Opportunities and limitations of the exercise of foreign policy power by a very small state: the case of Trinidad and Tobago

Jacqueline Braveboy-Wagner
City University of New York

Abstract The idea that a microstate such as Trinidad and Tobago can possess and use ‘power,’ a trait generally associated with a high level of military and economic capability, would appear to a traditional realist to be absurd. This is largely because power is still seen as exercised at the global systemic level or at regional levels that are globally significant. However, small states generally focus their foreign policies on smaller circles, primarily neighbours and dominant bilateral partners. By moving the power analysis (back) to the state (foreign policy) level, extending the definition of ‘power’ to include status (‘position’) and actual attempts to get others to adopt an influencer’s preferences, and employing the newer views of power as soft and smart, this article argues that even very small states can exercise power within limited domains as long as they possess certain capabilities (in this case, energy resources) and are ready to seize available opportunities. The evidence shows, however, that the results of these attempts are still mixed, limited primarily by perceptual constraints on the part of both the small-state influencer and the target influencee.

Introduction
As the title indicates, this article analyses some selected attempts by a very small state to exert soft power over its neighbours and certain other diplomatic partners. The idea that a very small state such as the one chosen here, Trinidad and Tobago—a state of such small size that it is one of a group that some still call the ‘ministates’ or ‘microstates’ (Plischke 1977; Commonwealth Secretariat 1985; Braveboy-Wagner 2005)—can possess and use ‘power’, a trait generally associated with a relatively high level of military and economic capabilities, would appear to a traditional realist to be a theoretical non-starter. However, as will be elaborated, a foreign policy approach that is weakly realist can actually lend some robustness to prevailing explanations of the external behaviour of small states, albeit only the more developed and resilient ones. This article elaborates a number of initiatives purposively undertaken by the government of Trinidad and Tobago to further its interests and image in the region and the world.

The notion of small-state power
In the realist literature on power, the focus is on a state’s capabilities, which in turn affect its ability to ensure its security and survival within a global system of sovereign states, each of which seeks its own national interest (Morgenthau 1968).
In such a system, a weak state (that is, one with limited military capabilities) can exert very little individual influence except in the context of its value as an ally or potential ally of the great powers. In their foreign policy choices, therefore, such states usually choose to ally with a great power (‘bandwagon’ [Walt 1990]), ally with other small (weak) states (considered a less successful strategy [Rothstein 1968]), maintain their neutrality (the historical stance of European small states) or, in the postwar period, resort to nonalignment, a strategy that eschewed Cold War alliances and permitted countries to exploit superpower rivalries (see Martin 1962; Jensen 1966).

While most realists have focused on military power, some have incorporated an economic perspective that in some ways leaves more room for consideration of the bargaining/economic power of small states (for example, see Krasner 1985). However, they have at the same time warned of the dangers of economic interdependence, which is seen as increasing the vulnerability of the dominant states. Some (along with the neoliberal regime theorists) have maintained that there is a need for global economic hegemony, since only a hegemon can foster stability and promote appropriate regulations in its (or the collective) interest (see Kindleberger 1986; Krasner 1983). Such arguments and arrangements do not leave much room for the small state. And even though neoliberals see the international system as more complex, cooperative and inclusive than do the structural realists, it is still the case for them that, while a small state can exert some leverage on certain issues and within regional and global institutions, it cannot, acting individually, have much of an impact on the international system. In fact, Keohane in an early article termed most of them ‘system ineffectual’, that is, only able to influence the system in groups that ‘are so large that each state has minimal influence’ (Keohane 1969, 296).

It may be noted that the literature on power tends to refer rather generously to the concept of ‘small powers’, the term being used to mean states with weak military capability or, in Rothstein’s case, states that recognize that they must rely on others for their security (Rothstein 1968, 29). A militarily weak state is not, intuitively speaking, a ‘power’ at all unless it can be said to exert influence over larger nations through strategic location or military alliances. Moreover, since not all militarily weak states are small in the population sense, if one adds the population dimension—which is the dominant conception of ‘small’ in most of the literature—it is clear that most small-sized states are both militarily and economically weak. This is why small-state researchers have opted to study these states from the perspective of dependence and vulnerability, not power. In other words, the universe of small states with the potential to exercise military or economic power is itself very small.

In dealing with these few small-state powers, it is important to recognize that the power being talked about is hardly ever exercised at the systemic level. A state (such as Cuba) may be globally or even regionally weak, but if it is influential in certain arenas—in Cuba’s case, influence has been exercised in Latin America and Africa—it is, in this article, considered to be a small power. And so, in moving away from the idea that power must be exercised at the system level, a foreign policy approach, one that is actor specific, is most appropriate.

The notion of ‘foreign policy power’, elaborated by Chong and Maass in the lead article to this issue, is intended to ‘encapsulate a broader and updated understanding of the power of small states’. The two authors note that the phrase
has been carefully selected to emphasize the multiple dimensions, or possibilities, of power exercise'. The choice of phrasing highlights several notions that may not be immediately obvious. First, by using the term ‘power exercise’, they immediately avoid any debate about whether realists like Morgenthau considered power to be a means or an end in itself.Capabilities are clearly only a starting point in power analysis. Power must be exercised, or exerted, and so the focus must be on active efforts to gain position (Schweller 1999) or influence. Second, as noted before, the foreign policy perspective helps to move the discussion of power away from the system level while still taking into account the implications of system changes.

Chong and Maass (2010) maintain quite rightly that ‘foreign policy power’ emphasizes multiple possibilities in terms of the type of instruments used, in particular the use of ‘soft’ power as much as ‘hard’ power. Clearly, small state power is less likely to be built on a military than on an economic foundation and/or on normative considerations. In the economic sphere small states may be deemed relatively powerful (or potentially so) if they are industrially advanced (for example, Switzerland or Sweden) or possess energy resources (the Middle Eastern oil producers) or have thrived on extensive trade (Singapore) or have become known for certain technical skills (Cuba dispatches its medical personnel worldwide). Note that all of the countries cited have populations in the region of about ten million people (Cuba somewhat more). A small power may also become known for its ‘good’ global citizenship—the Scandinavian countries, for example, are generally singled out for their adherence to global regulations and for their social and humanitarian orientation both at home and abroad. All these countries are seen as using ‘soft’ power to exert influence over others in their regions or around the globe. Moreover, a small state may also exert influence based on ‘smart’ power, that is, its development of expertise and/or negotiation and strategic capabilities (see, for example, Joenniemi 1998; Browning 2006).

