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**Internal Political Tribalism
and Regional Integration in the Caribbean**

-David Hinds



Jean Monnet/Robert Schuman Paper Series
Vol.5 No. 11
June 2005

This publication is sponsored by the EU Commission.

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Miami European Union Center
University of Miami
1000 Memorial Drive
101 Ferré Building
Coral Gables, FL 33124-2231
Phone: 305-284-3266
Fax: (305) 284 4406
E-Mail: jroy@miami.edu
Web: www.miami.edu/eucenter

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Internal Political Tribalism and Regional Integration in the Caribbean

David Hinds *

**The Jean Monnet Chair
University of Miami
Miami, Florida
June 2005**

* Dr. David Hinds is an Assistant Professor in the African and African American Studies Department at Arizona State University. He is a political scientist with specializations in Comparative Politics (Caribbean) and African Diaspora Studies. Dr. Hinds did his undergraduate studies at the University of the District of Columbia and his graduate studies at Howard University in Washington, DC. His areas of teaching and research include Race, Ethnicity and Politics in Plural Societies; Governance and Democracy; African Diasporic Political Thought; Political Resistance; and Culture as Political Expression. Apart from his scholarly work, he is a prolific writer in the popular media. His column, "The Truth of the Matter" and other popular writings on Caribbean Politics and Society appear in several on-line publications and in the Guyanese newspapers and can be found on his website guyanacaribbeanpolitics.com. In addition, Dr Hinds has been for the last decade a co-host of the most widely viewed Caribbean television program in the United States, CaribNation, which operates out of Washington, DC. In this capacity he has interviewed scores of Caribbean policy makers, political leaders, educators and cultural activists. He is also a political commentator and analyst on a monthly radio program, Caribbean Exchange, heard on Morgan State University Radio in Baltimore, Maryland.

Internal Political Tribalism and Regional Integration in the Caribbean

Introduction

As the Anglophone Caribbean navigates its fifth decade since the beginning of constitutional independence, international and domestic forces are threatening its survival, both as individual nation-states and as a community of states. The challenges of the current wave of globalization with its bias against small states have had serious implications for the Caribbean Political Economy. The dominant response has been a push towards deeper regional integration whereby the states could collectively coordinate and maximize their ability to compete in the global economy and protect themselves from the negative effects of globalization. Three crucial developments in this direction have been the setting up of a Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) and movement towards a Single Market and Economy (CSME) and an Executive Commission with powers to help implement decisions taken by the Heads of Government, the highest decision making body of CARICOM.

However, this push towards deeper integration, which is spurred in large part by the forces of international capital in consort with U.S. political and cultural hegemony, has been accompanied by a pull factor occasioned by the domestic political dynamics of the Caribbean states. This push-pull factor or the convergence of global and domestic factors is largely responsible for the nature and pace of regional integration in the Caribbean. This paper argues that while developments at the international level are critical to regional integration, of equal importance are developments at the domestic level.

During the last few years the historical polarization of Caribbean societies both at the level of government and society has played a critical role in slowing down the pace of Caribbean integration over the last few years. The chief culprit in this regard has been the persistent conflict between government and opposition, which is not helped by the Westminster winner-take-all system and the authoritarian political culture, both of which are legacies of the region's colonial past.

The CCJ, in particular, has been a victim of this problem, particularly in Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica, where opposition parties have linked support for the court to their partisan domestic agendas. The opposition Jamaican Labor Party (JLP), which objects to the CCJ as a court of last resort for Jamaica on the grounds that it will be subject to partisan political influence, has called for a referendum to decide on the issue. Ironically, it was the JLP while in government in 1970 that first proposed the idea of a regional court to replace the Privy Council as the court of last resort for the region. Trinidad's opposition United National Congress (UNC), which strongly supported regional integration when in office, though not objecting to the CCJ has nevertheless tied

its support for it to constitutional reform in the country. In both instances the ruling parties have rejected these proposals, leading to a political stalemate.

While this scenario may be characterized as politicking, it points to a larger issue: the extent to which domestic politics can affect regional integration. This paper contends that where there is more political and social integration at the domestic level a more stable and viable regional integration is likely to emerge. Conversely the more the countries are politically and socially polarized domestically a stable and viable regional integration is less likely to emerge. Since a regional integration movement is a community of states, what happens within one state is bound to affect what happens at the regional level. If states seeking integration are structurally and politically geared towards one-party rule then what results is a community of ruling parties rather than a community of states. Internal integration, therefore, is a prerequisite for regional integration, while internal polarization and tribalism are recipes for regional disaster. Political cooperation between government and opposition is, therefore, critical to the viability of regional integration.

