



**The World Today**  
**GLOBALISATION AND POLITICS: INSECURITY,  
ECONOMY AND PROGRESS**

Dr. Barry Ishmael  
Alumni, The UWI Graduate Institute of International Relations, UWI,  
St. Augustine

We are in an election year! This is by no means a revelation. It appears that there is a lack of confidence in the political leadership of our country and in its governance. Why is this? For those of us who have taken time out to look at international news we have noted a similar scenario in many democratic and developed countries. These feelings of frustration and indifference felt by many of our citizens are not unique to Trinidad and Tobago (T&T).

The immediate examples that come to mind are: the Bush administration in the United States and more recently the government of Mr. Tony Blair in the United Kingdom. Many believe that it was Blair's rapid loss of popularity among the electorate and within his own political party that ushered in his political demise. However, it is usually argued that Blair's downfall was as a result of his support for the United States (US) in the most recent US-led war on Iraq. The question that arises is why in T&T and many developed countries are the current governments so unpopular?

The war in Iraq as well as the fall of the former Soviet Union not only established the superiority of western style capitalism as the superior economic system, it also left a void in international bi-polar politics.

As the 'winner' of the Cold War, the United States was not in itself able to directly establish itself as the centre of a new imperial system. Instead, what it sought was to influence the global environment after the Cold War by a focus on multilateralism. The key achievement of this, as it pertains to the implications for global economic relations (trade), was the formation of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 1995. The most important legacy of the WTO is perhaps its Dispute Resolution Mechanism. It is this system that has put an end to the current preferential access that sugar from African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries will have to the European Union. The practical effect of this 'reform' of the EU sugar regime will be to effectively put an end to the sugar industries in many CARICOM countries (St. Kitts, is one example.)

Likewise, the expansion and liberalisation of global trade has brought with it the free movement of services, people and corporations. It has also brought with it the consolidation of ownership among companies in some key sectors of global trade (Sprint and AT&T, in telecommunications and Mitsubishi and UFJ Bank in banking). These service companies are part of a developing trend in global trade, that of the borderless trans-national enterprise. When these companies merge, when they move operations from one country to another, they create opportunities for more economic activity but they also cause loss of employment and loss of job security for those that are left behind. This

trend also affects governments and economic activity in small open economies such as ours.

Among populations in developing countries, the immediate impact of this is first seen in the loss of traditional, predictable, long term employment. For public servants constantly arguing for a living wage, the real struggle is keeping the traditional benefits they have come to rely on. They have to compete with not only their local compatriots but with a global work force. In Trinidad and Tobago, our workers have to choose between lower paying jobs or higher paying jobs without the traditional benefits or guarantees of traditional government employment.

Also, the crime situation can partially be blamed on the widening gap between rich and poor as brought about by the rapid spread of the factors of global capitalism. When governments provide social programmes that are aimed at teaching new skills to the under privileged, the preferred approach, they rarely address a key issue that pervades the sensibilities of all of our nations people, that is the loss of that 'feeling of security'. The crime situation in Trinidad and Tobago, the apparent inability of the authorities to take action against criminal elements has a deeper root cause than simply incompetence or indifference. It is a cultural phenomenon, the conflict between traditional values, morality etc., and the adaptive processes that our small now very open economy is under going to try to adapt to the new global reality. Furthermore, the present crime wave is not a phenomenon unique to Trinidad and Tobago. It is global in nature, a fact that is of no comfort to those among us who have been victims of crime or who are afraid of being victimised.

The issues of rising food prices, rising crime, the rising cost of living as well as the rising incivility among our people and the increasing inter-personal conflicts within the family, the workplace and even our places of worship are simply a part of the psychological fallout from our overall loss of security. The politicians, regardless of their political ambitions or whether they are sincere or not in their representations, are not the issue, the issue is how do we all as a people trust, work and strive together to regain that sense of security.