GOVERNANCE ISSUES: TOWARDS A CARICOM PARLIAMENT

BY

ANN MARIE BISSESSAR

This paper re-examines the issue of the establishment of a common political institution in the Commonwealth Caribbean. It suggests that while a unitary form of governance may be necessary due to converging global forces, the implementation of this type of institutional arrangement will be constrained by factors such as the economic, social and political environments of the different countries. Yet, the article argues, the European Union and the Parliament that was subsequently established in 1979 suffered these limitations as well. In the case of these countries, however, it could be argued that the similarities are more powerful than the differences. Analysts, for example, have argued that the countries that make up the European Parliament are not separated by sea as occurs in the case of the islands in the Caribbean. Thus, the proximity of these countries allow for closer ties. However, a major argument that has been forwarded to explain why the Caribbean will have difficulty in establishing a common Parliament has to do with leadership. Because of their history as slave and indentured societies, it has been suggested that the leaders in the Caribbean were reluctant to transfer authority and cede their sovereign status. While these factors are no doubt valid, this paper argues that perhaps the major problem in the Caribbean may be the absence of a well-thought out federal political arrangement and the inability by the various countries to articulate clearly defined procedures and practices.
Globalization, according to Lupel (2003) involves a stretching of social, political and economic activities across frontiers so that events, decisions and activities in one region of the world could impact on communities and regions in distant regions of the globe. For him, therefore, globalization in its many forms, presents a threat to the viability of democratic practice. Nye and Donahue (2000), however, advised caution in applying this concept. They suggested that while certainly globalization impacts, particularly on the economy and governance of countries, yet the degree of these impacts will vary with the size, power, and domestic, political culture of the states involved.

This paper will examine some of the factors that have led to a re-thinking of ‘governance’ practices in the countries of the English-speaking Caribbean. It argues, that while ‘global governance’ is not only unitary states interacting with each other, but rather states as agents interacting and constituting an international system, in the case of the countries of the Caribbean a unitary statehood will be difficult to achieve. The paper looks at some of the forces that have ‘pushed’ Caribbean governments towards a re-negotiation of ‘unitary’ governance. It then addresses some of the domestic constraints that may prevent governments from implementing a common political system in the Caribbean. Inevitably, some historical regression is necessary since the paper will examine some of the previous attempts at integration and the constraints that emerged at specific periods. The major argument of the paper is that political integration will be difficult to achieve in these countries. It suggests, however, that the limitations may not be confined only to the domestic economic and political environments but also to the lack of a coherent structure that will allow for a common political arrangement.
Discussion

The Commonwealth Caribbean is the term applied to the English-speaking islands in the Caribbean and the mainland nations of Belize and Guyana that once constituted the Caribbean portion of the British Empire. This paper examines the islands of the Commonwealth Caribbean which are Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, the windward islands (Dominica, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines and Grenada) Barbados and the Leeward islands (Antigua and Barbuda, St Christopher and Nevis, the British Virgin Islands, Anguilla and Montserrat).

To a large extent, these islands appear to be too disparate to allow for discussions of unification or in this case a Caricom parliament. For example, each island differs in terms of population, size, ethnic composition, income and political status. Anguilla, for instance, has a total land mass of 91 square kilometers and a population of 7,000 persons while Jamaica has a land mass of 11,000 square kilometers and a population of approximately 2.3 million persons. The per capita gross domestic product of the Cayman island is nearly fourteen times as large as that of St Vincent and the Grenadines. In Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana, the population is evenly divided between Africans and East Indians, a pattern that is quite different from the other islands in which Africans constitute the majority. Another major difference in these countries is the state of political development. Although most of the islands are independent nations, five, namely, the British Virgin Islands, Anguilla, the Cayman islands, and the Turks and Caicos islands remain British dependencies.