In this regard three key questions must be interrogated. First, can states that are incapable of constructing a national ethos based on shared values and governance in their respective societies create a viable regional unity? How can governing parties and leaders that eschew unity with their own opposition, construct regional unity? Second is the majoritarian winner-take-all system an adequate tool for the construction of the culture of cooperation in postcolonial societies? Third, is the issue in the Caribbean really about the refusal of leaders and states to pool sovereignty or is it a refusal to surrender power?

This link between domestic politics and regional integration is pivotal to an understanding of regionalism. Mandsfield and Milner agree with this thesis. According to them:

Various recent studies indicate that whether states enter regional trade arrangements and the economic effects of these arrangements depend on the preferences of national policymakers and interests groups, as well as the nature and strength of domestic institutions.¹

Mandsfield further contends that “any comprehensive analysis of the international political economy would consider the effects of both international and domestic politics.”² This view is shared by Hoffman who observes that “every international system owes its inner logic and its unfolding to the diversity of domestic

¹ Edward D. Mandsfield and Helen V. Milner, “The New Wave of Regionalism” *International Organization* 53 (3): 589-627 (607).

² Edward D. Mandsfield, “The Proliferation of Preferential Trading Arrangements” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. 42(5):523-43 (200).

determinants, geo-historical situations and outside aims among its units.”³ Expanding on this relationship he opines, “[d]omestic politics are dominated not so much by the region’s problems as by the purely local and purely global ones, which conspire to divert the region’s members from the internal affairs of their area...each nation new or old, finds itself placed in an orbit of its own, from which it is quite difficult to move away: for the attraction of the regional forces is offset by the pull of all the other forces.”⁴

Hoffman hits the nail on the head when he observes that because the nation-state is made up of its “internal features,” when policy makers move beyond the nation-state they do so “by taking along the nation with its baggage of memories and problems – with its situation.”⁵ The contention here is that economic, political and social instability within member states have implications for the success of regional integration. Jacome⁶ supports this approach to regional integration. She argues that integration has to be dealt with within a broader political and social framework that includes democracy and governance at the domestic level.

Domestic Politics and Governance- An Overview

Unlike Europe, the Caribbean is building a regional movement among countries that have not yet settled the national or democratic question--the question of nationhood and an acceptable body of principles, values and rules that underpin the state and society. The political history of the region did not prepare it for the cooperation and sense of oneness that are needed for building viable nation-states. The convergence of authoritarianism, class domination, an externally driven and determined political economy, racial insecurity and gender inequity lend to some degree of political dysfunctionality that retard political consensus and socio-economic development.

Despite some democratic modifications, the Caribbean state is as authoritarian as it was at the time of independence.⁷ The coercive arm has maintained its historic role as a medium of terror against the masses while serving as protector of the interests of the ruling class. This situation in conjunction with chronic poverty, narco-traffic, social alienation and corruption within the state has engendered a complex criminal enterprise that threatens to overrun the state. Some scholars have, however, attributed to the

³ Stanley Hoffman, “Obstinate or Obsolete? “The Fate of the Nation-State and the Case of Western Europe” in *Daedalus* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 862-915), 864.

⁴ Ibid, 865.

⁵ Ibid, 868.

⁶ Francine Jacomé, “Democracy and governability in integration and regionalization processes in the Wider Caribbean,” in Peter Wickham et al. *Critical issues in Caribbean Development: Elements of regional Integration* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 1998), 127-157.

⁷ Clive Y. Thomas, *The Rise of the Authoritarian State in Peripheral Societies* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1984).

countries of the region an overly democratic profile that has not been consistent with the lived realities.⁸ Because the region has had a very good record of maintaining parliamentary democracy and the rule of law, these scholars have mistaken these democratic forms and procedures for democratic substance. In the process they have ignored the anti-democratic form of governance in the region; they have focused on structures while ignoring outcomes. As Ryan observes, “[t]he triumph of electoral democracy notwithstanding, the Caribbean has had its share of political charlatan and adventurers, politically inspired riots, successful and unsuccessful coups, draconian repression, politically driven victimization and assignation, election related violence, electoral thuggery, fraud and corruption, social and ethnic cleanings, and some of the other ugly, nasty and exploitative deformations that have characterized democracy elsewhere.”⁹

