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Caribbean Geopolitics and Geonarcotics

New Dynamics, Same Old Dilemma

Ivclaw L. Griffith

THERE IS A SMALL BUT GROWING LITERATURE by Caribbean scholars on the actual and potential impact of the end of the Cold War on the Caribbean region. These assessments point to myriad implications, significant both in scope and depth—implications in international politics, political economy, and geopolitics and security, among other things.¹ Undoubtedly, post-Cold War developments have precipitated new realities in the Caribbean. Yet these new realities have not displaced the central dilemma of Caribbean countries: vulnerability. Stated otherwise, while there are new dynamics in the post-Cold War geopolitical landscape of the Caribbean, there persists the same old dilemma.

A former Caribbean leader, Lloyd Erskine Sandiford of Barbados, captured the essence of this dilemma in a speech to Caribbean leaders shortly after the coup attempt in Trinidad in the summer of 1990: “Our vulnerability is manifold. Physically, we are subject to hurricanes and earthquakes; economically, to market decisions taken elsewhere; socially, to cultural penetration; and [now] politically, to the machinations of terrorists, mercenaries, and criminals.”² There is no consolation in acknowledging that the Caribbean is not singular in regard to vulnerability, that vulnerability is a reality facing small states the world over. Shridat Ramphal, former Secretary General of the Commonwealth of Nations and now Chancellor of the University of the West Indies, once made a prescient

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observation about the vulnerability of small states generally: "Small states by their nature are weak and vulnerable. . . . Sometimes it seems as if small states were like small boats pushed out into a turbulent sea, free in one sense to traverse it; but, without oars or provisions, without compass or sails, free also to perish. Or perhaps, to be rescued and taken on board a larger vessel."³

Vulnerability is a multidimensional phenomenon, of course. States are considered vulnerable because of geographic, political, military, and economic factors that compromise their security. One study identifies six factors that can contribute to vulnerability: great-power rivalries, territorial claims, possession of valuable resources, provision of refuge to refugees or freedom fighters, corruption, and suppression of democracy.⁴ Little more than a decade ago, experts studying the vulnerability issue noted the range of threats to which small states can be vulnerable: threats to territorial security; threats to political security, which can involve a broad range of actions deliberately intended to influence national policy and that in some cases cause a specific change in the threatened state's national policy; and threats to economic security, actions that can undermine a state's economic welfare and interfere in its political process.⁵ Various countries in the Caribbean have faced all of these threats, and many still do.

This article explores a few of the post-Cold War dynamics that affect the Caribbean. It points to the continuity of the vulnerability dilemma and probes the aggravation of that dilemma by the virtual explosion of drugs in the region. The new dynamics examined pertain mainly to state-centered political, military, and economic initiatives at the regional and international levels—an exception being drug aspects, which arise essentially from actions by nonstate entities. This discussion focuses primarily on the archipelagic Caribbean, although it extends at times to states in the Caribbean Basin.

New Geopolitical Dynamics

The world witnessed dramatic change and turbulence as the 1980s gave way to the 1990s, some of it critical to the Caribbean. The collapse of world communism and the concomitant end of the Cold War are at the center of the transformation. The bipolar character of global military-political power has been replaced by a reemerged multipolar system. Not only is there evidence of multipolarity, but some scholars point to the development of a multidimensional basis of global power. Joseph Nye, Jr., for example, sees the distribution of power as "like a layer cake," with the top (military) layer being largely unipolar, the economic middle layer tripolar, and the bottom layer of transnational interdependence showing a diffusion of power.⁶ This post-Cold War structural-operational transformation at the global level has at least two major implications for

the Caribbean, both of which pertain to the realities of U.S. geographic proximity, power, and interests.

Multipolarity and U.S. Adaptation. This nation's policies and actions toward the Caribbean are now shorn of the previous East-West ideological cloud, thereby altering the character, if not the scope, of United States–Caribbean relations. It is true that to the extent Fidel Castro is able to remain adamant in the pursuit of communism in Cuba, there will be concern in the United States about an ideological threat. Nonetheless, partly because of regional changes (in Nicaragua, Grenada, Guyana, and elsewhere), “the communist threat” is virtually nonexistent.

The previous East-West military-political fixation of the United States not only colored its relations with Caribbean countries on a bilateral basis but influenced multilateral relations as well. During the Cold War period the interests and conduct of some Caribbean countries caused them to suffer the consequences of U.S. displeasure, while others received the benefits of its approbation in the context of such institutions as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB). However, there is already evidence that the end of the Cold War has led to appreciable change in U.S. attitudes and behavior toward Caribbean countries in these multilateral arenas.

The second implication is related to the American military presence in the region. The nature and scope of U.S. military deployment and posture in the Caribbean, once part of its geopolitical game plan for countering the USSR, have already begun to change. This is contributing to a lesser U.S. military presence, reduced International Military Education and Training Program (IMET) assistance, and reduced arms supplies and sales to countries that were either U.S. allies in the East-West conflict or were otherwise considered important to its national interests.⁷ As noted in *Strategic Assessment 1997*, “The U.S. has been reducing its presence in the region, relocating [Southern Command] from Panama, removing the Navy training center from the Guantanamo [Cuba] naval base, and consolidating its diplomatic presence throughout the region.”⁸

The transfer of responsibility for the Caribbean from the U.S. Atlantic Command (USACOM) to the Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) is further evidence of change. In keeping with changes to the Unified Command Plan (UCP) announced by Defense Secretary William Perry in February 1996, SOUTHCOM's geographic area of responsibility (AOR) has been expanded. According to the Pentagon, “This change satisfies two objectives. The first is to enhance Southern Command's interactions with the navies of Central and South American nations. The second is to have one commander control all U.S.