While there are a number of distinctions between countries, there are, however, a number of similarities as well including shared historical experiences in which the majority of the population was brought in as slaves or in the case of Trinidad
and Tobago and Guyana, indentured servants. With the exception of Guyana, all the other countries also had administrative and political systems which were introduced by the departing colonials. Yet, the most telling argument for the unification of these countries has been that of their ‘smallness.’ Indeed, writers such as Alesina and Spolaore (1997) suggest that the provision of public services in these countries may be subject to indivisibilities that lead to increasing returns to scale. Others such as Romer (1986), Barro and Sala-I-Martin (1995), Aghion and Howitt (1998), suggest that increasing returns to scale in the private economy will also be difficult to realize in small states. Another argument that has been offered is that small economies may also be at a disadvantage because their size prevents them from diversifying into a wide range of activities, making them more vulnerable to terms of trade shocks than large states.

Attempts at Unification

Indeed, in looking at the attempts of unification overtime, there is no doubt that economies of scale have been the most critical consideration even as early as 1800s. Particularly in the West Indies there were many proposals for the federation of the British West Indies. Braithwaite (1957) accordingly outlines various attempts at federal arrangements in 1840, 1871, 1882, 1894 and 1896. However, as he noted, there were immense obstacles such as the diversity of culture and economic development in addition to language barriers. Given these obstacles, it was not surprising that in 1927, the issue of unification was confined to the setting up of a Colonial Agricultural Scientific and Research Services which was to service all fifty British territories. Accordingly, a special Committee, under the chairmanship of Lord Lovat, was formed in 1927 to discuss the possibilities of unification of such services and to work out a scheme under which it would be practical.

The report of this Committee was printed as Command Paper 3049 and circulated to the colonies for their observations and comments. In 1929, the Secretary of State agreed to the recommendation for the appointment of an Advisory Council
on Agriculture and Animal Health which was established in March of that year. The justification for the establishment of a unified agricultural agency at that time seemed overwhelming. Reasons included:

- ‘The sharing of experience from one part of the Empire to another in order to assist the development and economic prosperity of the colonies as a whole.’ (Colonial Office Conference, 1930- Stenographic Notes of the Second Meeting held at the Foreign Office on the 24th June 1930 at 11 am p. 23). It was argued, for example, that there were similarities in agricultural practices and that an officer serving in one part of the Colonial Empire could pass on his experience to other colonies, while at the same time he would benefit from the experiences of his colleagues in other areas.

- It was also felt that public servants would have greater advantages so far as promotional opportunities were involved if they were part of a larger service rather than attached to smaller units.

- It was suggested that a ‘larger’ more unified service would allow for greater ‘flexibility’ so that a number of officers could be recruited and, if necessary, they could be employed as ‘supernumeraries’ until vacancies occurred. It was also assumed that a larger, more unified service would lead to an increase in the number of positions opened to graduates of the University.

However, while administratively there were justifications for setting up such a unit, the problem of finances became a vexing issue. The proposal was that the unit should be financed by a ‘pool’, the funds of which should be secured by a cess on revenue. The proportion which was suggested was one-four-hundredth of the Colonial revenues. Yet, while in certain groups of colonies, there was a general acceptance, there were objections from colonies such as Malaya, Ceylon and Jamaica. The problem, though, was not confined to funding. Rather because each colony was at different stages of political development, for example, Ceylon had a very advanced constitutional system, they had little to gain if a unified system was introduced, thus these colonies would be opposed to funding a ‘unified’ agency. In the West Indian colonies, in Jamaica in particular, it was observed that they were believers in ‘keeping their ain fish guts for their ain seamews.’ In other words, Jamaica was strongly opposed to the appointment of any officer from another colony- or what they termed ‘foreigners’ (Colonial
Apart from the differences in political development, there was also the issue of ‘colour.’ For example, in the case of Jamaica, it was pointed out that there were some ‘valuable officers who are very good in their own country but would be absolutely impossible anywhere else.’ (Colonial Office Conference, 1930- Stenographic Notes of the Second Meeting held at the Foreign Office on the 24th June 1930 at 11 am, pg.27). In other words such officers could not be considered for promotion elsewhere in other colonies because they were not of European descent. Because of these and other issues, including the differential rates of salaries throughout the colonies, it was therefore felt that the idea of unification, should at this stage be abandoned.