The focus on the use of soft and smart power by small nations contradicts some dominant trends in the study of small states, especially small developing states. While the traditional realist view was one of small as weak (exemplified by Vital 1967; Singer 1972), in the 1960s and 1970s, the ‘dependent state’ perspective dominated, which viewed developing states as a whole as lacking autonomy in decision-making and engaging in either compliant or consensual behaviour vis-à-vis their benefactors (for example, Moon 1983). With respect to the very small, the focus turned to questions about vulnerability—political subordination to larger neighbours as well as the great powers; economic weakness attributable, inter alia, to undiversified economies and dependence on unpredictable markets; and, as the 1980s wore on, increasing concern about environmental issues such as climate change, losses in habitat and biodiversity, pollution, deforestation and so on, in small developing states (Commonwealth Secretariat 1985; Commonwealth Secretariat and World Bank 2000). Though not specifically about foreign policy, research on vulnerability also highlighted the limits of small-state diplomacy as these states sought with difficulty to have their concerns heard in the international scene.

As Mastanduno and Kapstein note, ‘Although major powers may not be competing militarily, positional conflicts over resources, markets, prestige, and political influence are prevalent and will persist’ (1999, 5).
arena. More recently, the survivalist tone of vulnerability work has been replaced by a more positive turn toward resilience (Briguglio et al 2008; Cooper and Shaw 2009), although the global economic crisis that began in 2007 has contributed to a sense that few small states can be deemed resilient to global financial pressures. Certainly the fate of Iceland, which had appeared to be resilient but was very adversely impacted by the crisis, provides a cautionary tale.

A weak power approach introduces a very different dimension to the study of resilience. Essentially it aims to show that there are indeed some small states that may be not only resilient enough to deal with global economic pressures but also proactive enough to locate spaces in the international system where they might be able to successfully promote their interests. This does not mean that they are not vulnerable in many respects (as are all states to some degree or another) but that they are capable of employing strategies, both foreign and domestic, which allow them to overcome many of these handicaps.

By employing the language of realism, even in a weak neoclassical way, studies like this one can be critiqued for revisiting a paradigm that has been deemed irrelevant to small countries, unable to adequately explain state cooperation, and lacking an understanding of the role of domestic influences on state interaction. The fact is, however, to quote Donnelly, that ‘unless realism never provided valuable insights or explanations—and even its strongest critics do not suggest this—no reasonable person would want to “be” an anti-realist in the sense of never using realist theories’ (2009, 55). In other words, realism does indeed explain some things, just as other theories and approaches do as well. In the case of small states, a weak form of neoclassical realism which pays attention to state-level factors and includes normative factors as aspects of the ‘national interest’ can capture some overlooked aspects of small-state foreign policy.

The analysis that follows assesses the foreign policy use of soft (resource-based and value-based) power as well as an aspect of smart power (in the sense of resource-based knowledge) by a very small state in the pursuit of its national interests. Since power has to be exercised, the analysis is concerned with efforts to leverage these power bases in terms of: (a) its region; (b) its dominant bilateral partner, the United States (US); and (c) targeted global arenas. While power is about asserting one’s interest and getting others to do what one wants (Dahrendorf 1977), it is also, as Schweller notes, about position, that is, gaining status relative to others. Power is used in both senses in this article.

**Trinidad and Tobago**

Trinidad and Tobago is a very small state lying just off the east coast of Venezuela. Its territory, covering two main islands and a few tiny offshore islets, is only 5130 square kilometres (1980 square miles); its population is 1.3 million. It is ranked by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) as high in human development (59th in 2005 [UNDP 2008]). Its economy, measured by gross domestic product (GDP), is relatively large for a state of its size,\(^2\) at US$20.6 billion in 2007. In per capita GDP, Trinidad and Tobago stood at US$15,473 in 2007 (again,
compare Estonia at US$15,471). In the Caribbean region, only the Bahamas exceeds Trinidad and Tobago’s GDP per capita, at US$19,720 (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development [UNCTAD] 2008).

The comparatively large size of Trinidad and Tobago’s economy is attributable to extractive and industrial activity. Less than one per cent of the country’s GDP is derived from agriculture. Energy dominates all aspects of the economy, accounting for an estimated 39.6 per cent of GDP in 2008, 57.8 per cent of government revenues and 88.2 per cent of merchandise export receipts (Trinidad and Tobago Central Bank 2008, 8). However, the energy sector employs only 3.5 per cent of the population, most of which are employed in services and agriculture sectors (2008, 23). Some 5.2 per cent of the GDP comes from manufacturing, and the rest comes primarily from construction, financial and other services (2008, 69).

Trinidad and Tobago is by far the most industrialized economy in the Caribbean region. Although it is a small oil producer, it ranks as the world’s fifth-largest natural gas producer (exceeded only by Algeria, Qatar, Indonesia, Malaysia and Oman), and the largest exporter of ammonia and methanol.

Oil was discovered in Trinidad and Tobago in 1866, first produced in 1908 and first refined in 1912 (Bryan 2007, 367). In 2008 total oil production stood at 42 million barrels. Reserves, which have been declining, stood at about 2712 million barrels per day in 2006 (620 million barrels proven). About 80 per cent of crude oil produced is exported, and the rest is refined locally, about 40 per cent of refinery product coming from local sources and the remainder being mainly crude oil from neighbouring Venezuela. Import arrangements result in around 100,000 barrels of oil per day being imported whereas around 160,000 barrels of petroleum products per day are exported as well as 195,952 barrels of oil equivalent per day of natural gas (Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries 2008). With declining oil reserves, Trinidad and Tobago became an early converter to capturing rather than flaring natural gas, to the extent that it now supplies 70 per cent of the US market and produces about two per cent of world gas. Trinidad and Tobago’s gas exports are in the form of liquefied natural gas (LNG), and it possesses the world’s largest LNG ‘train’ (production module) (Bryan 2007, 370). Proven gas reserves stood at 17 trillion cubic feet in 2007 (Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries 2008).

Beyond oil and gas, as a former British colony that gained its independence in 1962, Trinidad and Tobago and its fellow English-speaking Caribbean nations also have a global reputation as stable and democratic nations with respect for the rule of law. While it is a republic, the country has maintained its membership in the Commonwealth, from which its main political and legal institutions were inherited. The country is also noteworthy for the fact that, despite its ethnic diversity (it is primarily composed of people of African and East Indian heritage supplemented by Chinese, European, Lebanese and various mixtures), political tension between the two main groups has never developed into open conflict, and social harmony is the norm. Finally, the country is known worldwide for its vibrant culture, having been the original home of the calypso and steelband art forms as well as the carnivals that have since spread throughout the Caribbean.