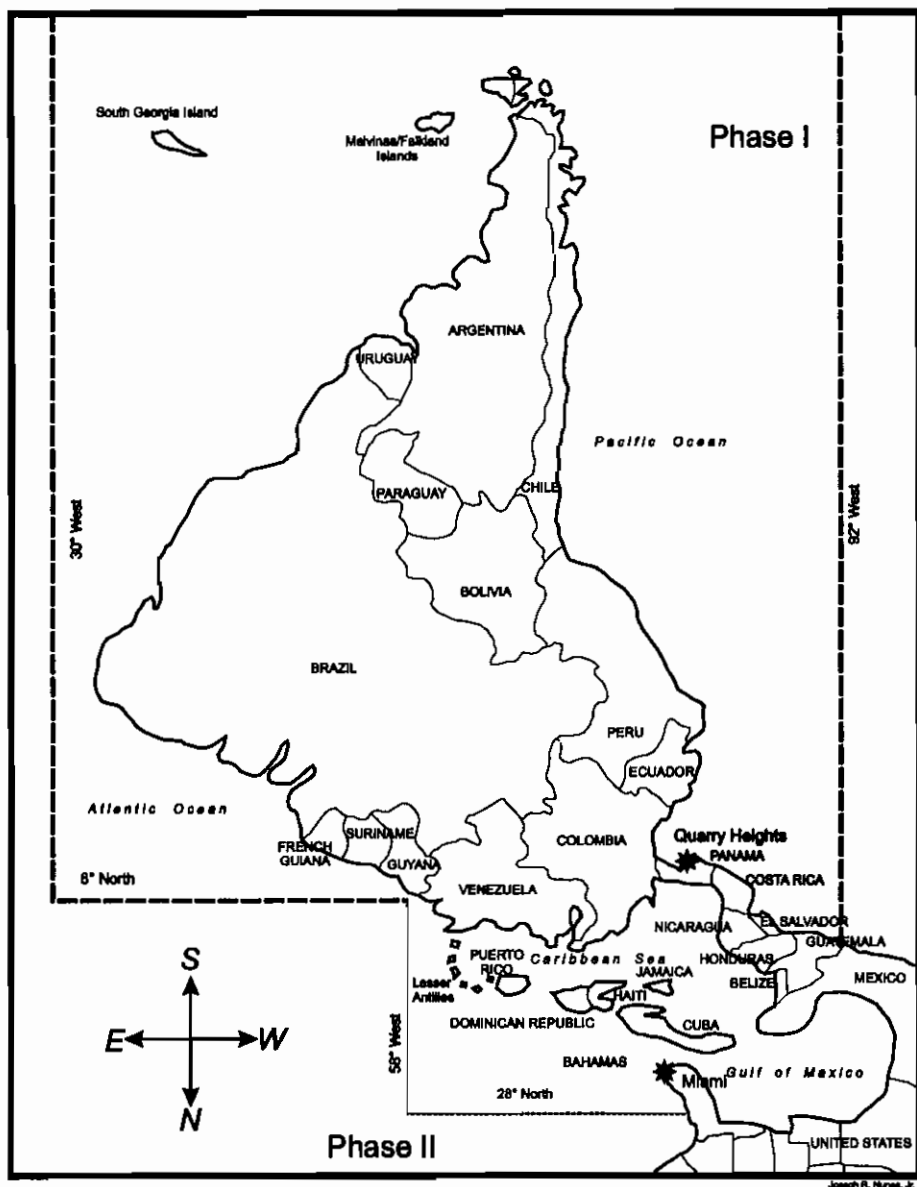
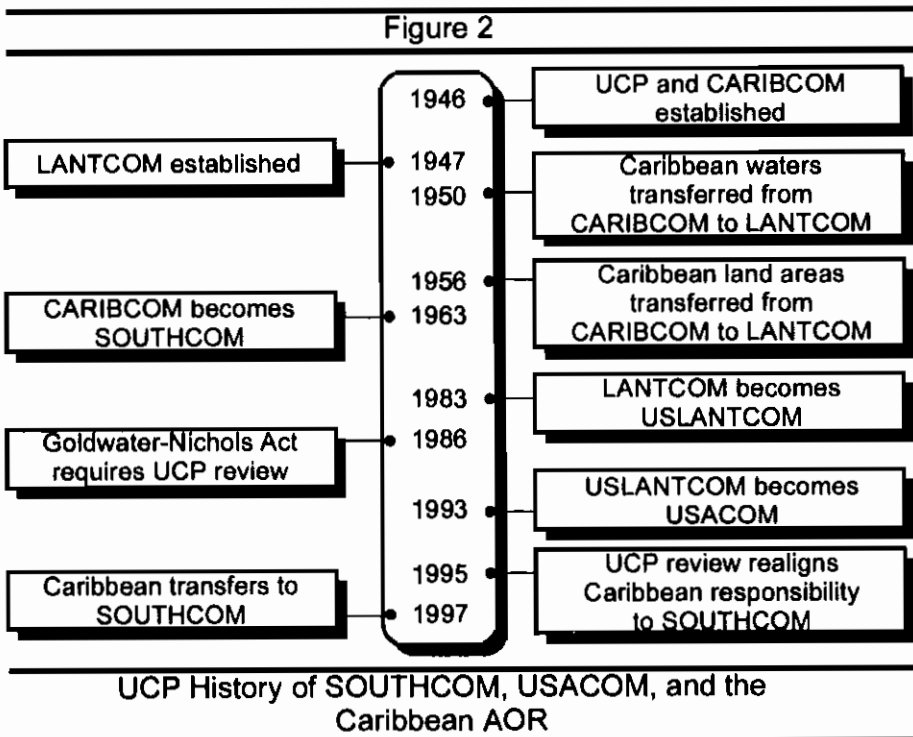


Figure 1
Unified Command Plan Changes Affecting the Caribbean

military activities in the Caribbean Basin and Central and South America.”⁹ Moreover, according to the SOUTHCOM commander in chief, the UCP change has six specific goals: to improve integration of U.S. air, land, and maritime forces; improve regional unity of effort; enhance engagement with Latin American and Caribbean militaries; improve the alignment of military, academic, and diplomatic organizations; synchronize counterdrug efforts in source and transit zones; and win increased assistance.¹⁰

The UCP change was designed to take place in two phases, as Figure 1 shows. Phase One became effective 1 January 1996 and gave SOUTHCOM control over the area adjoining Central and South America. Phase Two, responsibility for the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean AOR, could not be effected before 1 June 1997, and during spring and summer 1996 USACOM was reported to have lobbied several executive and congressional agencies to be allowed to retain jurisdiction over the Caribbean. Several Caribbean military and police officials also expressed apprehension over a possible shift from USACOM, in one instance publicly, at the May 1996 Caribbean Island Nations Security Conference in Barbados. Nevertheless, on 18 July 1996 Secretary Perry directed the execution of Phase Two: thus on 1 June 1997 the Caribbean AOR passed from USACOM to SOUTHCOM.



