

# Colonialism and Neo-colonialism in the Caribbean: An Overview

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## Introduction

The contemporary Caribbean<sup>1</sup> is one of the most politically fragmented regions for its size on earth; and one with the strongest remaining colonial presence. Political divisions and external control are major blocs to the consolidation of a Caribbean identity and the charting of an independent course of development in the interest of Caribbean peoples. They undermine the ‘fragmented nationalism’<sup>2</sup>, and the pervasive epistemological dependency<sup>3</sup>, that is characteristic of the regional consciousness. This situation is a direct consequence of the region’s five-century long history as area of rivalry among, and colonisation by, external powers. Political decolonisation of Caribbean countries is incomplete; indeed it has come to a virtual standstill. Initiatives at regional cooperation and regional integration have made some progress; but face continuing challenges. Such progress as has been made result from the efforts of Caribbean people themselves; and are continuing. Rebellion, revolution, cultural affirmation and other forms of resistance are as integral to the Caribbean experience as are exploitation by external forces and internal elites. The tradition of struggle serves to inspire, inform and motivate current generations. Slowly but surely, a pan-Caribbean consciousness is emerging, led by the vision of cultural practitioners; and containing the seeds of a future Caribbean nation.

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper we refer to ‘the Caribbean’ as constituting the archipelago which runs from the Bahamas to Trinidad and Tobago; plus Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana, Belize, and Bermuda.

<sup>2</sup> See Franklin W. Knight, *The Caribbean: Genesis of a Fragmented Nationalism*. Oxford University Press, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> See Brian Meeks and Norman Girvan (eds.) *The Thought of New World: The Quest for Decolonisation*. Ian Randle Publishers, 2009.

**Table 1. Caribbean Region: Population by Political Status**

	No.	Population	Percent (%)
<b>Independent States<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>16</b>	<b>38059,037</b>	<b>87.7</b>
<i>CARICOM (Caribbean Community)</i>	14	16873,738	38.9
<i>O.E.C.S. (Org. East Caribbean States)<sup>2</sup></i>	6	596,689	1.4
<b>Non-Independent entities</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>5327,678</b>	<b>12.3</b>
<b>France</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1079,273</b>	<b>2.5</b>
<i>Overseas Departments(Regions)</i>	3	1026,730	2.4
<i>Collectivities</i>	2	35,934	0.1
<b>Netherlands</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>286,046</b>	<b>0.7</b>
<i>Status Aparte</i>	3	280,679	0.6
<i>Public Entities</i>	3	5,367	0.0
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>147,057</b>	<b>0.3</b>
<i>Overseas Territories</i>	5	147,057	0.3
<b>United States</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3815,302</b>	<b>8.8</b>
<i>Free Associated State(Commonwealth)</i>	1	3706,690	8.5
<i>Unorganized Unincorporated Territories</i>	2	108,612	0.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>43386,715</b>	<b>100.0</b>

1. CARICOM (Caribbean Community), Cuba and the Dominican Republic

2. The six members of the OECS are also members of CARICOM

Source: author, based on World Bank World Development Indicators database 2012; and on sources for Table 3.

**Table 2. THE CARIBBEAN: INDEPENDENT STATES**

	<b>Area (sq. km)</b>	<b>Population, total (2010)</b>	<b>GDP per capita (current US\$) 2010<sup>1</sup></b>
Cuba	114,500	11257,979	5,565
Dominican Republic	49,000	9927,320	5,215
<i>CARICOM</i>			
Antigua and Barbuda	442	88,710	13,655
Bahamas, The	13,864	342,877	21,985
Barbados	431	273,331	15,035
Belize	22,966	344,700	4,064
Dominica	750	67,757	6,883
Grenada	345	104,487	7,401
Guyana	214,970	754,493	2,950
Haiti	28,000	9993,247	671
Jamaica	10,991	2702,300	5,274
St. Kitts and Nevis	269	52,402	12,437
St. Lucia	616	174,000	6,884
St. Vincent/Grenadines	389	109,333	6,446
Suriname	163,820	524,636	6,254
Trinidad and Tobago	5,128	1341,465	15,359
Total	626,481	38059,037	
Average	39,155	2378,690	4,718 <sup>2</sup>

Source: author, based on World Bank World Development Indicators database 2012.