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3 This history of stability was, however, interrupted by two coup attempts in 1970 and 1990.
and, through the efforts of a large diaspora, well beyond. While this in itself offers potential for the exercise of cultural power, there is little evidence of a conscious, purposive promotion of cultural power by the government (rather than the people) of Trinidad and Tobago. In fact the effect of cultural promotion, which is primarily to be seen in the area of ‘image’, is difficult to measure when compared with the geo-political and economic initiatives outlined below. For this reason (and for reasons of space as well), cultural initiatives are not discussed in this article.

The power of energy

Any power that Trinidad and Tobago exerts is based largely on its possession of energy resources. Natural resources comprise a central element of power (see Bundy 1977 for a list), since it is these which support the industrialization processes that underlie military performance, increase production, foster exports and bring in revenues that are (or should be) used to improve social performance and human development. Of particular worth to a country is the possession of energy resources: from the coal that fuelled the industrial revolution, oil became the preferred source of energy for the major countries by the 20th century because of technological advancement that allowed the extraction of the product below the surface. Oil has been tied to military advancement at least since the early 20th century, being used to fuel the ships and planes used in World War I as well as the vast array of sophisticated military hardware constructed since then. But there is also oil’s general leverage effect on economies noted aptly by Winston Churchill in his statement to Parliament in 1913: ‘if we cannot get oil, we cannot get corn, we cannot get cotton, and we cannot get a thousand and one commodities necessary for the preservation of the economic energies of Great Britain’ (Maugeri 2006, 24).

As is well known, oil’s increased importance to the economic and military security of the industrialized nations was highlighted during the energy crisis of the 1970s. The crisis was generated by the efforts of the members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), first, to raise prices and taxes, and then in 1973 to embargo Western supporters of Israel after the fourth Middle East war. In the late 1970s to the 1980s, supply shortages brought on by the Islamic revolution in Iran and the lengthy Iran–Iraq War continued the upward trend in prices. Although prices eventually fell and remained stable through most of the 1990s, the combined effect of increased demand from emerging economies, instability in Nigeria and Venezuela, war between Israel and Lebanon in 2006, a standoff between the US/Europe and Iran over the latter’s nuclear enrichment policy, limited refinery capacity, and speculation caused by middlemen were all responsible for a huge run-up in prices that brought the price of oil per barrel to more than US$100 in 2008.4 As a global recession descended, beginning with banking and real estate crises in the US, the price of oil plummeted. Once again, however, the issue of energy independence, or, more precisely, energy security, has risen to paramount place on the global agenda for all the oil-importing nations of the world. Meanwhile, producing nations have their own security issues to deal with, primarily questions of market security and sustainable exploitation.

\footnote{4 For more detail on changes across time in oil prices, see Braveboy-Wagner (2009).}
It should be noted that by 2000, a number of oil-producing nations had turned to monetizing associated natural gas as well. Natural gas prices are less volatile than oil prices but there have also been highs and lows related to supply and demand. Spot prices averaged about US$6 per million BTU (British thermal units) in 2004, peaked at above US$14 in 2005, declined again in 2006 and 2007, peaked above US$13 in July 2008 with an average of US$9.13 for that year and decreased considerably to about US$5 in the early part of 2009 (US Department of Energy [DOE], Energy Information Administration 2009).

The world’s reliance on hydrocarbon energy has given a certain political capability to even small energy-producing nations such as Trinidad and Tobago, and more so, of course, to the large producers. At periods of peak prices, oil- and gas-producing and -exporting countries have not only been able to increase their revenues for domestic development but also been able to exercise some foreign policy power to achieve their interests. Not all countries playing the energy game are actually producers. Some countries (for example, Georgia) benefit because they exert leverage as transporters of gas. In all of these cases, however, the size of a country is less significant than the level of dependence of its trading partners.

A good example of a small state that has used its energy resources not so much to influence resistant countries to do what it wants as to display leadership is Qatar. This country of only 841,000 people (2007), only a quarter of whom are citizens, had a GDP before the global recession of 2008 of US$66,735 million and a GDP per capita of a huge US$79,387 (UNCTAD 2008). Most of its GDP derives from oil production and related industries, and in addition it is expected to be the world’s largest LNG producer in 2010 (‘Qatar’ 2008). While Qatar may not be particularly influential on the world stage, although it is a close ally of the US (it hosts the US Central Command), it has used its resource power to project itself as a leader of the Arab world. In this respect, Qatar has adopted the role of mediator in a number of conflicts between fellow Arab and Muslim nations. As one news source noted, in 2007 and 2008 alone, ‘the Qatari foreign minister, Hamad bin Jassim bin Jaber Al Thani (widely known as HBJ), has flown his jet—repeatedly—everywhere from Morocco to Libya to Yemen, using charm, guile and large amounts of money to mediate disputes, with varying success’ (Worth 2008). One particular success came in May 2008 when the Emir played a primary role in mediating factional conflict in Lebanon that threatened to bring down the government and prevent a power-sharing agreement from being worked out (Worth 2008).

Two simple conclusions about foreign policy power stem from the above examples. The first is that the exercise of power as influence (getting other countries to do what one wants) is only going to be successful if the target of the influence attempt is in some way dependent on one’s resources. Second, in terms of the exercise of power for the broader purpose of achieving relative prestige or status (‘position’), success depends on opportunity and entrepreneurial leadership as well as the consent of others. If others resist a country’s attempts at leadership, tension can be the likely result. Thus, for example, Nigeria’s use of petrodollar diplomacy to establish the West African Community (ECOWAS) and Libya’s similar push for the establishment of the African Union were both met initially by the suspicion and resistance of neighbouring countries (Braveboy-Wagner 2009, 151–154; Adogamhe 2003, 91–93).
Trinidad and Tobago’s mixed influence in the Caribbean

As a very small state with relative wealth, Trinidad and Tobago can be expected to seek to influence its immediate neighbourhood first. Indeed since 1967 (with effect from 1968) it has been a member of a regional free trade area (the Caribbean Free Trade Area, CARIFTA), which was elevated to a common market and community in 1973–1974 (the Caribbean Community, CARICOM). In fact, Trinidad and Tobago’s nationalist leader Dr Eric Williams was a vigorous promoter and early adopter of regionalism (see, for example, Williams 1969)