As Figure 2 clearly shows, UCP changes in relation to the Caribbean are not new. Yet one potential risk of this change, from the Caribbean vantage point, is the possibility that the Caribbean will get short shrift in the balancing of security relations between, on one hand, the United States and countries in Central and South America and, on the other, those in the Caribbean, which are smaller and relatively less important. However, some analysts feel that this change, coupled with the relocation of SOUTHCOM headquarters to Miami in 1997, could lead to a Caribbean slanting of its missions.

SOUTHCOM planners recognize two sets of challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean: transnational threats and regional instability. In the first group they place narco-trafficking, international terrorism, and illegal migrant flows. Regional instability is considered to lurk both in specific places—Cuba, Haiti, Colombia, Peru, and areas of numerous unresolved border disputes—as well as in general danger arising from weapons transfers and poverty.¹¹ SOUTHCOM's vision is to "help achieve and maintain a community of democratic, stable, peaceful, and prosperous nations whose militaries respect human rights, civilian leadership, national sovereignty, and work cooperatively with U.S. forces."¹² Further, its stated mission is to "provide command and control of U.S. air, land, and sea forces and most military activities to enhance stability and cooperation in the region while promoting and protecting U.S. interests."¹³

Noted Latin American and Caribbean scholar Jorge Domínguez has observed that the Caribbean now has less military importance than it once did in world affairs, although there remain some significant military issues in the region.¹⁴ Yet the end of the Cold War has not obliterated the strategic value of the Caribbean. The geopolitical importance of the region, for states near and far, still lies generally in its possession of strategic materials, in the location of vital sea lanes of communication (SLOCs) there, and in the security networks that powerful states have in and around the region.

As regards strategic materials, Caribbean countries possess and produce oil, bauxite, gold, diamonds, manganese, and nickel, among other natural resources, although it is also true that these resources are owned by few of the countries in the region. The United States still gets about 70 percent of its bauxite and a sizable portion of its oil imports from the Caribbean. SLOCs in the Caribbean area are also part of the strategic matrix. Foremost is the Panama Canal, connecting the Pacific and Atlantic oceans; the Canal is used for both military and civilian purposes, its diminished importance over the past decade notwithstanding. Once ships exit the Canal on the Atlantic side, they must use one or more of some sixteen passages in the Caribbean Sea to reach destinations in the United States, Europe, Africa, or elsewhere. The Anegada, Mona, and Windward passages and the Yucatan Channel are among the widest and most heavily used straits.¹⁵

But beyond the fact that the Caribbean still has geopolitical value for states is the reality that the region is also considered vital by non-state actors. This point will be better appreciated when attention is turned later to drugs.

Economic Restructuring and Foreign Policy Reevaluation. Allied to the post-Cold War military-political changes are alterations in the structure and operations of economic power relationships. The formation of economic blocs around the world is one important manifestation of this. The European Union now boasts a unified market of 320 million consumers, and ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations), with some 420 million people, agreed in January 1992 to create a free trade area as a precursor to establishment of a common market. Original plans called for an ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) by 1 January 2003, but ASEAN members are now aiming for January 2000, following the advice of the sultan of Brunei at the September 1995 meeting of the ASEAN Council of Economic Ministers. Closer to home there is NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Area), with annual production of over six trillion dollars and some 387 million consumers in Canada, Mexico, and the United States.

One major consequence for the Caribbean of this megabloc phenomenon is the potential reduction or even loss of economic assistance, foreign investment, and preferential trading deals. Concerning NAFTA, for example, there was fear that the anticipated increase in trade resulting from the removal of trade barriers in Mexico would displace U.S. trade with Caribbean countries and reduce the benefits of tariff preferences provided by schemes like the Caribbean Basin Initiative.¹⁶ The experience of the garment industry of Jamaica and some eastern Caribbean countries during 1996 and 1997 suggests that original fears were quite justified.

In addition to the post-Cold War military-political changes and the megabloc phenomenon, another factor that affects the Caribbean is the policy reevaluation by big and middle powers that once considered the Caribbean to be important to them, and by countries on which Caribbean states placed importance. Noteworthy in this respect are the United States (between 1990 and 1996) and some European Union countries.¹⁷ Reprioritizing by these countries is the result of several factors, sometimes acting in combination. These include budgetary constraints, economic recession, shifting foreign-policy focus, the demand by domestic constituencies for more attention to local concerns, and leadership changes.

In tangible terms, reevaluation has meant reduction and reallocation of aid, preferential trade readjustment, reduced foreign investment guarantees, and diplomatic downgrading of some Caribbean countries. For example, the withdrawal by the British of their military garrison in Belize between 1993 and

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1995 was prompted by both budgetary difficulties and a review of British foreign and security policy towards Central America and the Caribbean. That action has had a dual effect: increased vulnerability of Belize to territorial and political sovereignty violation, and reduced deterrence against narcotics production and trafficking (although the British were not directly involved in antidrug operations).

A special, if brief, note is needed about Canada. Although Canada has been forced to reduce aid because of budgetary problems, its trade relations with Cuba have grown over recent years. Quite understandable, then, is Canada's strident criticism of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, popularly known as the Helms-Burton Act, which was signed by President William J. Clinton on 12 March 1996. Canada's Caribbean interests extend beyond Cuba; Ottawa, long having a "soft spot" for the Commonwealth Caribbean, strives to maintain credible levels of aid, trade preferences, and technical assistance.