**Table 3 Caribbean Non-Independent Countries: Population, Area, Income**

<b>Territory</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Area km2</b>	<b>GDP/GNI PC US\$</b>
<b>France<sup>1</sup> (8)</b>			
French Guiana (DOM)	229,000	83,534	20,904
Guadeloupe (DOM)	400,000	1,628	21,780
Martinique (DOM)	397,730	1,128	24,509
<i>Les Saintes (DEP)</i>	3,000	13	..
<i>Marie-Galante (DEP)</i>	12,009	158	..
<i>La Désirade (DEP)</i>	1,600	21	..
<i>Saint Barthélemy (COL)</i>	8,823	21	37,000
<i>Saint Martin (COL)</i>	35,925	53	20,600
<b>Netherlands<sup>2</sup> (6)</b>			
Aruba	101,484	179	21,800
Curaçao	141,766	444	20,500
Sint Maarten	37,429	34	11,400
<i>Bonaire</i>	15,666	294	..
<i>Saba</i>	1,824	13	
<i>Sint Eustatius</i>	3,543	21	
<b>United Kingdom<sup>3</sup> (5)</b>			
Anguilla	13,500	91	12,200
British Virgin Islands	27,800	150	<u>38,500</u>
Cayman Islands	54,878	264	47,700
Montserrat <sup>5</sup>	5,879	104	..
Bermuda	67,400		
Turks & Caicos Islands	45,000	430	17,112
<b>United States<sup>4</sup> (3)</b>			
Navassa Island	0	5	-
Puerto Rico	3706,690	13,790	13,675
U.S. Virgin Islands	108,612	347	13,139
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,392, 378</b>	<b>102,722</b>	<b>16,278<sup>6</sup></b>

*Notes.*

1 French Guiana, Guadeloupe and Martinique are Overseas Departments. Les Saintes, Marie-Galante and La Désirade are dependencies of Guadeloupe. Saint Barthélemy and Saint Martin are 'Overseas Collectivities' .

2. Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten are autonomous members ("Status Aparte") of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Saba and Sint Eustacius are Public Entities of the Netherlands..

3. U.K. Overseas Territories and Bermuda, which is a U.K. dependency.

4. Navassa Island is directly administered by the U.S. Puerto Rico is a 'Free Associated State' (a dependency with a Constitution subordinated to US law). The USVI is a dependent territory without a Constitution subordinated to US law.

5. Montserrat is a member of the Caribbean Community.

6. For thirteen entities for which per capita income data are available.

.. Not available.

*Source:* author, compiled from data in World Bank, Wikipedia, and CIA Fact book. The assistance of Dr Carlyle Corbin in determining the designation of these entities is gratefully acknowledged.

## Political Fragmentation and Continuing Colonial Control

There are thirty-five identifiable political entities in the Caribbean in a population of 43 million (Table 1); which is smaller than that of Colombia. Nineteen of these can be regarded as ‘colonial Caribbean countries’, in the sense that they are non-independent entities over which extra-regional powers exercise ultimate control under international law. There is wide variation in the form and extent of external control and in the degree of local autonomy that exists under current constitutional arrangements. The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC), referred to the entire group as "Non Independent Caribbean Countries (NICCs)"; and adopted a terminology that distinguished three sub-categories. First, those that are 'Non Self-governing' (following UN practice); second the 'Self-Governing' or 'Autonomous' Countries; and third, the 'Integrated Jurisdictions .' There is an on-going debate over the content and implications of the different arrangements, however. For instance, seven of the nineteen entities are included in the United Nations list of seventeen “non-self-governing territories”<sup>4</sup>. The U.N. list does not include the French Caribbean Departments, presumably because they are regarded as “Integrated Jurisdictions”; and as well as the Dutch territories and Puerto Rico, presumably because they were regarded as “Autonomous Countries”<sup>5</sup>. However, Corbin (2012a) has shown that the ‘cosmopoles’<sup>6</sup>. retain the unilateral right to alter status in the Dutch territories and in Puerto Rico. Therefore, these countries cannot be regarded as having true autonomy. The case of the French Caribbean Departments is the most interesting; for they are, constitutionally, integral parts of the French Republic; have the same degree of local autonomy as other regions of