Even before oil was produced, Trinidad and Tobago’s resources had attracted immigration from neighbouring states. In the 19th century, when West Indian sugar was very important globally, the country, along with British Guiana, produced the highest volume of sugar in the region. Both countries drew Caribbean immigration because of the higher wages paid by planters after slaves were emancipated (Palmer 1995, 5). Later, after World War II, immigrants were attracted to Trinidad because of the stationing of a US naval base on the island. Still later, the leverage effect on the economy resulting from the development of the oil industry continued to attract immigrants. In the late 1950s, the British sought to federate the English-speaking Caribbean islands as a prelude to granting the grouping independence. However, arguments over power-sharing arrangements between the largest island, Jamaica, and the richest, Trinidad, soon led to a break-up of the incipient federation when Jamaica opted for independence in 1961. The smaller islands, then known as the ‘Little Eight’\(^5\) then sought—in view of their own perceived lack of viability—to federate with Trinidad and Tobago. However, Trinidad and Tobago’s leader, noting that the smaller countries were primarily concerned with freedom of movement to Trinidad, famously professed that ‘1 from 10 leaves 0’ and instead negotiated with the British for the country’s independence (Williams 1969, 203). Grenada then sought political union with Trinidad, which was in turn rejected. After Barbados also gained its independence (1966), the remaining seven countries became self-governing ‘associated states’ with Britain, until all but Montserrat gained their independence in the 1970s and 1980s.

The dependence of the region on trade with Trinidad and Tobago has only increased over the years. The country dominates intra-CARICOM trade; it sent

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\(^5\) The Little Eight were: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, St Kitts-Nevis-Anguilla, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, and Montserrat.
out US$2.4 billion in goods to the region in 2006 (17.2 per cent of the country’s total exports) while importing some US$98 million (1.5 per cent of total imports). More specifically, in 2006 Trinidad and Tobago accounted for 86 per cent of intra-CARICOM exports but only about four per cent of regional imports (CARICOM Statistics Sub-programme 2009). The wide gap between Trinidad and Tobago and its regional partners stems not only from its energy-related exports, but also from its manufacturing exports. Moreover, as a result of the liberalization of the 1990s and 2000s, Trinidacian financial firms have also established a growing presence in the region (including the Dominican Republic), buying shares or buying out both financial and manufacturing operations in many countries. Between 1999 and 2004 Trinidad and Tobago companies invested US$315 million, not a large amount in absolute terms but a sum invested in various key sectors in CARICOM, including shipping and trading, banking, life insurance, cement and beverages (alcohol). Meanwhile, portfolio investment representing bond placements by CARICOM states in Trinidad and Tobago amounted to a further US$1.2 billion, a significant figure given the slowing of flows of development funds from international agencies. Financial flows amounted to 4.6 per cent of GDP in 2003 (all figures are from Trinidad and Tobago Central Bank 2005). These figures do not include Trinidad and Tobago’s aid to CARICOM under various support funds, outlined in the discussion of aid below.

Given the country’s trade dominance and increasing financial presence (or increasing economic power) within the CARICOM area, it would be natural to expect Trinidad and Tobago to play a leadership role in the region and to seek to exert political and economic influence over its neighbours. Surprisingly, however, Trinidacian efforts in this regard are best described as low-key. The country has remained openly committed to regional cooperation, participating actively in and indeed funding (see below) many initiatives of the community, except during the contentious and ideologically polarized era of the late 1970s, when it downgraded its participation. Yet Trinidad and Tobago has been wary of appearing to be too dominant and demanding, aware of the fact that other Caribbean states may, and indeed do, resent its strength even as they accept the fact that the country is the region’s economic magnet. However, Trinidad and Tobago’s attempts at regional influence and leadership have been moderately successful in some respects. Two particular arenas are discussed below: Trinidad and Tobago’s relationship with Latin America; and Trinidad and Tobago’s security and economic assistance to the region.

As the most southerly of the West Indian islands, Trinidad and Tobago has historically had good and close relations with Venezuela. It has a history of trade links with that country, has sometimes contentious but shared fishing arrangements and, most importantly, is a refiner of Venezuelan oil. Moreover, ties are strong with respect to tourism, immigration and education, especially language training on both sides. In addition to those with Venezuela, relations with Colombia and Brazil were established by Trinidad and Tobago relatively

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6 Provisional figures for 2007 were US$1.7 billion and US$118 million, respectively.
7 Trinidad and Tobago was increasingly alienated from the socialist members of the community—Guyana, Jamaica and Grenada, in particular the last, whose unconstitutional revolutionary government was kept at arm’s length. Because of nationalist and ideological issues, no CARICOM heads of government summits were held between 1975 and 1982.
soon after independence in the 1970s and have been deepened since then. By the 2000s, therefore, Trinidad and Tobago had officially developed a goal of positioning itself as a bridge to Latin America,\(^8\) to the point of requiring the widespread adoption of Spanish as a second language. As a result, Trinidad and Tobago has intended to lead the CARICOM sub-region into the Latin American orbit and has taken a number of initiatives in this regard.

Trinidad and Tobago was the first country to join the Organization of American States (OAS) in 1967 and for a period of time was the leading representative of the English-speaking countries within the organization. By the late 1970s all the independent English-speaking Caribbean islands as well as Suriname had joined the OAS, where, through force of numbers, working collectively, they have been able to exert a fairly significant degree of influence. A particular illustration of their growing impact was their ability to garner enough support for the removal of a 1985 charter provision that prohibited Belize and Guyana from joining the OAS because of their border disputes with Guatemala and Venezuela, respectively.\(^9\) Another success has been in securing elected positions. Among the most important achievements is the fact that first Barbados, then Trinidad and Tobago, and currently Suriname have occupied the position of assistant secretary-general, an important niche for promoting the concerns of the small non-Spanish-speaking members of this predominantly Latin organization.

Along with leading the movement into the OAS, Trinidad and Tobago’s Prime Minister Dr Williams translated his concern that non-Latin issues were not sufficiently heard into a push for the creation of a specifically Caribbean-oriented division within the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA). This division, called the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee, was formed in 1975. For similar reasons, Trinidad and Tobago also supported the addition of a second ‘C’ (for Caribbean) in ECLAC, a change that was approved in 1984. Another initiative supported strongly by Trinidad and Tobago was the creation of a new Latin American organization that would include Cuba while excluding the US. The main promoters of the idea were Venezuela and Mexico, both of which felt that the time was right for the establishment of a counterpoint to the US-dominated OAS. The Latin American Economic System (SELA—Sistema Económico Latinoamericano) was established in 1975.