One recent reflection of this was the communique of the Canada-CARICOM Summit, held 3-5 March 1996 in Grenada. Among other things, the communique indicated that "Prime Minister [Jean] Chrétien confirmed that Canada was seeking from the World Trade Organization (WTO) an extension of the waiver granted from its current preferential trade agreement, CARIBCAN. He also expressed his intention to explore the incorporation into CARIBCAN of those products which are currently excluded from the arrangement."¹⁸ The communique also noted Canada's continued offer of aid in such varied areas as debt management, small business development, the environment, drugs, and regional security.¹⁹

In sum, the Caribbean has witnessed a diminution in relative importance for most "important" countries. Curiously enough, the only redeeming factor insofar as many countries are concerned is the preeminent threat now facing the region: drugs. The only "card" the region has to play now is the drug card. This is especially so in relation to the United States.

U.S.-Caribbean Summit. The United States remains important to the Caribbean, not the least because it is viewed as both "part of the problem" (whether for trade or drugs) and "part of the solution" (whether in giving trade access or in boosting the counternarcotics capability of Caribbean countries). In the context of U.S.-Caribbean relations, the 10 May 1997 summit in Barbados between President Clinton and the leaders of fifteen countries in the region deserves to be seen for what it was: a landmark that can set the stage for a new thrust and character in U.S.-Caribbean relations.

Was the summit mere posturing by Clinton, Owen Arthur (of Barbados), P.J. Patterson (Jamaica), Basdeo Panday (Trinidad and Tobago), Dr. Jules Wijdenbosch (Suriname), James Mitchell (St. Vincent and the Grenadines), Dr. Vaughan

Lewis (St. Lucia), Dr. Denzil Douglas (St. Kitts–Nevis), René Preval (Haiti), Samuel Hinds (Guyana), Dr. Keith Mitchell (Grenada), Jaime Fernández (Dominican Republic), Edison James (Dominica), Dean Barrow (Belize), and Lester Bird (Antigua-Barbuda)? Was it only about symbolism, or was there substance? Summits, even ones involving states with such dramatic power disparities as those represented in Bridgetown, are never about either symbolism *or* substance; they are always about symbolism *and* substance, both of which are important in the conduct of foreign and security policy, irrespective of the size of the nations involved. Thus the real question about the Barbados summit is, how much was there of each?

In terms of symbolism, the meeting was significant just in being held at all: it was the first time that a U.S. president had traveled officially to the Caribbean to meet with regional leaders. The summit involved the leaders of all the independent nations in the area, Cuba excepted of course, and not merely of a “representative group,” as had been done a few years ago in Washington. That restricted approach had generated considerable resentment within the region—toward both Clinton and the leaders with whom he had met.

The summit was a reality check for Washington, helping it to learn, rethink, and unlearn in its effort to resolve the coexistence of consciousness of the importance of hemispheric partnerships and confusion about desired postures toward certain states in the hemisphere. The Caribbean leaders, however, also needed—and did get—a reality check, one directly connected with possible tangible outcomes: that “checks and balances” in the U.S. political context frequently affect the president’s ability to offer the kind of assurances and guarantees often thought to lie within the power of the leader of the world’s sole superpower. In fact, Congress, especially when not dominated by the president’s party, is a powerful foreign policy actor, although sometimes a confused one, which is all the more reason that presidents often have to sound and act tentative.²⁰

Nevertheless, the substance of the U.S.–Caribbean summit goes beyond this, to its two main products: the Bridgetown Declaration of Principles, and the Plan of Action. The Plan of Action is the more substantial of the two. It deals with two clusters of issues: trade, development, finance, and the environment; and justice and security. Some things in the thirty-page Plan of Action hinge on U.S. congressional action, but there is also considerable scope for the executive branch to initiate and to deliver on its own. Indeed, the Clinton administration’s submission to Congress of a draft Caribbean Basin Trade Enhancement Act on 17 June 1997 is evidence of both summit follow-up and summit substance. Yet the failure of the administration to win congressional

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support for the proposed legislation during the 104th Congress is testimony to the power of Congress as a foreign policy actor.

Both in symbolic and substantive terms, and for the United States as well as for the Caribbean, the Barbados summit pointed to the utility of multilateralism and to the necessity for nations in the hemisphere to act collectively to deal with common problems and challenges. It also signaled a new phase in U.S.-Caribbean relations. Pragmatism, however, should be a core element of the “new” U.S.-Caribbean matrix. Not only can unrealistic expectations be dashed—and for a variety of reasons—but it would be foolhardy for Caribbean leaders to think that this “new” multilateralism will bring an end to American unilateral or bilateral action in the region, or in the hemisphere. United States national interests do not permit it. Moreover, Caribbean leaders should be mindful that people who make and execute U.S. foreign and security policy heed the words of General George Washington, uttered in 1778: “It is a maxim, founded on the universal experience of mankind, that no nation is to be trusted farther than it is bound by its interests, and no prudent statesman or politician will venture to depart from it.”

Yet while recent geopolitical changes related to the end of the Cold War have altered the strategic environment in many ways, the Caribbean strategic environment still holds clear and present dangers, because of the continued salience of some issues and the heightened dynamics of others. Drug trafficking presents some of these dangers.

Beyond Geopolitics

The Caribbean lies at what José Martí once called “the vortex of the Americas”—a bridge between North America and South America. European statesmen recognized the strategic importance of this vortex soon after the 1492 encounter between Europe and the Americas. This strategic importance has persisted over the centuries, and it was dramatized in geopolitical terms during the Cold War. However, the strategic value of the Caribbean lies not only in its geopolitical value as viewed by state actors engaged in systemic conflict and cooperation. Over recent years the region has been viewed as strategic by nonstate drug actors, also with conflict and cooperation in mind—but in terms of geonarcotics, not geopolitics.

Geonarcotics. The concept of “geonarcotics” embraces the multiple dynamics of the narcotics phenomenon. It posits, first, that the phenomenon is multidimensional, with four main problem areas (drug production, consumption–abuse, trafficking, and money laundering); second, that these give rise to actual and potential threats to the security of states around the world; and third, that the

drug operations and the activities they spawn precipitate both conflict and cooperation among various state and nonstate actors in the international system. Over and above this, the term captures three factors besides drugs: geography, power, and politics.