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<sup>4</sup> Bermuda, the Turks and Caicos Islands, Cayman Islands, Montserrat, the British Virgin Islands, Anguilla and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Source Corbin 2012a. However the same author asserts that it was ‘premature’ to delist Puerto Rico and the Dutch Caribbean territories from the United Nations list of non-independent territories. Carlyle Corbin (2012b), Decolonisation of Small Island Territories –The Unfinished Agenda of the United Nations. A paper to the Academic Council on the United Nations, 2012 Annual Meeting & 25th Anniversary.; p. 2 and FN 1.

<sup>5</sup> Until 2010 five of the six Dutch Caribbean territories belonged to the Federation of the Netherlands Antilles which, together with Aruba, were autonomous members of the Kingdom of the Netherlands Antilles.

<sup>6</sup> i.e. France, the Kingdom of the Netherlands (Holland), the United Kingdom (the U.K. or simply ‘Britain’) and the United States (the U.S.). The term ‘cosmopole’ is adopted from Carlyle Corbin (2012a).

France; and have shown little appetite for national independence. Yet these territories are parts of the Caribbean geographically, historically and culturally<sup>7</sup>.

The legal/constitutional arrangements evidently have a bearing on the juridical scope for these entities to engage in regional affiliations; and even on the extent to which their populations and ruling elites regard themselves as being 'Caribbean'. For instance, Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands participate in the ECLAC/CDCC, but not in the Association of Caribbean States (ACS). The five-country Federation of the Netherlands Antilles had Associate Membership in the Association of Caribbean States. After the federation was dissolved in 2010; three members opted for "Status Aparte" (a form of autonomy); and two to become 'Public Entities' of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. It is not clear whether any of these new entities will take up Associate Membership in the ACS. All of the British Overseas Territories are Associate Members of the Caribbean Community (Caricom); and most participate in ECLAC/CDCC; but none have taken up membership in the ACS. On the other hand Martinique and Guadeloupe are active Associate Members of the ACS, through the Republic of France. In short, the extent of regional affiliation by the colonial Caribbean countries is uneven, and constantly in flux. However, further analysis of this subject is beyond the scope of this paper.

However, the reality is that these Caribbean outposts provide the extra-regional powers concerned with important military and economic assets. The United States military facilities in Puerto Rico were said to be "part of the US Atlantic Command (LANTCOM) (and is) seen as crucial in supporting LANTCOM's mission"<sup>8</sup>; but this was replaced by the Joint Forces Command which transferred responsibility for Puerto Rico to the U.S. Southern Command in 2000<sup>9</sup>. By agreement with the Dutch authorities in The Hague, the U.S. uses Curacao as the base

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<sup>7</sup> This leads to some strange paradoxes: a French Caribbean writer has noted the inappropriateness of school textbooks telling of "our ancestors, the Gauls"; whereas in reality the African ancestors of these territories were enslaved by those whose ancestors were the Gauls!

<sup>8</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military\\_of\\_Puerto\\_Rico](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_of_Puerto_Rico), accessed 12 November 2012

<sup>9</sup> See Map at [http://www.defense.gov/news/Oct1999/ucp\\_oct1999.gif](http://www.defense.gov/news/Oct1999/ucp_oct1999.gif)

for over-flights to monitor Venezuela<sup>10</sup>; another U.S. base is located in Aruba<sup>11</sup>. The U.S, Britain and France are believed to carry out regular naval exercises in the Caribbean, utilising their Caribbean territories as bases/supply posts. The fight against drug trafficking provides a useful cover for a strong NATO presence in the region, using the dependent territories as of right insofar as the corresponding colonial power exercises their sovereign rights in defence matters. The extension of sovereign territorial jurisdiction to the waters surrounding these islands is also important. Hence Corbin reports that “the Dutch have now acquired through Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba some 83,000 sq. kms. of territorial sea – for the Kingdom of the Netherlands – and for the E.U.” (Corbin 2012a, p. 10).