However, in 1930 discussions of integration or ‘unification’ of the countries of the English-speaking Caribbean once again surfaced. Indeed, in what appeared to be a ‘formidable’ presentation Sir Samuel Wilson, in an address to a Conference in which the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies and Governors and representatives of other colonies were present, expressed concerns about the delivery of the services within the colonies. (Colonial Office Conference, 1930- Stenographic Notes of the Second Meeting held at the Foreign Office on the 24th June 1930 at 11 am). The solution, according to Wilson was to establish a unified administrative service.

The concept of ‘unification’ at this time had two primary objectives. It was devised as a mechanism to provide optimum control by the Secretary of State over the administration of each territory. Secondly, since the morale of the Service was low, it was believed that the prestige attached to the idea of belonging to a ‘unified service’ would serve to enhance self esteem. However, in order to bring about unification of the various services and at the same time maintain a measure of uniformity in all the colonies, significant changes in the
administrative structures and systems had to be addressed. By 1939, however, it became clear that the idea of ‘unification’ would once more be placed on the ‘back burner’ since much of the deliberations in Britain would now center on the strategies to put in place during the first world war.

The idea of unification or federation, however, did not die but once again re-surfaced in 1953. According to the accounts by Wickham (1997) the impetus, this time for closer union, was different than those proposed by the colonial administrators. He noted, for instance, that the populations of the various colonies were hopeful that federation would address the several social ills existing in the colonies. The politicians, on the other hand, desired to ascend to positions they believed their talents and education levels entitled them, but were restricted by the limitations of their colonial status. The union of the colonies, therefore if it could provide for greater self government, would increase the sphere of influence of the political leaders. Another actor was the Associated Chamber of Commerce in the West Indies. The support of this Chamber was based on the belief that there would be benefits in the creation of free trade areas and the establishment of a Customs Union. The associated chamber also supported the idea of pursuing what has now come to be known as functional cooperation by supporting the concept of joint representation and focusing attention on practical problems facing the West Indian colonies such as the non-existence of shipping facilities.

As has been well-documented, however, the experiment with federation was doomed to fail (Lewis, 1962; Mordecai, 1968; Springer, 1962; Wickham, 1997). The postmortems of the federal experiment identified several factors which contributed to the lack of success including the clash of nationalisms within the leadership structure. Another factor, also, had to do with economic differences between the countries. It was evident that even during colonial rule that there were a number of obstacles preventing unification or federation of the colonies. There were, however, some successes which actually took place. For example, the federation of the Leeward islands was achieved in 1871 and
persisted until the Act of Parliament in 1957 de-federated them so that they might emerge as distinct constituent units in the larger “British Caribbean Federation” that was proposed. Yet, even under this arrangement, a number of difficulties emerged, one of the more critical being the weakness of the central government. Other experiments which had little success included the island of Barbados sharing a governor-ship with the Windwards in 1885, the union of St Kitts and Nevis, and Tobago which was federated in Trinidad in 1887.

Thomas (1979) offers a number of lessons which can be drawn from the Federal experiment. The first was that integration could not be attempted from simply proceeding to bring the existing governmental structures together. The danger in this kind of arrangement would be the failure to agree on the sharing of office and power regionally or that the existing ‘national’ ruling classes would rise above sectional interests, agree, and use the instruments of integration to consolidate their class positions on a regional scale. The second crucial lesson was that integration could not be approached from a purely administrative convenience. Finally, although manifesting itself in external associations, agreements and treaties the capacity for effective regional agreement of the Caribbean ultimately depends on the degree of development of internal political and social forces in the region.

The dismantling of the Federation did not, however, lead to the abandonment of the goal of unity. With the dismantling of the Federation and the subsequent move to independence by some of its unit members, a new resolve to re-embark on unity emerged. Based on the belief that the federation had foundered because it had been a mistake to try to erect a political superstructure on an economic vacuum, as Gill (1979) suggests, the new approach as exemplified in the summons by the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago was to forge a Caribbean Economic Community. It was felt that if a regional economic foundation could be first be consolidated, then a more viable political structure could then be erected. By 1968, therefore, renewed efforts at stimulating economic integration resulted
in the establishment of the wider Caribbean Free Trade Association (CARIFTA). The long-term objective of this experiment was to move progressively towards a higher form of regional economic integration which included the following elements:

- the establishment of a common external tariff
- the planning of industries on a regional basis
- the harmonization of fiscal incentives to industry
- the adoption of a regional air carrier

Although, CARIFTA was intended to remove barriers to trade among Caribbean islands based on the principles of reciprocity, it was initially a three-country association among Barbados, Guyana and Antigua which was later widened to include Jamaica, Trinidad and the LDCs. CARIFTA, it seemed had a number of successes including increased trade among the more-developed-countries (MDCs) during the period 1967 – 1970. In addition it led to the establishment of a regional development bank, the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB). However, while it led to increase in trade among the MDCs, it created a longstanding disparity between the MDCs and the LDCs (Less Developed Countries).

With a release of a feasibility study on the Common External Tariff in 1971, the region was able to move toward the establishment of another organization, CARICOM. The CET called for the elevation of the association to a significantly higher level, representing a closer form of association. When Demas assumed office as Secretary General to CARIFTA, he accordingly prepared two documents which prepared a case for the establishment of CARICOM (Wickham, 52). The arguments in these two documents were accordingly presented to the 7th Heads of Governments Conference in October 1972, resulting in the decision to upgrade CARIFTA to CARICOM.
The Establishment of CARICOM

CARICOM, was conceived as an integration process involving far-reaching commitments on the part of member states in three distinct thought inter-related areas of activity namely economic integration, functional co-operation and the co-ordination of foreign policy. It was anticipated that CARICOM would have been the major instrument of what has been described as ‘developmental regionalism.’ The concept was based upon the assumption that nations which share a regional identity may be capable of helping one another to develop more rapidly than if each country pursued a solely nationalistic course. The transition from CARIFTA to CARICOM was justified by its advocates and by member countries in terms of what were considered the limitations of CARIFTA. Essentially, however, as has been pointed by numerous writers, the emphasis on CARICOM was primarily economic. In the area of functional co-operation CARICOM provided for the co-operation of Member Countries in offering certain essential services which could be supplied more economically on a regional basis and in some cases were beyond the capacity of a single member country. As Hall and Blake (1977) also observed it was expected that there would have been a progressive coordination of the external relations of the countries both in the economic and political aspects to enable maximization of the bargaining power of the individual Member States in their negotiations with large trading blocs and with multi-national corporations.

To ensure that the commitments were carried out, the Treaty of Chaguaramas which established CARICOM provided for an elaborate decision-making machinery linking all levels of decision-making at the national level. The Treaty provided for the Heads of Government Conference to be empowered to take decisions on all matters relating to the Community. Conceptually, according to Hall and Blake (1977) CARICOM as an agent of developmental regionalism was expected to confer specific benefits such as economies of scale, location and specialization, increased efficiency of industry, and the reduction of the external vulnerability of members.
By 1976, however, it was evident that international forces had radically altered the assumptions by CARICOM and placed unprecedented constraints on the capacity of Member Countries as well as the Region as a whole to satisfy the basic needs of the population. It was also found that special measures introduced into CARICOM for the benefit of the LDCs did not produce the desired results of stimulating industrial development so that their share of the CARICOM gross national product had been reduced by approximately 50% so that the gap between them and the MDCs had widened significantly. Another criticism of CARICOM was the length of time taken to implement certain measures. Essentially, then a number of weaknesses were identified including:

- the lack of consensus on the meaning of development
- the slow progress of action on ownership and control of regional resources
- the need for rationalization in the regional integration movement
- the absence of a Caribbean Court of Appeal
- the slow progress of co-ordination of foreign policy
- the slow progress on co-operation in tourism (Hall and Blake, 1997, 13).

At the political level, the issue became even more complicated when viewed within the wider context of the CARICOM arrangements. In essence the CARICOM decision-making machinery required the consent of all the members. However, by declaring that they were unwilling to agree on any further measures of deepening, which did not give priority to their own development, the LDCs placed the whole machinery in crisis.