Trinidad and Tobago lobbied hard for, and finally acquired, the headquarters of a new organization created in 1994 to formalize CARICOM’s outreach to Central America. This Association of Caribbean States (ACS) was intended to promote functional cooperation and free trade between the Caribbean and Central America. Venezuela seemed at first to be the front runner for the secretariat; however, Trinidad and Tobago engaged in vigorous lobbying in the member

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\(^8\) Among the many speeches emphasizing the goal of integrating Trinidad and Tobago’s activities into Latin America, see the address by the Minister of Trade and Industry at the launch of the CARICOM/Costa Rica Trade Agreement, 16 November 2005 (<www.tradeind.gov.tt/Speeches/2005/Costa%20Rica%20signing.pdf>) and the speech of the Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister of Finance at the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers’ Association Annual General Meeting 2009 (<www.tradeind.gov.tt/Minister%20Browne%20speechTTMA%20breakfast.pdf>), accessed 2 April 2010.

\(^9\) Both were able to join the organization in 1991.
capitals, which eventually succeeded. Venezuela was appeased by being given the post of first secretary-general.

Trinidad and Tobago’s trading relationships have also formed the basis for arrangements established between the CARICOM integration movement and Latin American countries. Since the 1970s Venezuela has been active in the Caribbean after redefining itself as a Caribbean nation with geopolitical interests in the sub-region. Hence its decision in 1993 to sign a one-way trade agreement with CARICOM was in keeping with its other activities. However, the decision by Colombia to follow suit (1994) and subsequent agreements between CARICOM and the Dominican Republic (2000) and Costa Rica (2004) were based primarily on the economic opportunities envisaged in Trinidad and Tobago. In particular, the Costa-Rica–CARICOM accord was originally negotiated as a pact between Costa Rica and Trinidad and Tobago. In view of the common market rules governing third party arrangements, however, the trade agreement was regularized and extended to the entire region. Trinidad and Tobago can also take some credit for promoting the establishment of relations with Cuba, but the decision to do so in 1972 was a collective one made by the four larger CARICOM countries. Still, Cuba’s trade relations with Trinidad and Tobago are also central to Cuba’s economic relations with CARICOM; a Cuba–CARICOM trade agreement was signed in 2000.

In 1994 the process of negotiating hemispheric free trade and functional cooperation began in Miami, in an atmosphere of optimism after the successful negotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement. Trinidad and Tobago initiated a lobbying campaign for the headquarters of the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas, with Port-of-Spain competing against such better-known cities as Miami, Atlanta, Puebla (Mexico) and Panama City. With the failure of talks, and their virtual abandonment in 2005, the headquarters issue remains on the backburner. In the meantime, however, Trinidad and Tobago scored a significant success when it was approved as the host of the fifth Summit of the Americas scheduled for April 2009. Previous summits had been held in Miami, Santiago (Chile), Quebec City and Mar del Plata (Argentina). Trinidad and Tobago is the smallest country to host such a large gathering of heads of government from the hemisphere. Since the gathering fortuitously coincided with the coming to power of a new and popular African-American president in the US, the presence of this president, along with his counterparts in the hemisphere, brought Trinidad and Tobago far more international visibility than might have been the case otherwise.

Beyond Latin America, and notwithstanding its low-key approach to the sub-region referred to earlier, Trinidad and Tobago has been able to influence CARICOM in a number of ways. As noted earlier, the country was one of the early promoters of regional integration and has historically been viewed as central to integration by the eastern Caribbean countries. Furthermore, its relationship with neighbouring continental Guyana has solidified over the years, partly due to the two countries’ ethnic similarities (both have significant East Indian as well as African populations). Even though, given the bitter break-up of the West Indies Federation, CARICOM members have not openly embraced political integration (which integration theorists see as the capstone of such arrangements [for example, Balassa 1961]), Trinidad and Tobago has in recent times promoted two initiatives for political union.
In 1993 Prime Minister Patrick Manning announced an initiative to unite with Barbados and Guyana, a proposal that, however, was never pursued. At the time Guyana was still liberalizing, moving from authoritarian socialist rule and dealing with significant ethno-electoral instability. Barbados, too, seemed more interested in promoting its leadership of the small states of the region than in submerging its identity in a union. In 2008 Manning proposed another initiative: union with Grenada, St Vincent and the Grenadines, and St Lucia in the first instance, to be followed by others if they agreed. This time, knowing that the country’s additional petro-revenues made his proposition more attractive, the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago travelled around the region to sell the idea. By late 2008 the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), that is the entire sub-grouping of the eastern Caribbean, had endorsed the idea of union. Trinidadians and Tobagonians were, however, considerably less enthusiastic, many calling for a referendum on the issue. The Prime Minister maintained that only a simple majority in parliament was needed to pass the required legislation. As of March 2009, a working group mandated to move the issue forward had published a report rationalizing the union in terms of spatial integration in a broad number of functional areas and eventual full and unitary integration of political structures (see Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2009). On the technical side, the union proposal, in calling for economic union by 2011 and political union by 2013, conflicts with CARICOM’s own timeline for the single economy (2015). The OECS, meanwhile, had previously decided on a single economy by 2009. How these differing dates will be reconciled remains to be seen. Moreover, the global recession that descended in 2008 may put any such idea of union on the backburner for the time being.

With respect to security issues, Trinidad and Tobago can certainly claim some leadership and influence within CARICOM. After the organizational structure of CARICOM was modernized in 2001, CARICOM prime ministers adopted special portfolios, Trinidad and Tobago assuming the responsibility for regional security. In the 1990s and 2000s, this portfolio has included significantly expanded responsibilities, and now spans issues as diverse as peacekeeping, drug-trafficking, counter-terrorism, money-laundering and human-trafficking. Historically, CARICOM countries have tended to be non-interventionist, exceptions being crisis-level situations such as the breakdown of order in Grenada in 1983 and an attempted coup in Trinidad and Tobago in 1990, both of which resulted in peacekeeping interventions in which CARICOM states participated. In the new post-Cold-War order, however, CARICOM has been more proactive in regional conflict resolution. For example, Trinidad and Tobago joined with Jamaica (the chair of CARICOM at the time) and the Bahamas (a country much affected by refugee outflows) to attempt to resolve successive crises in Haiti, in particular the electoral impasse that led to stalemate between the Haitian government and the opposition in 2002–2004. Again, as the largest economy, Trinidad and Tobago has been looked to to provide both ideas and financial support for CARICOM’s security efforts. The country has established a coordinating security secretariat within the Office of the Prime Minister that manages both national and regional efforts. At the regional level, Trinidad and Tobago oversees the operations of a new regional security architecture characterized by inter-agency collaboration and intelligence-sharing; at the national level, the country’s investment in offshore patrol vehicles, fast boats or interceptors and radar has been accompanied
by collaborative arrangements with Barbados as a way to protect the broader southern Caribbean.