Furthermore, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) confers on states parties the right to exploit the resources of the seabed in a 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone. All of the island Caribbean states have adhered to UNCLOS as well as France, the Netherlands, and the U.K. and the EU<sup>12</sup>. Presumably; this gives these European powers the right to explore for hydrocarbons and other mineral resources in the EEZ’s corresponding to their Caribbean dependencies (see Map). In an era of intense competition for energy resources, this is an asset of considerable importance.

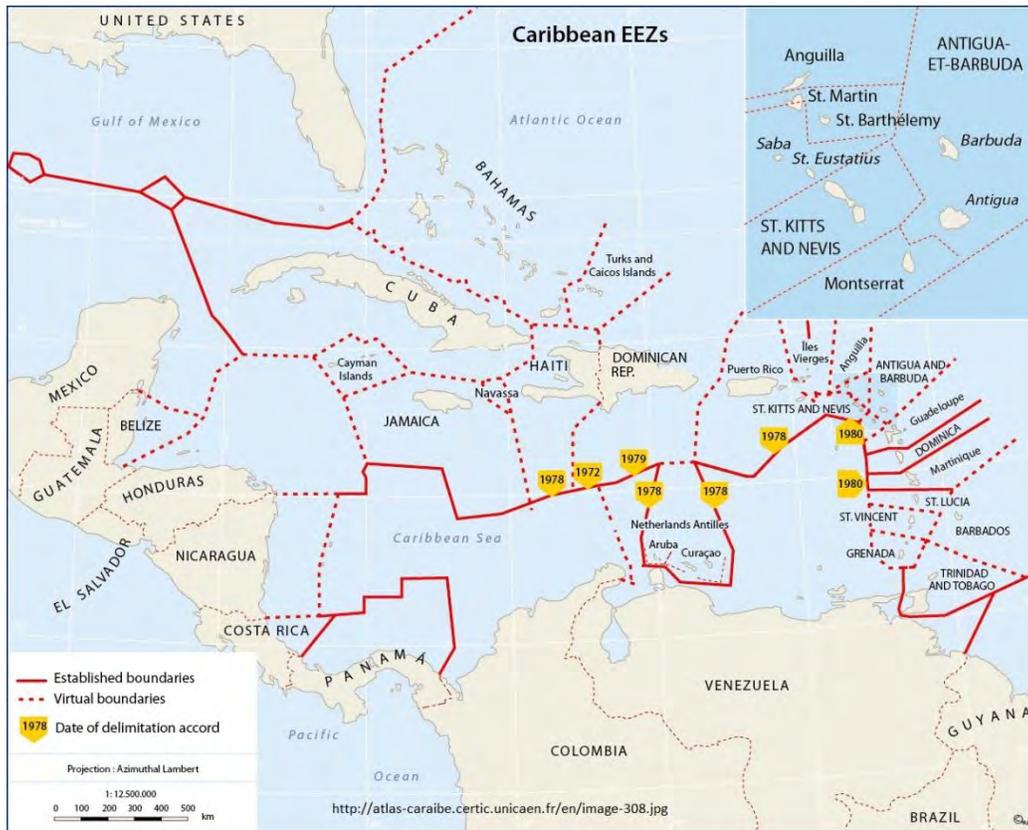
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<sup>10</sup> Corbin 2012a, p. 13

<sup>11</sup> Alex Sanchez The U.S. Military’s Presence in the Greater Caribbean Basin: More a Matter of Trade Strategy and Ideology than Drugs. COHA, <http://www.coha.org/the-u-s-militarys-presence-in-the-greater-caribbean-basin-more-a-matter-of-trade-strategy-and-ideology-than-drugs/>

<sup>12</sup> Notably, neither the United States and Venezuela have signed UNCLOS.