This phenomenon is aided and exacerbated by the Westminster model, which encourages fierce competition for power. Because Westminster model in the Caribbean confers on the winning party absolute power and the losing party no power, and because the winning party is unlikely to incorporate the interests of the losing party, the stage is set for permanent conflict. Ruling parties contain or marginalize opposition parties while opposition parties try to sabotage the work of the ruling parties. This antagonism is total because what is at stake is the power of governments to control almost every aspect of the society. This has led to a crisis of governance that is reflected in the inability of the governmental system to transform formal democracy into substantive democratic outcomes and advance the cause of nationhood. Peters describes such rule as “quasi-authoritarian.” According to him:

What is peculiar about the Eastern Caribbean political system is the absolute authority that government somehow inherits. Government officials are able to circumvent the laws that they have enacted. They are able to use public resources for their personal gain. While partisan politics is a normal phenomenon in modern democracies, Caribbean governments have taken the concept to its zenith. As a result, when a party is elected to power it virtually eliminates the opposition through patronage, control of the media and legislative action where necessary. These actions are in part responsible for the domination of one party for decades in most of these islands.¹⁰

⁸ Jorge Domínguez, et al. *Democracy in the Caribbean* (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1993); Evelyn Huber, “The Future of Democracy in the Caribbean” in Domínguez et al. 1993, (74-95); Anthony Payne “Westminster Adapted: The Political Order of the Commonwealth Caribbean,” in Domínguez et al. 1993, (57-73).

⁹ Selwyn Ryan, *Winner Takes All: The Westminster Experience in the Caribbean* (St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago: UWI Press, 1999), xvi.

¹⁰ Donald Peters, *The Democratic System in the Eastern Caribbean*, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), 9.

The Westminster Model, therefore, has been utilized to enforce elite domination of politics and governance and has served to institutionalize sharp polarization of the society along racial and tribal lines. Both elite dominance and polarization among the masses have served as impediments to democratization of society and politics. Barbados Prime Minister, Owen Arthur argues, “the unfortunate aspect of the Westminster model of governance is that it has encouraged “to the victors the spoils” mentality. It has ensured that at any time almost half of the population of any given Caribbean society is marginalized and alienated from participation in the development of their society.”¹¹

The two-party system in the Caribbean mirrors the division of the societies into relatively fixed antagonistic factions. In each country there has developed an intra-class rivalry and competition among the working peoples that divides them into two antagonistic camps or political tribes. In Guyana and Trinidad these tribes have the added identification of race. The political parties have evolved into bastions of tribal and racial representation. This attachment to one political party or the other arises out of the practice of clientilism whereby political support is based on the party’s ability to grant favors to its constituencies. In the case of Guyana and Trinidad, party membership and support are based on racial considerations. In effect, therefore, the Caribbean political landscape is characterized by fixed factions or “tribes” that battle each other for control of the government and state, thus making elections a high intensity exercise and the capture of government the ultimate prize. Owen Arthur captures this reality when he opines:

There is something fundamentally flawed about a system of governance, based upon the first-past-the-post principle, in which the victor gets all the spoils, but in which all other than hard score party supporters and in fact, almost half of the population at any time feel alienated from participating in what is taking place around them.¹²

Ruling parties, despite some degree of constitutional checks, function as paramount entities leading to little distinction between ruling party, government and state. As Peters (1992:21) contends, “The system of government that emerges out of that process is one characterized by some aspects of democracy but tightly controlled with the tradition of a quasi-authoritarian system. The countries, therefore, are recognized as democracies, but the government apparatus and the decision-making process at the national level are not democratic and cannot be capsulized within any of the broad political models that dominate the Third World.”¹³

¹¹Ryan , 1999, 317.

¹² Ryan 1999, 47.

¹³ Peters, 1992, 21.

Arthur Lewis puts it this way:

In a small island of 50,000 to 100,000 people dominated by a single political party, it is very difficult to prevent political abuse. Everybody depends on the government for something, however small, so most are reluctant to offend it. The civil servants live in fear, the police avoid unpleasantness, the trade unions are tied to the party, newspapers depend on government advertisements and so on.¹⁴

Because political power is monopolized by the leadership of the political parties in consort with the economic elites, there has developed a top-down approach to governance and politics that excludes the masses from any meaningful say in the decision making process. But even at the top, the elites compete for power and administer it not as a means to an end but as an end itself. Control of political power means absolute control of state resources and paramountcy of the party over the state. In many respects the ruling party in the Anglophone Caribbean is indistinguishable from the state. The fierce competition for power, therefore, engenders a very high intensity electoral exercise that excites the citizenry into a carnival of acrimony and violence that have been increasingly carried over into the post-election period. In between elections political parties, both governing and opposition, are motivated less by national concerns and more by the need to maintain or secure party hegemony. The exercise of politics is, therefore, an exercise in anti-development and anti-nationhood. Again Prime Minister Arthur hits the nail on the head, when he asserts that, “[i]t can also reasonably be argued that there has, in our region, been too destructive a competition for political office; too heavy a concentration of power in the hands of the ruling elites, an unhealthy preservation of anti-development party and tribal division, a focus on short term partisan political concerns rather than long-term strategic objectives, and efficient patronage and spoils systems which work against sound and progressive government. Alienation, cynicism and marginalization have been the result, all leading to a perpetuation of underdevelopment.”¹⁵