Trinidad and Tobago’s efforts to assist the region economically are obviously directly related to its resource power. Its partners in the region have had high expectations that, given its trade dominance as well as close historical, cultural and social ties with them, Trinidad and Tobago would use its energy resources to provide them generous economic, technical and humanitarian assistance. Indeed, during the first energy crisis of the 1970s Trinidad and Tobago disbursed about US$400 million in aid to the region in various forms: concessionary project aid; financing purchases of petroleum products through an oil facility; counterpart contributions to the regional development bank; balance of payments support; purchasing of bonds and debentures of other member countries; granting of access to its domestic capital market; and floating of Caribbean Development Bank (the regional bank) and Inter-American Bank bond issues in the domestic market with the proceeds going to CARICOM countries (Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Finance 1983). In the 2000s with the oil price skyrocketing once again, Trinidad and Tobago established a US$50 million Petroleum Fund to be used for poverty alleviation and disaster recovery efforts in the region. Some oil monies also went to finance a regional development fund, part of a trade support programme, to strengthen regional economies within the context of the efforts to establish a regional single market and economy by providing assistance to disadvantaged countries, regions and sectors (Braveboy-Wagner 2007, 125). More than US$360 million in debt relief was extended to neighbouring Guyana under the World Bank/International Monetary Fund’s Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative and enhanced HIPC initiative (Guyana’s debt to Trinidad and Tobago amounted to some US$536 million; see Trinidad and Tobago Central Bank 2005). Trinidad and Tobago also proposed to build an intra-Caribbean natural gas pipeline as well as two smelter plants that would source aluminium from Jamaica, Suriname and Guyana. Every year, too, the country has been the regional financial first-responder for humanitarian assistance after natural disasters, primarily hurricanes.

While the listing above suggests that Trinidad and Tobago has been successful in leveraging its resources to influence the region, the record is actually more mixed than it appears. There have been crucial instances in which the region’s stances have in fact gone against Trinidad and Tobago’s interests. A few examples can be noted: in the 1970s, notwithstanding Trinidad and Tobago’s aid and petrodollar diplomacy, CARICOM countries quickly embraced rival Venezuela when it decided to expand its power in the region. Venezuela extended various kinds of bilateral and multilateral assistance to the Caribbean countries and joined with Mexico in establishing an oil facility (the San José Accord) to give preferential prices to Central American as well as Caribbean countries. Trinidad and Tobago was annoyed by the trek of Caribbean nations to Venezuela in search of aid, especially in view of the fact that the terms of the San José Accord were actually less generous than those of its own oil facility. Around the same time, a smelter arrangement proposed by Trinidad and Tobago to source aluminium from Jamaica and Guyana had to be scrapped when Jamaica decided to pursue (unsuccessfully, as it turned out) a similar arrangement with Mexico.

Almost the same situation recurred in the first decade of the 2000s. Once again, Venezuela, now under the proactive and socialist-leaning Hugo Chávez, offered
the region membership in an oil facility, PetroCaribe, under which members would receive preferential price treatment and in some instances could grant Venezuela preferential access to their sugar, bananas and other products as a substitute for energy payments (PetroCaribe Energy Cooperation Agreement 2005). Again Caribbean countries (except Barbados, which did not wish to jeopardize its energy arrangements with Trinidad and Tobago) hurried to join this arrangement, even though it meant that Trinidad and Tobago would be forced to find a new market for the energy supplies it previously provided to CARICOM. At the same time, a project under which Trinidad and Tobago was to supply LNG to Jamaica, for use in its alumina industry, stalled amid contentention over pricing at the re-gasification terminal in Jamaica.

Besides energy-related issues, Trinidad and Tobago might reasonably expect the other members of CARICOM to agree to pursue some of its own trading interests. For example, it has exhibited more interest than the other CARICOM members in pursuing free trade with Latin American countries, but is bound by common market regulations to obtain CARICOM agreement to close these deals. Getting CARICOM to move forward in this respect has been difficult. Trade talks with Central America have moved forward quite slowly while trade with Mercado Común del Sur (MERCOSUR) has been placed on the backburner at the time of writing (2009). Finally, the imbalance between Trinidad and Tobago and the other countries in manufacturing exports has also led to regular disputes with regional neighbours, while the country’s financial dominance in the region has also triggered nationalist responses. These nationalist arguments have therefore constrained Trinidad and Tobago’s overall influence. In fact, other countries often seek to counter or balance rather than bandwagon (using the term non-militarily) with Trinidad and Tobago.

Trinidad and Tobago: a failure to influence the US

As is the case for most Western hemisphere countries, the US is the main trading partner of Trinidad and Tobago, accounting for 45.1 per cent of its exports in 2008 and 23.7 per cent of imports (Trinidad and Tobago Central Bank 2008, 118). US firms are also the main investors in the country, bringing in nearly US$700 million in 2005, compared with the second-highest investor, the United Kingdom (UK), at US$164.5 million (Trinidad and Tobago Central Bank 2007). The oil industry developed with primary exploration by US multinationals, and today Chevron-Texaco, Exxon-Mobil and EOG are among the major investors in oil and gas. In the 1970s, with nationalism spreading throughout the Third World and in the petroleum industry in particular, Trinidad and Tobago localized the oil industry and sought (unsuccessfully) to join OPEC.\textsuperscript{10} Liberalization of foreign investment occurred in the 1980s as the country moved to increase exploration as well as refining capacity and to develop downstream industries. This has brought in investment from a range of sources, including the UK, Canada, Spain and Australia. However, the concentration on the US market has been deepened by the turn to natural gas: the country is the single largest supplier of LNG to the US, 