**Figure 1 Caribbean Exclusive Economic Zones**



Source: <http://atlas-caraibe.certic.unicaen.fr/en/page-121.html>

The dependent territories in the Caribbean for the most part have small populations, relatively high incomes and a high degree of financial dependence on their respective colonial powers. The average population size is 242,000, but if Puerto Rico is excluded, the average for the remaining twenty-one is 77,000. The average per capita income of thirteen territories for which we have data is \$16, 478; this compares with \$4,718 for the sixteen independent states (Tables 2 and 3). The degree of financial (fiscal) dependence varies; it was not possible to compile comparative data for this paper. The relatively high per capita income of these territories is often used as ‘proof’ that the independent Caribbean states have not done well economically and that the dependencies are better off as they are. The subliminal message is that the extra-regional powers are ‘superior’ to local people in governance and economic management; buttressing the narratives of racial and cultural superiority/inferiority that accompanied the colonial project. This

use of the relative wealth and poverty of Caribbean countries is especially noticeable when comparisons are made between the situation Haiti with that of the French Caribbean Departments. Together with the small size of most of the non-independent territories, it explains the absence of widespread popular support for their national independence movements.

However, the relatively high per capita incomes need to be set in context. It is a result of a combination of small populations, large tourism sectors, financial transfers from colonial powers and in some territories large fiscal revenues from offshore financial services. For instance the Cayman Islands, a British Overseas Territory with a population of 57,000 and a per capita income of \$43,000, is the fifth largest banking centre in the world, with a financial services industry that generates over \$1 billion in GDP. Martinique, Guadeloupe and French Guiana benefit from transfer payments from France to support social services and a bureaucracy equivalent to those on the French mainland. The comparison with Haiti conveniently overlooks the fact that the country was punished by the slave-owning powers for its revolution and declaration of independence; which threatened the existing power structures of Atlantic economy and society. A punitive 'independence debt' was extorted from the Haitian people, who became victims of a predatory local elite and a series of imperialist military and indirect interventions.

## **Neo-colonialism in the Caribbean**

The colonial condition is not just a matter of constitutional status. Control by external powers is exercised in a variety of other ways. Notable among these are ideological co-optation, finance, trade and security arrangements.

Ideological co-optation is the most powerful form of control. Conditioning the *thinking* of the population and especially of the ruling elites, is the most effective way of influencing their behaviour. This is the particular form taken by 'Gramscian hegemony' in the colonial and neo-colonial condition. The context of this is the 500-year history of colonial influence in the Caribbean, which was the first and earliest territory of Western overseas expansion. This is a history of conquest, genocide, colonisation, settlement, piracy, European rivalry, African slavery and the plantation system, Asian immigration through indentured servitude, constant movements

of people (intra-regional and extra-regional migration) and imperialist military intervention. In these processes, every single ethno-cultural group that occupied the Caribbean space did so on terms that acknowledged the superiority of the culture of the colonising power; and destroyed or devalued their 'native' culture<sup>13</sup>. Opportunities for self-improvement were structured so as to encourage cultural assimilation of those with the power. This implied internalising the 'world view' of the coloniser. Once you do this, you do not question the existing hierarchies of power. One of the perverse effects is that Caribbean peoples country often judge each other by resorting to constructs created by the coloniser. An example of this is the popular view of Haiti.

Nevertheless the will to resist and the need for self-affirmation is present in all peoples. Hence in dialectical contradiction to this situation there have been rebellions, revolution, marronage, political and social movements; and cultural creations in music, dance, literature, sport and in ever field of endeavour.