Even in 1992 when submitting their Report, the West Indian Commission made three major recommendations. One was the urgent need to move quickly to deepen the integration process through the establishment of a Single Market or an Economic Union. The Heads of the various Member States accepted this recommendation since at the Grand Anse Declaration they had already accepted most of its elements. The second was to establish a Permanent Commission of three eminent West Indians with appropriate experience to follow-up the implementation of community decisions by member states. The Heads of Government, however, did not approve of the establishment of the Permanent
Commission to speed up the implementation of decisions made at a Community level. In other words, in the most critical phase of the policy process, that is implementation, there was a major short-coming.

It was clear that from the 1800s to present, the attempt at unification between the countries of the Commonwealth Caribbean was perceived to be an arrangement which would benefit countries economically, primarily in terms of trading. However, it was evident that even this kind of arrangement could not protect individual countries from external shocks. Rather, as was amply demonstrated in the case of the banana crisis in St Lucia in 2002/2003, there was little CARICOM could do to prevent GATT policies from being applied and preferential treatment from being re-called. More recently, the impasse between Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados and then the Haitian crisis (2004) has also brought to the fore, the ineffectiveness of CARICOM in dealing with issues among its member countries.

The problem facing the countries of the Commonwealth Caribbean, however, is not simply the weaknesses that have emerged in the CARICOM arrangement but rather the concern of whether, given new global imperatives, individual countries could survive on their own. Clearly, CARICOM was never conceived as a political union of member states but rather was an attempt at economic union. The larger issue, therefore, is whether the Caribbean could look at a ‘new’ model in which the emphasis would be on political union. There can be doubt, as shall be observed in the discussion which follows, that global forces would push these countries in this direction.

**Globalization and Governance : towards a common CARICOM Parliament**

The collapse of Eastern European socialism and the USSR was the catalyst for the conversion of trade and financial liberalization into a truly global project. Indeed, the globalization project of the 1990s had a coherent political,
institutional, theoretical and ideological basis, a set of prescribed practices and a convenient and easily-recognized label. Girvan (1999) outlined some of the central features of globalization as follows:

- A world economic order centered on the Triad of the US-EU-Japan, under the political and military leadership of the US.
- The World Trade Organization (WTO) dominated by the Triad, as the chief global institution for negotiating, codifying and enforcing neo-liberal practices in interstate economic relations;
- The construction of regional blocs or free trade zones by each member of the Triad in order to strengthen its position vis-à-vis the other two; the strongest being the European Union;
- In regional North-South trade agreements (NAFTA, FTAA, Lome), replacement of the principle of non-reciprocal preferences to assist the development of weaker partners with that of reciprocal trade liberalization to promote trade expansion and market-led growth in line with WTO provisions;
- Promotion of a package of neo-liberal policy measures which assumed universal applicability. These include privatization, financial deregulation, trade and exchange rate liberalization, fiscal and monetary orthodoxy and labour market reform and social welfare reform;
- The attainment of ‘global competitiveness’ as the benchmark by which all countries and producers, regardless of their resources or level of development are to be evaluated through participation in the global market.
- The consolidation of huge concentrations of private capital - transnational corporations and institutional investors - as the dominant players in world production and trade (pg. 3).

Given these forces, what becomes clear is that the elements of globalization, as outlined by Girvan, would have a positive impact for larger, more developed countries but negative impacts for smaller, developing countries. In addition, these forces would lead to a significant re-thinking of the role of government. For example, it was apparent both under the NAFTA agreement and now the impending FTAA, there has to be a re-examination of a whole range of regulatory framework involving governmental policies and practices. However, with this re-thinking the countries of the Commonwealth Caribbean and Central America would face a formidable task.
One task, as Nye and Donahue (2000) pointed out, is that the basic arrangements under which individual countries operated would have to be re-engineered. For example, rule-making and rule interpretation in global governance have become ‘pluralized’ and rules would no longer a matter simply for states or intergovernmental organizations. Instead, a number of actors including private firms, non-governmental organizations, subunits of governments and the transnational networks would all be required to play a role.

The implications for the involvement of so many actors in turn will result in a change in the existing arrangements, so that any emerging pattern of governance will have to be networked rather hierarchical and must have minimal rather than highly ambitious objectives. Because of what may now be referred to as ‘cross-sectoral partnerships’ of government, therefore, more nuanced approaches to transparency and accountability of both institutions and networks will have to be introduced. However, as Allison (2000) pointed out, global interdependence brings with it a number of transnational concerns such as terrorism, trade in illegal drugs, smuggling, organized crime and the spread of disease.