Opposition parties are, therefore, treated as outcasts and not as part of the governance structure while ruling parties assume power to govern and determine who gets what, when and where. In effect the winner determines unilaterally the fate of the rest of the society. Parties generally use their majority status to make national decisions and in the process more often than not ignore the views of opposition parties, which often represent significant minorities. According to Jamaica’s opposition leader Bruce Golding, “There is no joy in being in opposition, you know. When you are in opposition, you control nothing. If one is outside the “power loop”, one is ineffective, and impotent despite the fact that one may be a duly elected representative of the people.”¹⁶

¹⁴ Courtney Blackman, “Agony of the Eight Revisited,” *Caribbean Affairs* 1989 2(3) (63).

¹⁵ Ryan, 1999, 317.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 11.

Opposition parties in turn have generally tried to undermine the government outside of the formal constitutional framework and take advantage of loopholes in the formal system to stall or torpedo government initiatives. Beginning in the 1990s the region has seen a new tendency whereby losing parties have either refused to accept the results of elections or cooperate with the government after the elections. This is a departure from the norm in post-colonial Caribbean politics. Neville Duncan¹⁷ sees this as a problem for regional integration. While he observes that this development is not new to the region, given their prevalence they assume greater significance at this time. This zero-sum political praxis has led to persistent political instability within the countries that invariably spills over into regional politics. It has consumed all facets of the society. The working people become pawns in a ruthless political game that subsequently compels them to see their salvation in partisan terms. The middle strata and the professional class become cheerleaders of the status quo, thus making a mockery of the concept of Civil Society. Political space is surrendered to the political parties as a matter of course. Trevor Munroe (1996: 20) is on the ball when he says:

There are a number of serious obstacles in the way of radical reform and democratic renewal. One such is a constitutional system that, throughout the region, places excessive power in the hands of the executive, in particular in that of the office of the prime minister. The converse of this over-concentration of power are legislatures that are ineffective, electorates that have little institutional means of influencing policy between elections. In its most extreme form, this system allows constitutional dictatorship as manifested itself in the Gairy regime of the 1970s and that can lead to extra constitutional revolutionary action such as undertaken by the New Jewel Movement in the 1970s.¹⁸

Domestic Politics and Integration—The CCJ

As the Caribbean pushes for deeper regional integration, the adversarial nature of the region's politics pulls it back. This scenario is most glaring in the case of the CCJ, which should have been inaugurated in 2003. It was, however, postponed on at least three occasions until April 2005 when largely on account of disagreements at the domestic level it was launched as a trade court rather than as a replacement for the Privy Council. In particular, opposition parties in Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica have tied their country's participation in the CCJ to domestic constitutional reform and the holding of referendum respectively; proposals that have been rejected by the ruling parties.

¹⁷ Neville Duncan, "Governance and Caribbean Elections," *CARICOM Perspective* Issue No:69 Vol. 1 (2001): 72-74.

¹⁸ Trevor Munroe, "Caribbean Democracy: Decay or Renewal" *CARICOM Perspective* Issue No: 66 (1996): 16-21.

Since leaders and parties are unaccustomed to operating within a culture of political cooperation, which is so pivotal to a viable regional integration, they have little appetite for it. Regionalism, therefore, is not a major consideration at the domestic level; it is a sideshow but more importantly it is transformed into a noose around the neck of the incumbent party-tribe. It becomes a political football, a casualty of tribal politics as governments and opposition parties behave more like enemies rather than partners in the developmental process. While leaders insist on cooperation and consensus at the regional level they entrench the government-opposition divide at the domestic level.