### *Finance*

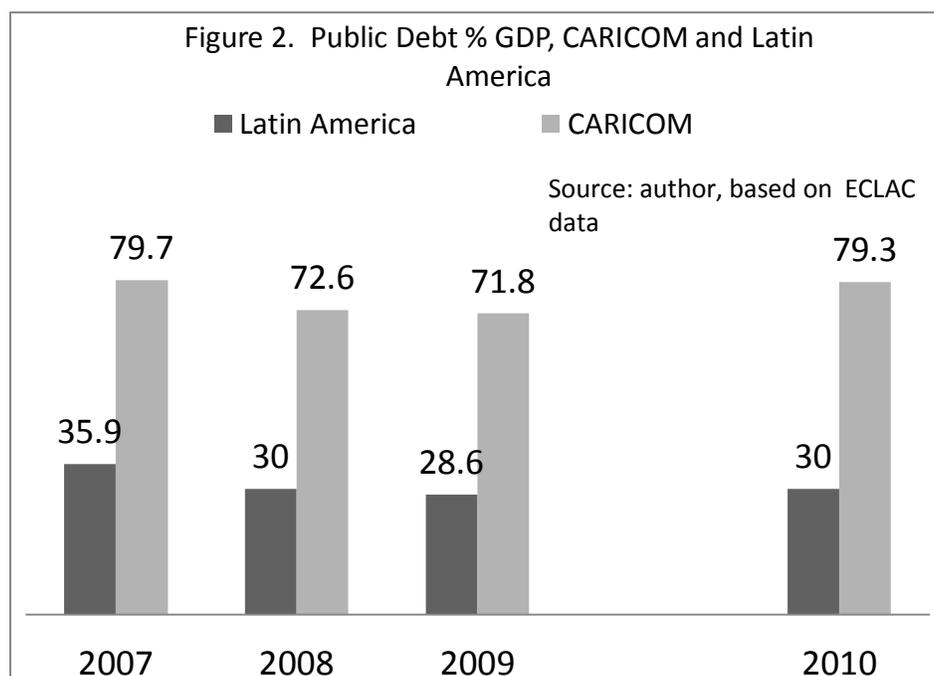
Caribbean countries have been said to be among the most highly indebted market economies in the world<sup>14</sup>. Debt burdens are significantly higher than in the rest of the Latin American and Caribbean region (Figure 2). Because of their weak, undiversified economies, most Caribbean countries are unable to borrow on international financial markets; or can only do so on unfavourable terms. Therefore they are reliant on grants and loans from official sources. These include the EU, the World Bank, the IADB, the IMF; and most recently Petro Caribe and ALBA. The world financial and economic crisis hurt the Caribbean more than Latin America. This was because of their higher degree of integration with North America and Europe through tourism and remittances. Several countries had no option but to turn to the IMF for emergency external

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<sup>13</sup> Tainos, Kalingas (Caribs), Africans, Asians (Indians, Chinese, Javanese), Jews, Syrians, non-conformist Europeans. The system of cultural hierarchies also placed Caribbean European settlers below Mother Country Europeans, by virtue of class origin, religion, racial 'mongrelisation', Creolisation, etc.

<sup>14</sup> Kevin Greenidge, Roland Craigwell, Chrystal Thomas and Lisa Drakes (2012); Threshold Effects of Sovereign Debt: Evidence from the Caribbean. IMF Working Paper, WP/12/157. June 2012; p. 3

finance (Table 4). IMF loans are usually conditioned on programmes to reduce the fiscal deficit by cutting spending, shifting the burden of taxes to the general population and in general neoliberal policy reforms.



**Table 4 Selected IMF Caribbean Programmes 2010-2012**

Country	Programme	Date	Duration	Amount US\$
Antigua & Barbuda	SBA	Jun-10	36 months	128 M.
Dominica	RCG	Jan-12	Immediate	3 M
Dominican Republic	SBA	Nov-09	27 months	1.74 B
Grenada	ECF	Apr-10	36 months	13.7 M
Haiti	ECF	Jul-10		278 M
Jamaica	SBA	Feb-10	27 months	1.27 Bn.
St Kitts & Nevis	SBA	Jul-11	36 months	79 M
St Lucia	RCF	Jan-11	Immediate	8.2 M
St Vincent & Grenadines	RCF	Jul-11	Immediate	2 M