\textsuperscript{10} OPEC declined to accept Trinidad and Tobago because of its small production base as well as a disinclination to admit more Latin American and Caribbean members.
supplying 70–75 per cent of that country’s imports since 2006 (US DOE figures). Moreover, Trinidad and Tobago accounts for about 53 per cent of US imports of ammonia (in tonnes) and 70 per cent of its imports of methanol.\footnote{The ammonia figure is for 2008 (see Trade Date International Pty Ltd, \url{<www.tradedata.net/files/...USA_Import_of_Andhydrous_Ammonia_1_.pdf>}); the methanol figure is from ICISpricing (\url{<www.icispricing.com>}), report of 9 October 2009, accessed 2 April 2010.}

After independence in 1961, Trinidad and Tobago’s foreign policy, though pro-West, focused on maintaining some political distance from the US. The distance in the relationship between the two countries had been soured by a long campaign to reclaim a naval base that was leased to the US by Britain for 99 years during World War II. It took many negotiations, piggy-backed on government-led popular demonstrations, before the base was returned in 1967. Over the years relations with the US have been cordial, but there have been some tensions when the dominant party, the People’s National Movement, has been in power. Indicative of the ‘distance’ have been Trinidad and Tobago’s refusal to approve the US intervention in Grenada in 1983, and the country’s development of strong relations with Cuba.

Trinidad and Tobago’s expectations, as a very small country, of its relations with the US have not been for more than ‘sovereign’ treatment, and recognition that while there are mutual interests, there may be areas in which strategies do not coincide. As the US reliance on Trinidad and Tobago’s gas (as well as ammonia and methanol) has grown, so have expectations for reciprocal benefit. Trinidad and Tobago has seen itself as a stable export and import market for the US, a democratic country that cooperates with the US, especially in security areas. Indeed, the country has signed and ratified several instruments mandating this cooperation, including taxation agreements and ‘Shiprider’ agreements under which the US participates in drug interdiction efforts in coastal waters.

Trinidad and Tobago can certainly point to some successes in its relations with the US. The two governments share an interest in energy cooperation, and the investment of US companies is supported by US government agencies. The Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI), a US programme of trade preferences in place since 1982, has benefited Trinidad and Tobago more than other Caribbean countries. In security, the US has generally been careful not to criticize Trinidad and Tobago too loudly for any deficiencies in its efforts to reduce drug-trafficking and money-laundering. In 2006 Trinidad and Tobago received a waiver from signing an ‘Article 98’ agreement to exempt US citizens from the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court (ICC). The waiver allowed the US to resume offering military training programmes that had been cut off in 2003. US security cooperation was tightened during the Caribbean’s hosting of the World Cricket Cup in 2007 as well as Trinidad and Tobago’s hosting of the Fifth Summit of the Americas. There has also been no undue US pressure on Trinidad and Tobago to attenuate its close relations with either Cuba or with Hugo Chávez’s Venezuela.

On the other hand, Trinidad and Tobago can show few positive gains in the relationship. In fact its frustration was concisely expressed by Prime Minister Manning in 2006. The Prime Minister noted that, despite the fact that Trinidad and Tobago was ‘a stable democracy, providing 71% of all US imports of methanol, 73% of US imports of LNG and 55% of US imports of ammonia’, the US has been ‘studiously ignoring … the requirements of Trinidad and Tobago’
Among the problems cited were the slowness in implementing the ‘third border initiative’, a 2001 initiative of President Bush intended to strengthen cooperation with the region in social, environmental and security areas; the stalling of negotiations for a successor agreement to the CBI; and, most importantly for Trinidad and Tobago, the fact that a request for duty-free access to the US market of goods packaged in the country had been disregarded. In security areas, Prime Minister Manning noted that the concern about terrorism had diverted US attention away from drug interdiction but that

The drug cartels in South America are no less active today than they were two or three or five years ago and … we are seeing a heightened use of Caribbean countries as transshipment centers…. Trinidad and Tobago has offered to patrol the eastern Caribbean; we will acquire the assets to do that but we cannot afford to finance it. The security that will be provided … is as much the security of the United States as it is the security of the Caribbean.

Finally, the Prime Minister suggested that his country was too focused on the US market in terms of its LNG exports and that better prices would be obtained by diversifying into markets away from the US.\(^{12}\)

Not long after this, the CBI was extended to the end of 2010. Although this was attributable to collective Caribbean lobbying, Trinidad and Tobago’s complaints were part of that effort. The extension came some time after a major meeting of President Bush with all the Caribbean leaders in Washington in June 2007. The issue of duty-free entry of packaged goods was, however, countered by the termination of the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) preferences for Trinidad and Tobago in 2008 (with effect in 2010). Ironically, GSP termination, based on Trinidad and Tobago’s high income level, came right after a visit by Prime Minister Manning to Washington to discuss energy-related issues. At best this was bad timing; at worst, it appeared that Trinidad and Tobago’s lobbying had had the opposite to the desired effect. In security areas, Trinidad and Tobago has since turned to Israel, Australia, Canada and other sources for assistance, although, as noted, US security assistance has improved and drug-trafficking operations in the Caribbean are again being prioritized by the US. In short, Trinidad and Tobago, both individually and in its attempts to serve as CARICOM interlocutor, has seen relatively meagre results in its attempts to exert leverage over the US.

The values dimension

As small stable countries known for adhering to the rule of law, the English-speaking CARICOM countries have traditionally been seen by the international community as among the few Global South nations that have had a consistent record of democracy and respect for the rule of law and for human rights norms. They are well respected at the United Nations (UN), for example, and this ‘normative power’ has allowed them to be elected to a wide range of key positions in that body, despite their size. A particular case in point is St Lucia, which to date

\(^{12}\) The country joined the Gas Exporting Country Forum, a producers’ grouping formed in 2001. Other members are: Algeria, Bolivia, Brunei, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Indonesia, Iran, Libya, Malaysia, Nigeria, Qatar, Russia, the United Arab Emirates and Venezuela. Kazakhstan and Norway are observers.
has been the smallest country to serve in the presidency of the General Assembly (in 2003). Jamaica has been highly visible in international economic and social forums, and during the era of Michael Manley was particularly well known in Third World forums. Barbados is associated with various small-state initiatives, especially sustainable development issues in small-island developing states (SIDS). Guyana is most known for its activism within the Nonaligned Movement (NAM) as well as the Group of 77. For these countries, positioning themselves proactively in international organizations has allowed them to have some voice and influence on relevant aspects of the global agenda.