Geography is a factor because of the spatial dispersion of drug operations, and because certain geographic features facilitate drug operations. *Power* involves the ability of individuals and groups to secure compliant action. This power is both state and nonstate in origin, and in some cases nonstate sources exercise more power than do state entities. *Politics* revolves around resource allocation, in the sense of the ability of power brokers to determine who gets what, how, and when. Since power in this milieu is not only state power, resource allocation is correspondingly not exclusively a function of state power-holders. Moreover, politics becomes perverted, and all the more so where it was already perverted.²¹

The Caribbean drug phenomenon is a reflection of the global drug phenomenon in that it involves production, consumption and abuse, trafficking, and money laundering.²² Trafficking, however, best highlights the region's strategic importance. Aspects of the Caribbean's physical and social geography make it conducive to drug trafficking. Some Caribbean countries are multiple-island territories. For instance, the Virgin Islands, U.S. and British combined, comprise about a hundred islands and cays; the Bahamas is an archipelago of seven hundred islands and two thousand cays. This insular character permits entry into and use of Caribbean territories from scores, sometimes hundreds, of different places from the surrounding sea and from the Atlantic and Caribbean coasts of such mainland countries as Guyana and Belize.

Another feature of the region's physical geography is dual proximity: to South America, a major drug supply source; and to North America, a major drug demand area. On the supply side, the world's cocaine is produced in South America, notably Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, and Venezuela. Colombia alone produces about 80 percent of all the cocaine in the world, although only about 20 percent of worldwide coca leaf cultivation is done there. (Colombia's coca cultivation is reported to have grown by 13 percent in 1995, making that country the world's second-largest producer, after Peru.) A significant proportion of global heroin and marijuana production also comes from South and Central America, especially from Colombia, Mexico, Peru, Paraguay, Brazil, and Guatemala.²³

On the demand side, the United States has the dubious distinction of being the world's most drug-consuming nation. In 1993, the State Department estimated the annual consumption of cocaine alone at 150–175 metric tons, valued at U.S. \$ 15–17 billion.²⁴ Two years later, General Barry McCaffrey, then head of SOUTHCOM and now the U.S. drug “czar,” estimated that about three hundred metric tons of the approximately 575 metric tons of cocaine available

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worldwide in 1994 were consumed in the United States.²⁵ Moreover, an estimated 13 million Americans, about 6 percent of the household population over twelve years of age, currently use illegal drugs. Use in this case is defined as consumption within the past thirty days.²⁶

There is not much distance between the Caribbean and South America, or between the Caribbean and the United States, especially its southern parts. For example, except for French Guiana and Suriname, all Caribbean countries are less than two thousand miles from Miami, and only seven of them are more than two thousand miles from Atlanta and Washington, D.C. Generally, the distances involved are quite short. For instance, the island of Bimini in the Bahamas is just forty miles from the Florida Keys, and only ninety miles lie between Cuba and the United States.

Europe is another area of huge drug consumption. Despite the relatively great distance between that continent and the Caribbean region, the Caribbean is a major transit area for cocaine, heroin, and marijuana bound for Europe.²⁷ Several reasons explain this. One is the proximity of the Caribbean to South America. A second relates to commercial, communications, and other linkages between Europe and the Caribbean, linkages that provide the institutional and other infrastructure for trafficking.

Third, because French Guiana, Guadeloupe, and Martinique are Departments d'Outre Mer of France; because Anguilla, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Montserrat, and the Turks and Caicos Islands are British dependencies; and because Bonaire, Curacao, Saba, and St. Maarten are integral parts of the Netherlands—for all these reasons there are certain customs, immigration, and transportation connections between these territories and their respective European “owners,” and they are exploited by traffickers. Some of the arrangements are similar to those involving the United States, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, which also facilitate traffickers aiming for destinations in the continental United States.²⁸

The Caribbean's vulnerability to trafficking and the prospects for its continuance make drugs a clear and present danger to the region. However, contrary to what was once prevalent thinking, it is not a danger merely to Jamaica and the Bahamas; it is not a danger only to the English-speaking Caribbean. Drug trafficking is an equal-opportunity phenomenon, affecting the entire Caribbean, with scope and intensity varying from place to place.

Not even Cuba, with its tight security and socio-political arrangements, escapes the impact of drugs. Cuban involvement in trafficking commanded the greatest attention in 1989, when several top military officials were convicted and given harsh sentences for trafficking, corruption, and other infractions. All fourteen defendants were found guilty. The chief defendant was Division General Arnaldo Ochoa Sanchez; Ochoa, Captain Jorge Martinez Valdez,

Colonel Antonio De La Guardia, and Major Ainado Padrón were sentenced to death. Brigadier General Patricio De La Guardia and Captain Miguel Ruiz Poo were each given thirty years in prison, and the eight others were given prison terms ranging from ten to thirty years.²⁹

Ever since the Ochoa affair there have been periodic allegations of collusion of Cuban officials in drug trafficking, the most recent of them the July 1996 claim that Fidel Castro himself was deeply implicated in the attempt to smuggle 5,828 pounds of cocaine seized the previous January—a claim which, of course, the Cuban authorities denied.³⁰ But although there is little hard evidence of present Cuban government involvement in trafficking, there is considerable evidence of trafficking involving Cuba. In April 1992, for example, twenty-nine Cubans in the city of Camaguey were found guilty of possessing and trafficking cocaine. Some were also convicted of currency and weapons-possession charges.³¹ Cuban officials reported that 3.3 metric tons of cocaine were seized in seventy-nine different cases during 1993. Reported seizures for 1994 were 238 kilograms of cocaine and 1.1 metric tons of marijuana.³² Cuba's national prosecutor observed in a November 1995 interview with *Granma*, "Years ago, since this merchandise had no commercial value, everyone who found a packet of this type handed it over to the authorities. Now people have discovered how much that's worth and they don't always hand it over."³³