SBA Stand-By Arrangement

ECF Extended Credit Facility

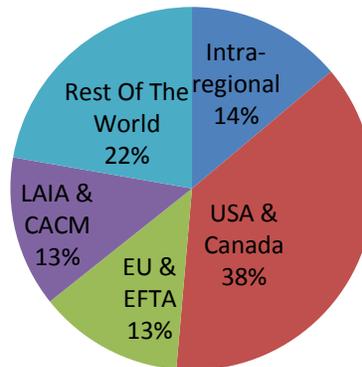
RCF Rapid Credit Facility

Source: author, based on IMF Press Releases

The Jamaican IMF programme agreed in 2010 entailed 53 undertakings by the government across a wide range of fiscal and monetary policies and so-called ‘structural reforms’ (Table 5). In addition there are numerous performance criteria and reporting requirements on 51 items on a daily, weekly, monthly or quarterly basis. On the face of it, this degree of control is similar to that exercised by a colonial power over the finances and economic policies of a dependent territory. Financial dependency in conjunction with overall economic dependency can therefore become a source of control over a nominally independent state.

<b>Table 5 IMF control over Jamaica’s economic policy</b>	
<i>Obligations of the Government of Jamaica to the IMF under the 36-month Standby Agreement of 2010</i>	
<b>POLICY AREA</b>	
Fiscal policy	10 undertakings
Monetary policy	3 undertakings
Structural reforms	40 actions
Performance criteria	9 quantitative criteria
<b>REPORTING OBLIGATIONS TO THE IMF</b>	
Daily	13 items
Weekly	6 items
Monthly	22 items
Quarterly	10 items
Source: author’s analysis of Jamaica’s Letter of Intent and supporting documents of 23 December 2010,	

Figure 3. Percentage Distribution of CARICOM's Foreign Trade by Main Trading Partners (2006-2010)



Source: based on data in CARICOM trade data base

### Trade

The exports of most Caribbean countries are heavily skewed towards the U.S., Canada and the EU (Figure 3 for the CARICOM distribution of trade). This is another legacy of the colonial past; and another source of neo-colonial control. One-way trade preferences used to be granted by the EU to most Caribbean states under the Lomé Agreement; and by the United States under the CBI and its successor schemes. Since the 1990s this has changed under the trade rules of neoliberal globalisation. The 'order of the day' is now reciprocal free trade together with the opening up of service industries, strengthened investor rights, strengthened intellectual property and the opening of public procurement markets. These provisions are contained for the most part in the CAFTA-DR with the United States signed by the Dominican Republic; and the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the EU signed by the Dominican Republic and fourteen Caricom states. Earlier, the one-way trade preferences of Lomé had been found to be in violation of WTO rules, as well as the trade preferences for bananas exported by the Caribbean (and African ACP) countries to the EU market. The effect of these provisions of 'Free Trade Agreements' is to further strengthen the position of U.S. and EU corporations in exploiting the markets, labour and natural resources of Caribbean countries; placing local firms at a

considerable disadvantage. There is further erosion of national state sovereignty by means of regulatory restrictions and on binding extra-national arbitration in investor-state disputes. Another instance of this is the provisions of Bilateral Investment Treaties concluded by several Caribbean countries with the United States and with some member states of the EU.

**Table 6. U.S. Grant military and police aid from International Military Education and Training, 2008-2013, Latin America and the Caribbean, US\$**

<i>Total Latin America</i>	40,829,537
<i>Caribbean</i>	
Dominican Republic	4,687,024
Jamaica	4,162,003
Eastern Caribbean	3,189,000
Guyana	1,851,670
Belize	1,301,095
Suriname	1,268,882
Haiti	1,168,919
Bahamas	1,093,784
Trinidad and Tobago	984,000
Eastern Caribbean Regional	587,000
Barbados	151,000
Antigua and Barbuda	127,582
St. Kitts and Nevis	92,857
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	88,000
St. Lucia	85,000
Grenada	74,142
Dominica	42,008
<i>Total Caribbean</i>	2,231,589

Source: *Just the Facts: A Civilian's Guide to U.S. defense and security assistance in Latin America and the Caribbean.*

<http://justf.org/Program?program=International%20Military%20Education%20and%20Training>

Military cooperation agreements between Caribbean and the United States are another link in the apparatus of neo-colonial influence. In 2008-2013 to U.S. military assistance to fifteen Caribbean countries totalled \$2.2 million (Table 6). Thus, in the words of an official U.S. document:

The International Military Education and Training (IMET) program ...facilitates the development of important professional and personal relationships which have proven to

provide U.S. access and influence in a critical sector of society that often plays a pivotal role in supporting, or transitioning to, democratic governments.