Trinidad and Tobago has also been a partner in SIDS, NAM and other Global South arrangements. Under its first prime minister, Dr Eric Williams, the country was proactive on global anti-colonial and anti-racial issues. The country has also received a great deal of positive attention as an early promoter of the International Criminal Court (ICC). It was a former president as well as prime minister of the country, ANR Robinson, who lobbied hard for the creation of a court that would try war crimes and crimes against humanity. His efforts, joined by others, led to the creation of the court in 1998. After a period of low-key performance internationally, Trinidad and Tobago was approved as host of the Commonwealth Heads of Government summit held in November 2009, five months after hosting the Summit of the Americas. As chair of the Commonwealth Heads for the next two years, Trinidad and Tobago expects to be able to increase its influence and strengthen its relationships with other African and Asian nations.

Not all of these international organizational activities relate directly to resource wealth; they are better perceived as related to normative power. On the other hand, a value-resource nexus has developed in Trinidad and Tobago’s vision for its humanitarian as well as knowledge-sharing outreach. As petro-revenues have increased, the country’s interest in developing a reputation for good governance and social consciousness has likewise increased even if the country has some way to go itself in consolidating its domestic efforts at good governance.

For most oil-producing countries, the energy windfall of the 2000s has been spent more wisely that that of the 1970s. In the 1970s, it is generally agreed, oil windfalls tended to be spent on large-scale projects of dubious social value, and governments tended to engage in and encourage consumption at the expense of savings for a future downturn. In the oil boom of the 2000s, however, these states have tried to be more prudent. There is a greater recognition of the finite nature of fossil fuels as well as the volatility of the market. In recent years states have created well-endowed sovereign funds and invested not only in buildings but in material and social infrastructure. In a related vein, while the major oil-producing nations were relatively generous in the 1970s to their non-energy producing counterparts at all levels of development, they are being asked today to focus their aid to support the achievement of the new set of norms encompassed by the (UN-initiated) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs mandate eight areas for improvement globally, including poverty alleviation and targets for aid, trade and debt relief to be achieved by 2015.13

13 The MDG goals are: to eradicate extreme poverty, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensure environmental sustainability and develop a global partnership for development.
It is in the context of the MDGs that Trinidad and Tobago has opted to establish an outreach programme to other energy-producing states. The aim is both to help such nations develop and to establish Trinidad and Tobago as a knowledge-exporting country, one that is using the skills learned in developing its comparatively well-managed energy industries to help emerging energy exporters (of gas in particular) manage their economies in keeping with best practices. Under the programme, Belize has been provided with technical help in training and taxation in the context of the management of its newly discovered energy resources. In addition, in 2007 Trinidad and Tobago began a programme of technical assistance to West, Central and Southern African countries, initially in Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Congo-Brazzaville, Angola and Gabon. Since then relations have been initiated with Tanzania and Rwanda. This initiative can be said to represent an attempt by a small country to extend its influence beyond its region through ‘smart’ initiatives underwritten by a normative dimension.

Conclusion

It has long been understood that a very small state cannot hope to exert independent influence in the global system, although it can certainly join alliances and coalitions to preserve and promote its interests. However, coalition behaviour has not been the focus of this analysis. Instead it is maintained that a very small state, given appropriate resource or value endowments, can indeed craft a foreign policy that is proactive and influential in targeted domains. Trinidad and Tobago is a very small state by any objective standard, but its hydrocarbon-based energy resources have made it the largest economy in the Caribbean. Using these resources, and boosted by a history of responsible normative behaviour, the country has sought to play a leadership role both in the sub-region and in certain international institutions. While it has achieved some successes with respect to the Caribbean, Latin America and an incipient outreach to Africa, it has not been successful in its efforts to get the US to do what it wants it to do.

The illustrations provided in this chapter show, then, that the mere fact that others are dependent or strongly reliant on a nation’s resources does not translate into success either in being seen as a leader or in influencing others to accept one’s preferences. A low global position is still a limiting factor when it comes to seeking influence over powerful partners such as the US, especially when the national interests of a great power require strong focus on other areas of the world. Moreover, without skilled diplomacy, efforts to pressure even regional partners may produce a counter-reaction against perceived regional dominance.

It was noted in the theoretical discussion that the study of small states has focused for some time on issues of vulnerability and resilience. No small state with severe vulnerabilities, such that the state cannot cope with or bounce back from global pressures, can consistently exercise power in the sense in which it has been used in this article. In this respect, Trinidad and Tobago has resorted to deficit spending to ride out the decline in the price of oil and gas and still has adequate monetary reserves (US$9.4 billion in 2008; see Trinidad and Tobago Central Bank 2008). Since its financial sectors have had relatively limited international exposure, the country has largely escaped the ‘Iceland effect’. On the other hand, it is clear that Trinidad and Tobago’s continued ‘power’ rests on its
ability to exhibit resilience in a number of sectors: economic, by continuing to
grow economically, attracting foreign investment, promoting and diversifying
energy and trade linkages and stepping up efforts to develop the non-energy
sectors; socially, by dealing successfully with a high level of crime linked in large
part to the inability to curb drug- and arms-trafficking, and by continuing
improvements in health, human resources and technology; and politically, by
appeasing an opposition galvanized against the financial scale and pro-industrial
methodology in both development and foreign policy projects.

As Browning notes, smallness is constructed, and ‘more positive renderings of
smallness in constructing state identities will entail broader possibilities for
foreign policies’ (Browning 2006, 674). Trinidad and Tobago has, though not
consistently, sought to craft a foreign policy that seeks to break out of the limited
visions of what a small state, indeed a very small state, can and should do. This is
not to say that systemic factors, including the variability in the fortunes of oil and
gas, as well as domestic factors (the will of leaders, the role of oppositions,
bureaucratic limitations and so on) are not highly important in constraining as well
as determining whether a country can succeed in its ambitions. However, with the
variable tools of foreign policy now available—soft as well as smart—there are
opportunities open for small states which in the past century would have seemed
improbable. As demonstrated to some degree by Trinidad and Tobago, even a very
small state can, by adopting appropriate strategies, achieve relatively big goals.

Notes on contributor
Jacqueline Braveboy-Wagner is Professor of Political Science/International
Relations at both The City College and The Graduate School and University
Center of The City University of New York. She is the author/editor of eight books
and one collection of papers, as well as numerous articles on Caribbean foreign
policy as well as global south international relations. Her books include
Interpreting the Third World, The Caribbean in world affairs, The Caribbean in the Pacific
century (with contributors), Small states in global affairs, and Institutions of the global
south. She has served as President of the Caribbean Studies Association, has sat on
the Governing Council of the International Studies Association for many years,
and more recently, served as Chair of a Government Commission to Review the
Foreign Policy of Trinidad and Tobago.

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