In August 1996 Justice Minister Carlos Abat, who heads Cuba's national counternarcotics operations, reported that during the first quarter of 1996 Cuban authorities had confiscated more than a thousand kilograms of cocaine, 1,400 kilograms of marijuana, smaller quantities of heroin and hashish oil, weapons, and eleven motorboats, among other things. Between January and June 1996, forty-five foreign drug runners were arrested. They were of varying nationalities, including Colombians (the largest group) and Jamaicans, Bahamians, Spaniards, Dutch, British, Italians, and Irish.³⁴ Cuba is also reported to be increasingly popular in the traffic of drugs to Russia and several other former Soviet republics. This is mainly due to two factors. One, there is a regular air service between Havana and Moscow and other former communist capitals. Second, there is a huge amount of tourism between Cuba and several South American countries. Colombians, for example, are the second-largest group of Latin American tourists visiting Cuba, after Mexicans.³⁵

For the Caribbean, the implications of trafficking go beyond the consequences of being a transit center, partly because not everything intended to leave the region actually does so. Some of the cocaine and heroin remains, sometimes as payment for services. All this contributes to problems throughout the Caribbean of drug-related crime, corruption, and arms trafficking. Weapons and ammunition are vital to successful drug operations, especially production and trafficking. They are used for both symbolic and substantive purposes,

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notably protection of drugs and drug operatives; tasks like robbery and narco-terrorism in the interests of producers, dealers, or traffickers; intimidation of clients as well as competitors and deterrence against deviance or disloyalty by fellow operators.

Arms Trafficking. Arms trafficking in the Caribbean has been both intra-regional and extra-regional. The disastrous consequences of the intra-regional drugs-weapons connection have been felt in St. Kitts-Nevis, Guyana, the Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, and elsewhere. But perhaps Jamaica and Puerto Rico provide the most startling evidence of those consequences, with their high rates of drug-related homicides and drug gang activities. Indeed, as regards Jamaica, a 1989 statement still captures the reality today: "Jamaica over the past few years has experienced, through an upsurge in violent crime, the effects of a combination of drugs and money in the form of the naked display of power, through the use of arms."³⁶ Jamaica had 790 murders in 1995, up from 690 in 1994. Firearms were used in 58 percent of the murders, mostly related to drugs.³⁷ The situation is just as horrendous in Puerto Rico, which had 980 murders in 1994, 60 percent of them drug related. In 1995 the murder rate increased by 11 percent, with crime overall increasing 5.2 percent; the governor of the island called out the National Guard to help curb the crisis.³⁸ Puerto Rico had 868 murders in 1996, 80 percent of which were drug related.

As for extra-regional trafficking, the Caribbean is used in the acquisition of weapons by drug operators based in South America. Both intra- and extra-regional trafficking have serious security consequences. But extra-regional trafficking is relatively more dangerous, partly because of the larger quantities of weapons and funds involved, and also because of the notoriety and viciousness of some of the nonstate actors behind it. For example, Caribbean countries are now featuring increasingly in the Russian-Colombian drugs-weapons-crime connection. U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) reports indicate that between June and September 1997 several Russian vessels made port calls at Turbo in northern Colombia and are believed to have unloaded shipments of AK-47 assault rifles and rocket-propelled grenades and exchanged some for drugs. United States and Colombian authorities were unsure whether the weapons went to guerrillas, paramilitary organizations, or the Cali drug cartel. They are certain, however, of the Caribbean connection; passage of the weapons through the Caribbean, and use of Caribbean offshore banks to launder drug money and process the payments for the weapons not bartered for drugs.³⁹ As a matter of fact, five of the six Russian offshore banks in Antigua were closed in February 1997, with no reasons given by Antiguan authorities.⁴⁰ In August 1997 the remaining one—the European Union Bank—folded; the two principals fled the island and are being sought by U.S. and Antiguan authorities.

One gets a sense of the arms trafficking drama by looking at a few cases. On 22 December 1988 a ten-ton shipment of arms with an estimated value of \$8 million (Jamaican) arrived in Jamaica on the way to Colombia. The consignment, from the Heckler and Koch firm of West Germany, included a thousand G3A3 automatic assault rifles, 250 HK21 machine guns, and ten sixty-millimeter commando mortars with six hundred high-explosive rounds. The planned operation involved Germans, Englishmen, Panamanians, Colombians, and Jamaicans. Interrogation of some of the conspirators on 4 and 5 January 1989 revealed that the arms were destined for a leftist insurgent group called the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). The operation had been underwritten by Colombian cocaine dealers who financed FARC. The arms had been paid for out of the proceeds of a special drug shipment made earlier to Europe. The affair ended on 6 January, when the arms were placed on a Colombian military aircraft and sent to Bogotá. The foreigners were extradited, and the Jamaicans were held on several charges.⁴¹

More dramatic was a case a year later involving Antigua-Barbuda. On 15 December 1989 the Colombian police killed Gonzalo Rodríguez Gacha and his son Freddy, both of the Medellín cartel. One of the raids made on Rodríguez Gacha's properties uncovered hundreds of Israeli-made Galil rifles, with ammunition. Colombia sought an explanation from Israel. The disclosure by Israel that the weapons had been part of a larger sale to Antigua-Barbuda Defense Force (ABDF) led to a Colombian diplomatic protest to Antigua-Barbuda. As the matter developed, it became clear that both domestic and foreign aspects had to be probed. Consequently, there was an extensive public inquiry, by British jurist Louis Blom-Cooper. He uncovered an incredible scheme involving Israelis (one posing as an agent of the Antiguan government), Antiguans, Panamanians, Colombians, and Americans. The weapons had been shipped from Haifa for Central and South America via Antigua. However, the arms transshipment was only part of a larger scheme; the other part was to create a mercenary training outfit using the ABDF as organizational cover. Blom-Cooper asserted, "To any one with the slightest knowledge of armed forces it was obvious that the training school, proffered by Spearhead, Ltd., was intended, among other things, to train mercenaries in assault techniques and assassination."⁴²

Guyana, which has risen to prominence in drug trafficking, is also said to be deeply implicated in the transshipment of weapons. Contraband smuggling routes linking Guyana with Brazil, Suriname, and Venezuela that were developed during an economic crisis of the 1970s have been adapted to drug trafficking. These are, no doubt, also being used to smuggle arms.⁴³ Guyana is vulnerable partly because of its physical and social geography, and partly due to its political and economic weaknesses: it has 214,970 square kilometers of territory with less than a million people, who live mainly along the Atlantic

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coast; also, its long borders with neighboring countries (nearly seven hundred miles with Brazil, more than four hundred with Venezuela, and slightly less with Suriname) are all inadequately policed, largely due to financial and manpower shortages.