Yet, while many of the Caribbean countries seem to be reluctant to come to terms with the move to a more interdependent arrangement, albeit at the global level, it can be argued that to a large extent many of these countries have already lost legitimacy through the emergence of parallel, sometimes underground economies. Also, since many countries entered into arrangements with the international lending agencies such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the reform initiatives which were introduced insisted that governments undergo stabilization and adjustment which led to a radical restructuring of the public sectors and in most cases a minimal state.

In addition, it was found that developing countries were weak in bargaining positions as international financial institutions set conditions for macro-economic management, state reform, public and private sector roles, investment roles and
institutional structure. Equally important was the fact that new international regimes for trade, environment, labour and other matters were reducing choices and discretion in these areas as well. In other words, sovereignty, particularly from 1990 onwards had become nothing more than a theoretical ideology to be used as a political tool by the politicians from the various countries.

The option for the CARICOM countries: the ‘third’ way

Since 1880, the argument against unification or a federal arrangement has been confined to disparities in the economies of countries, trade imbalances, population size and a number of other factors. While these factors were important, it can be argued, however, that given the new global challenges, Caribbean countries can no longer depend on preferential trade or development aid. In fact, it can be argued, that while sovereignty was a luxury that states could afford in the nineteenth or early twentieth century this option is no longer available in a world of nuclear weapons and economic globalization. Indeed, state survival, particularly small states, is now dependent on collective security, and economic development requires guaranteed access to international and global markets. If the countries of CARICOM are to respond to the new global initiatives, therefore, what will be required is a different arrangement or structure.

The Caribbean attempts at federation or unification, have demonstrated that the major objectives that had been sought under these unions seemed to have a broad economic objective and what actually occurred was that the union was one of convenience in which national interest was allowed precedence over regional interest. Given the failure of an economic union, therefore, one alternative that may be examined could be that of a political union in the form of a CARICOM Parliament. The suggestion of a CARICOM Parliament, however, will give rise to numerous objections. Indeed, what may be the major bone of contention is that political leadership and nationalistic concerns were critical factors in the break-up of the former arrangements. Yet, these arguments were presented during the formation of the European Parliament which
was established in 1979 and although this organization has experienced some ‘teething’ problem, this Parliament appears to have become a critical force in world politics today.

**Some features of the European Parliament: Can CARICOM learn from the experiment?**

**Features of the European Parliament**

The European Parliament which represents fifteen countries of the world consisting of a total of 375 million persons, derives its legitimacy from direct universal suffrage and has acquired greater influence and power through a series of Treaties including the Maastricht Treaty (1992) and the Amsterdam Treaty (1997). Like all Parliaments, this institution has three fundamental powers: legislative, budgetary and supervisory. The normal legislative process in this Parliament, however, is one of co-decision. This procedure puts the European Parliament and the Council on an equal footing and together they adopt legislation proposed by the Commission. Parliament has, however, to give its final agreement.

Unlike other Parliaments, however, the role of the Parliament so far as legislation is concerned is limited to the free movement of workers, the establishment of the internal market, research and technological development, the environment, consumer protection, education, culture and health. There are also areas in which the Parliament simply provides an opinion such as taxation and the annual farm price review. In terms of budgeting, the European Parliament and the Council are the two arms of budgetary authority. However, Parliament has the last word on most expenditure in the annual budgeting which targets the following areas such as spending on the less prosperous regions, spending on training to reduce unemployment and research and social measures. The European Parliament also exercises democratic oversight of all Community activities and could set up temporary commissions of inquiry as it did in the case of the mad cow disease which led to the establishment of a European Veterinary Agency in Ireland.
Parliament was also instrumental in the creation of the European Anti-Fraud Office.

