodríguez Beruff, 2009; Phillips, 2010; McDavid, 2011; and Rodríguez Arredondo, 2012. McDavid and Phillips restrict their analysis to the CARICOM area, and Phillips focuses on traditional institutions and concerns.

18 For example, see Cornell and Swanström, 2006, in relation to Eurasia; and Grayson, 2008, in relation to Canada. In their analysis, Cornell and Swanström (26) make the following point: “Ivelaw Griffith, in ‘From Cold War Geopolitics to Post–Cold War Geonarcotics,’ has taken the theoretical discussion further than most academics, although his case studies are for the greater part focused on the Caribbean.”

19 For a useful discussion of the Dudus Affair, see Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2010; Griffith, 2010, 2011; and Schwartz, 2011.

20 Six months later the Commissioner offered the following sobering commentary in a newspaper column: “Today, despite a 40 percent drop in murder, coming from almost 1,700 in 2009, Jamaica still ranks as the fourth most murderous country on earth behind Honduras, El Salvador, and Venezuela. Our murder rate is around 40 per 100,000 of the population, down from 63 per 100,000 in 2009. We have the second highest rate of murders/killings by guns in the world, at 47 per 100,000 of the population; second only to El Salvador with 50 per 100,000 of their population. Our murder rate is equivalent to that of a country experiencing two civil wars at the same time; it is much higher than countries experiencing war on their mainland.” (Ellington, 2013)

21 This incident, coming in the wake of numerous child abuse and murder cases, prompted the UNICEF representative in Jamaica, Robert Fuderich, to lament the “unrelenting violence against youngsters” on the island. He noted that the “recent spate of grisly crimes targeting schoolchildren has underscored a chronic and disturbing problem.” He indicated that 40 children were reported murdered in 2012, and that reports of child abuse, including neglect and rape, are also increasing: 8,741 reported cases of child abuse in 2012 compared to 7,826 in 2011. (*News Daily*, 2013)

22 The treaty has a long title: “Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and other Related Materials.” It was signed on November 14, 1997, and came into force on July 1, 1998. For a list of the countries that have signed and ratified it, see <http://www.oas.org/juridico/english/sigs/a-63.html>.

23 For an appreciation of the structure and operation of IMPACS, see <http://caricomimpacs.org/impacs/>. For some reflections by director Francis Forbes in a February 2013 interview, see [http://dialogo-americas.com/en\\_GB/articles/rmisa/features/regional\\_news/2013/02/21/feature-ex-3938](http://dialogo-americas.com/en_GB/articles/rmisa/features/regional_news/2013/02/21/feature-ex-3938).

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## About the Author

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