The full extent of arms trafficking in the Caribbean may never be known, for fairly obvious reasons. Direct and circumstantial evidence suggests, though, that the cases mentioned above do not represent the sum total of Caribbean arms smuggling. The drugs-weapons combination and the ills to which it gives rise in the Caribbean have contributed immensely to the “lost innocence” of most of the countries there. No longer are Caribbean countries paradise locations marked by tranquility and frolic. The drugs-weapons-murder-riot saga in St. Kitts-Nevis in 1994 that led to the ouster of the government in the summer of 1995 provides clear evidence that dramatizes the dangerous linkages involving drugs, geography, power, and politics.⁴⁴

The facts and figures are startling:

- Cocaine seizures in 1993 for just five Caribbean countries—the Bahamas, Belize, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Jamaica—totaled about 3,300 kilograms. The 1995 seizures for those same nations amounted to almost six thousand kilograms, a 45 percent increase.

- Operation DINERO, an international money-laundering sting operation conducted out of Anguilla from January 1992 to December 1994, led to the seizure of nine tons of cocaine and \$90 million worth of assets, including expensive paintings, one of them Pablo Picasso's *Head of a Beggar*.

- In June 1993 there was a strange shower over the Demerara River in Guyana: 364 kilograms of cocaine and \$24,000. The shower was an airdrop, part of a Colombia-Venezuela-Guyana-United States drug network.

- Between 1993 and 1996, more than five thousand Jamaican deportees were returned to the island, most of them for drug-related crimes committed in the United States, Canada, and Britain. In 1993 the number was 923; in 1996 it was 1,158.

- Early in 1997 the Netherlands ambassador in Suriname reported to Suriname's foreign minister that 195 drug couriers from Suriname had been arrested during 1996 at the Schipol international airport near Amsterdam, compared to fifty-one in 1995.

- Operation SUMMER STORM, which was mounted 18–26 June 1997 in the Caribbean, produced 828 arrests and the seizure of fifty-seven kilograms of cocaine, 340 kilograms of cured marijuana, over 440,000 marijuana plants, and 122 weapons, among other things.⁴⁵

Thus President Clinton and the fifteen Caribbean leaders who met in Barbados in May 1997 were justified in declaring:

We acknowledge the threat posed by illegal trafficking in arms, ammunition, and other similar materials to the moral fabric of our societies and the social, economic, cultural, and political foundations of our respective countries.

We acknowledge that the threat posed by this traffick to our societies is compounded by its linkage to the illicit traffic in drugs.⁴⁶

The Vulnerability Dilemma

There is a subjective aspect of vulnerability, which involves the perception by others that a particular state or set of states is easy prey for invasion, destabilization, or other forms of aggression. But there is also an objective aspect; it relates to military, geographic, economic, and organizational difficulties, such as populations and militaries too small to meet security needs, and also fragile economies, manpower deficiencies, and corrupt political systems. In the case of the Caribbean, both subjective and objective factors contribute to the vulnerability dilemma.

When one considers the political and social penetrability of Caribbean societies and their economic and military limitations, it is not difficult to understand how the governability and sovereignty of states there can be subverted—not only by other states but also by drug barons and their accomplices. As one Caribbean diplomat has noted, “A handful of well-armed narcotic soldiers or mercenaries could make a lightning trip to a country, wreak destruction, and fly out before a defense could be mounted by states friendly to the small island.”⁴⁷

We have pointed to regional and global changes that have been transforming the Caribbean's geopolitical landscape but not altering its central dilemma: vulnerability. We have also seen how drug trafficking and arms smuggling—actions driven by the interests of nonstate actors—are testing the limits of governance and pushing open dangerous windows of that vulnerability. Drug trafficking and its associated problems are not entirely new to the Caribbean, but the scope and severity of the threats posed by drugs have increased both dramatically and dangerously.

Cooperation is critical to the battle against drugs, and it is a necessity, not just a desire. This is so mainly for two reasons: the drug trade is a transnational phenomenon; second, all countries in the hemisphere fighting it, especially those in the Caribbean, face capability limitations—financial, technical, manpower, and training, among others. However, the necessity for cooperation does not mask the reality that controversy may arise in the course of combating drugs. Policy makers and practitioners should therefore be constantly mindful of at least two potential sources of conflict that could undermine antidrug efforts: sovereignty and bureaucratic politics.

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The geographic, military, economic, and other disparities between the United States and Caribbean countries are great and too well known to warrant elaboration here. The smaller states in any partnership or alliance tend naturally to be concerned with the potential for being railroaded by the “big brother(s)” in the group. They often are also supersensitive about sovereignty, sometimes with justification, although often sovereignty is nothing more than an excuse for the absence of political will, or a function of the vicissitudes of domestic politics. Nevertheless, it behooves the larger partners to be mindful about sovereignty sensibilities in dealing with the group, in relation to both the design and execution of antidrug strategy and tactics. Indeed, sovereignty concerns over maritime interdiction helped to sour U.S. relations with Jamaica and Barbados between spring 1996 and summer 1997, during which time cooperative antidrug missions were affected. U.S. authorities are now very mindful of the sovereignty issue. The 1997 *National Drug Control Strategy*, for instance, notes, “While seeking to reduce drug availability, we must respect the rule of law and sovereignty of our partners.”⁴⁸

The second area is bureaucratic politics. Although—or perhaps, because—the partnership states in the hemisphere have adopted an interagency approach to fighting drugs, this challenge is not to be overlooked. There are often jurisdictional turf battles involving army and police, coast guard and army, foreign ministry and national security ministry, army intelligence and police intelligence, and so forth. They are generally driven by any of several factors, including budgetary concerns, prestige, and the idiosyncrasies of agency leaders, and it would be unrealistic not to expect them in the future. These difficulties can undermine counternarcotics pursuits within a single country. Thus, the potential dangers are increased when several states and agencies are involved. All partner countries and agencies should be constantly mindful of these dangers and subordinate agency interest to the common good: fighting the drug enemy.