Lessons for CARICOM countries

There can be no doubt that the lessons that can be learnt from the European Parliament is instructive for CARICOM countries since arguments such as size, culture, leadership and economic disparities are also challenges which the European Parliament had to grapple with as well. Perhaps the most useful lesson, however, is the defined and limited role of this Parliament. In addition, what emerged is that the European Parliament was not established as an ad hoc policy but one in which an institution was well-structured and which rested on a number of supporting pillars.

One pillar was the three European Communities which were deepened and enlarged by economic and monetary union. The first pillar embodies Community jurisdiction in its most highly developed form. Within the framework of the EC, the Community institutions may draw up legislation in their respective areas of responsibility which applies directly in the Member states and may claim precedence over national law. At the heart of the European Community is the single market with its four basic freedoms (free movement of goods, free movement of workers, freedom to provide services and free movement of capital and payments) and its rules on competition. Policy areas for which the Community is responsible include: economic and monetary affairs (centered around the single European currency, the euro); agriculture; visa requirements, asylum and immigration; transport; taxation; and employment among others.

It should be noted, though, that before the Treaty on European Union came into being, political cooperation between the Member States was on the basis of the ‘European political cooperation’ (EPC) arrangements set up in 1970, which were enhanced and expanded upon under the Single European Act in 1986/7. These arrangements involved regular consultations between foreign ministers and ongoing contacts between their government departments. The aim of the EPC
was to bring about better communication and greater convergence of the Member States’ positions on all major foreign policy issues and a joint course of action. Thus, crisis such as the Gulf War, which the EU was unable to deal with at the time has resulted in common foreign and security policies such as the Treaty of Amsterdam.

The third pillar under which the European Parliament operates is in the cooperation in justice and home affairs. The aim underlying the cooperation between police and judicial authorities is to afford citizens freedom, security and justice by jointly preventing and combating crime (terrorism, trafficking in human beings, illicit drugs and arms trafficking, corruption, racism) Judicial cooperation is also concerned with facilitating and accelerating cooperation in relation to proceedings and the enforcement of decisions and facilitating extraditions between Member States.

It is evident that the establishment of the European Parliament was not an immediate plan but one that was well thought out. The arrangement, as the discussion revealed, was however supported by communities who were willing to cooperate in certain affairs such as justice and home affairs and freedoms and rights. While, trade is an important issue, other areas of concern such as the under-development of certain countries also had a place of priority as well.

In comparing the European Parliament and CARICOM in the case of the Caribbean, it can be argued that what may be necessary is to expand the duties and responsibility of CARICOM in keeping with the responsibilities as set out in the European Parliament. While, it is true that the structure of CARICOM had ‘governance’ structures it could be argued that these are adhered to in the breach rather than in practice. What may be required under an enlarged political union is therefore clearly defined rules, regulations and procedures to which individual member countries must recognize and adhere to.
Conclusion

This paper examined the problems that emerged in attempts to unify Caribbean countries from the 1800s to present. It was found that factors such as size, disparities in trade, income, population, and the leadership in these countries were influential in the breakup of both the unification attempts in the 1930s and the federal experiment later on. Since that period there were new attempts, this time economic in nature, by way of CARIFTA, CARICOM and at present discussion of a CSME (Caribbean Single Market Economy). However, even these arrangements were weak and precluded the intervention in crisis such as the recent fishing disagreement between Trinidad and Barbados and the attempted overthrow of the Haitian president.

This paper, argued, however, that given the global imperatives, the countries of the Commonwealth Caribbean must re-examine their options and perhaps extend CARICOM to what maybe a CARICOM Parliament. The model suggested was that of the European Parliament, in which the discussion went into at length. The paper argued that this Parliament had similar constraints such as size, disparities and trade imbalances; yet by putting in place a Parliament with defined, if perhaps limited role, it was able to become a critical force in world politics.

There is no doubt, that a well thought out plan, in which binding agreements and commitments are worked out and adhered to by member states may well be the answer in the case of the Caribbean countries. Essentially, like the European Union, they too have a number of common establishments and systems which are successful include and a common educational benchmark by way of the CXC examinations, the Universities of the West Indies, and Seismic Unit among others. What is also commendable is that differences among member states diminish in importance when the West Indies Cricket Team is on the cricket field. These successes will therefore be the starting point on which to build.
References


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