(<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/28973.pdf>)

**Table 7. US Military And Police Trainees from the, Caribbean 1999-2010 (No.)**

	<b>TOTAL</b>
<i>Total Latin America</i>	<b>168,515</b>
<i>Caribbean</i>	
Dominican Republic	4,108
Jamaica	2,734
Trinidad and Tobago	1,799
Belize	1,740
Guyana	1,238
Bahamas	1,030
Haiti	993
Suriname	884
Antigua and Barbuda	651
Barbados	357
Grenada	260
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	259
Dominica	248
St. Lucia	246
St. Kitts and Nevis	244
Netherlands Antilles	146
Turks and Caicos	51
Cayman Islands	2
Bermuda	1
<i>Total Caribbean</i>	<b>12,883</b>
<i>Total Latin America and the Caribbean</i>	185,506

Source: *Just the Facts: A Civilian's Guide to U.S. defense and security assistance in Latin America and the Caribbean*. U.S. Aid from International Military Education and Training, Entire Region, 2008-2013.  
<http://justf.org/Program?program=International%20Military%20Education%20and%20Training>.

In 1999-2010, 12,883 personnel from nineteen countries participated in the programme. (Table 7). In 2009, Honduran military officers thought to have participated in these programmes overthrew the constitutionally elected President, Manuel Zelaya; who had taken his country into ALBA and had plans to reform the constitution to strengthen popular power. The attempted coup against President Hugo Chavez in 2002 is also attributed to ties between U.S. military and elements in the Venezuelan military.

## **Towards integration and sovereignty**

Caribbean integration and sovereignty are strongly linked. It is difficult to envisage countries of this size disposing of a significant degree of control over their internal development, vis-à-vis the rest of the world, without pooling their resources and bargaining power and securing the benefits of economies of scale through closer economic integration. Integration, or at least closer cooperation, would also offer the dependent territories 'Caribbean alternatives' to colonial-power connections in spheres of action such as trade, investment, security, management of the Caribbean commons (the sea) and coping with natural disasters. A Caribbean Union could conceivably offer some dependent territories the option of 'Association'--full internal autonomy with shared defence and foreign affairs—as an alternative to dependent status with a colonial power.

The history of Caribbean integration/cooperation initiatives provides sobering lessons on the difficulties originating with differences in language, political systems, laws, customs and other institutional forms. The West Indies Federation, a political union of ten British Caribbean islands, lasted only four years before it collapsed in 1962. Subsequent attempts to promote a federation of different groupings of the English-speaking countries, all failed. Economic integration and cooperation associations have been promoted, with varying degrees of success. The Caribbean Free Trade Association (CARIFTA, 1965) was succeeded by the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) which is now attempting to establish a Caricom

Single Market and Economy (CSME). Caricom has grown to encompass fourteen of sixteen Caribbean states. The pace of Caricom economic integration is generally perceived to have slowed. There is also the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC) of ECLAC, which integrates the members of Caricom, the other island states and the dependent territories; but results have been somewhat disappointing. The Association of Caribbean States (ACS) encompasses the countries on the Greater Caribbean mainland; but the disparities of size and trading interest, as well as competing alliances, have made it difficult to forge a political and economic bloc out of its membership. The persistence of these initiatives is a sign of the recognition of the imperative of cooperation and integration for the small countries of the Caribbean.

Caribbean countries are also drawing closer to their Latin American neighbours. Three Caricom island states are members of ALBA; two are members of UNASUR; and all are members of CELAC. Latin American alliances are also a means of strengthening the position of Caribbean countries vis-à-vis the imperial centres. Cultural production can also be a powerful driver of integration, for it speaks to the constriction of identity and cosmology. In any case, the Caribbean struggle for independent development and self-affirmation will continue.