Clearly, then, there is no easy way out of the Caribbean drug dilemma, either for the Caribbean or for the United States. The region’s “war on drugs” will be a long “war,” and it has to be a “total war,” conducted on several fronts simultaneously and by several nations acting in concert. Countermeasures need to be flexible, sustained, and results oriented. However, they should not be driven by political dictates for “quick results,” because the issues involved are multifaceted and the phenomenon is transnational. The jury is still out on whether the “war” can be “won.” But no one should dispute that the “war” has to be “fought.”

Notes

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of Miami, 1995), pp. 1–21; Richard L. Bernal, "Influencing U.S. Policy toward the Caribbean: A Post-Cold War Strategy," in Bryan, pp. 209–25; Jacqueline Bravehoy-Wagner, *Caribbean Diplomacy: Focus on Washington, Cuba, and the Post-Cold War Era* (New York: Caribbean Research Center, Medgar Evers College, 1995); and Jorge Rodríguez Beruff and Humberto García Muñiz, eds., *Security Problems and Policies in the Post-Cold War Caribbean* (London: Macmillan, 1996).

2. "Communique and Addresses: Eleventh Meeting of the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community," *Caricom Perspective*, Special Supplement, July–December 1990, p. 6.

3. Commonwealth Study Group, *Vulnerability: Small States in the Global Society* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1985), p. 119.

4. Sheila Harden, ed., *Small Is Dangerous: Micro States in a Macro World* (New York: St. Martin's, 1985), p. 13.

5. Commonwealth Study Group, p. 23.

6. Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "What New World Order?" *Foreign Affairs*, Spring 1992, p. 88.

7. For a discussion of military changes pertaining to the Caribbean, see Humberto García Muñiz and Jorge Rodríguez Beruff, "U.S. Military Policy toward the Caribbean in the 1990s," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, May 1994, pp. 112–24; and John J. Sheehan [Gen., USMC], "Lessons of 1994: Outlook for the Future," presentation at the U.S. Atlantic Command/National Defense University/North-South Center Caribbean Security Symposium, Miami, 18 April 1995.

8. Hans A. Binnendijk and Patrick Clawson, eds., *Strategic Assessment 1997: Flashpoints and Force Structure* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for National Strategic Studies, 1997), p. 79.

9. "Unified Command Plan Changes Announced," Pentagon Press Release 066-96, 7 February 1996. The changes to the UCP go beyond USACOM and SOUTHCOM; adjustments also affect Pacific Command, Central Command, and Strategic Command. The UCP itself is the overall schema that guides all unified commands, establishing missions, responsibilities, and force structures; delineating geographic areas of responsibilities (for geographic combat commanders); and specifying functional responsibilities (for functional commanders).

10. Wesley K. Clark [Gen., USA], "U.S. Southern Command Strategy for the Future," presentation at the 1997 Caribbean Island Nations Security Conference, Port of Spain, Trinidad, 18 March 1997, p. 15. After only little more than a year as commander in chief of SOUTHCOM, General Clark was reassigned to Europe, in August 1997, to become Supreme Allied Commander, Europe. His successor is General Charles Wilhelm, USMC, former commander of U.S. Marine Corps Forces Atlantic and commanding general of II Marine Expeditionary Force. See Robert Burns, "Marine May Head Southern Command," *Miami Herald*, 19 July 1997, p. 2B; and Caroline Keough, "The General Is In," *Miami Herald*, 27 September 1997, pp. 1B, 2B. General Wilhelm is the first Marine Corps officer to head the Southern Command.

11. Clark, p. 3.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

13. *Ibid.*

14. Domínguez, p. 2.

15. For a useful discussion of Caribbean geopolitics, see Richard Sim and James Anderson, "The Caribbean Strategic Vacuum," *Conflict Studies*, August 1980, pp. 1–21; David Ronfeldt, *Geopolitics, Security, and U.S. Strategy in the Caribbean Basin* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1983); Thomas D. Anderson, *Geopolitics of the Caribbean* (New York: Praeger, 1984); Andrés Serbín, *Caribbean Geopolitics: Toward Security through Peace?* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1990); Ivelaw L. Griffith, *The Quest For Security in the Caribbean* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), pp. 175–216; and Michael A. Morris, *Caribbean Maritime Security* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994).

16. For an interesting examination of the impact of global blocs and economic restructuring on the region, see Henry S. Gill, "The Caribbean and the World of Economic Blocs," *Social and Economic Studies*, vol. 31, no. 3, 1992, pp. 25–36; Mark Rosenberg and Jonathan T. Hiskey, "Changing Trading Patterns of the Caribbean Basin," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, May 1994, pp. 100–11; and Hibourne A. Watson, *Globalization, Liberalism, and the Caribbean: Deciphering the Limits of Nation, Nation-State, and Sovereignty under Global Capitalism*, Working Paper No. 3, Institute of Caribbean Studies, Univ. of Puerto Rico, 1995.

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18. Communique, Canada-CARICOM Heads of Government Summit, St. George's, Grenada, 5 March 1996, p. 4.

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20. See Ivelaw L. Griffith, "The Caribbean Security Landscape: A Reality Check," speech at the Georgetown University conference on the Caribbean, Washington, D.C., 18 June 1997.

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43. See "Gun Runnings," *Guyana Review*, June 1995, p. 12; and "Arms Found," and "Arms Seized," *Guyana Review*, April 1996, both on p. 2.
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