Editorializing on this issue, a Caribbean newspaper, *Stabroek News*, comments:

In these instances it may well be the case that CARICOM projects are being held hostage to domestic conflicts. Indeed it may well be the case that the slow pace in the implementation of decisions made by the Summit and other CARICOM bodies is due precisely to the fact that governments must steadily look over their shoulders at what political capital the opposition might make of CARICOM issues.¹⁹

What matters at the domestic level is not the collective will, but the will of the ruling party, which in turn is projected as the national will. This narrow national will, in the final analysis, is premised on a narrow legitimacy and it invariably collides with regional imperatives, which then leads to a slowing down of the pace of regionalization. Neville Duncan picks up the relationship between national legitimacy and regional integration. According to him the sustainability of democratic procedures cannot be left solely to member states but it should also become a regional concern. He suggests that Caribbean Heads of Government should set up a regional office to deal with the question of legitimacy at the state level.²⁰

The Jamaica Controversy

When the Jamaica Labor Party (JLP) held office in the 1980s its then leader, Edward Seaga, had committed Jamaica to joining both the CSME and the CCJ. However when the JLP became the opposition, the party became a vocal critic and withdrew support for these institutions. In response to Prime Minister P. J. Patterson reminder of the JLP's earlier support for the CCJ, Seaga replied that conditions had changed. In an interview with a US based Caribbean television program Seaga expressed his party's position:

¹⁹ *Stabroek News* "A role for the Opposition?" May 19, 2004.

²⁰ Duncan, 2001, 72-74.

We are not convinced that we can divorce the intrusiveness that seems to pervade all aspects of our life - the political intrusiveness - in a Court that is to have final appellate jurisdiction. The way in which the Court is structured is that the Chief Justice is to be appointed politically and then he appoints all the other Judges. So you have a Chief Justice who is beholden to the political leaders who appoint him. And as such, the Justices that are appointed to empanel the Court are also beholden to the Chief Justice who is beholden. Now, the one thing that we must not have is any watering down of the purity of justice. What this country needs, and I can't speak for the rest of the Caribbean, I think some countries in the Caribbean will fall in this category, is more justice not less justice and to the extent that we need more justice, we do not want to water down the pure form of justice that we are able to enjoy by appeals to the Privy Council. That has served us well, we have full confidence in it largely because not only the quality of justice that is there but because the members of the Privy Council are far removed from local circumstances. We do not want a Court that is going to take into account circumstances and conditions of the society in which they operate. We want a Court that takes into account two things: the law and the evidence before it.²¹

In relation to the larger issue of regional integration, Seaga takes an equally uncompromising nationalistic position. According to him institutions like the CCJ would weaken Jamaican sovereignty. He contends that, "We in the JLP do not wish to pursue this course and it is for this reason that we differ...by this position we mean no disrespect to our Caribbean sister states with whom we have had a strong record of cooperation at many levels for 30 years. It is not that by our stand we love them less, but we love Jamaica more."²²

Delroy Chuck, another JLP spokesperson supports Seaga's position by situating what he sees as Jamaica's domestic commitments in direct conflict with regional integration and hinted that the JLP was serious about the matter. According to him, "If we mean Jamaica well, then the priority would be to look after the Jamaican citizen, especially the unemployed, yet, is that being done?"²³ Any attempt to remove the Privy Council, without putting in place a Caribbean Court of Justice in accordance with proper procedure will be resisted and it will be "bangarang inside and outside of this Parliament."²⁴

²¹ Edward Seaga, Opposition Leader, Jamaica, interview by David Hinds, *Caribnation TV*, No. 426, Kingston, Jamaica, August 31 2000.

²² Peter Jones, "Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ): Caribbean Integration or disintegration?" *Economic Working Paper* Volume V Economic Development Institute Information Booklet Series 1 (November 2004), 39.

²³ Delroy Chuck, "Competing in the CSME" *The Jamaica Gleaner* April 13, 2005.

²⁴ Balford Henry, "House Passes New CCJ Bill," *Jamaica Observer*, April 13 2005.

When the JLP's call for a referendum to decide the matter was rejected by the ruling PNP which then used its legislative majority to pass the CCJ legislation, the JLP in alliance with the Jamaica Human Rights organization took legal action. The argument before the courts was that issues such as the changing of the final court of appeals should be decided by either a two thirds majority in parliament or a referendum and not a simple majority vote by the government side. While the Jamaican courts ruled in favor of the government, the Privy Council found that the manner in which the laws were passed did not comply with constitutional requirements and was thus unconstitutional. This ruling has had implications for other CARICOM countries which belong to the Privy Council and one can argue with much justification that it was the chief reason that the CCJ was launched in its abbreviated form.

As a result of the Privy Council's ruling the JLP and PNP eventually agreed to enact legislation to facilitate the CCJ as a court of first resort or trade court only. However, this agreement was hammered out in bilateral negotiations between the two parties outside of the formal constitutional structures. This development only occurred after there was a change of leadership in the opposition party. When the parliamentary debate over the bill eventually started the government allegedly used its majority status to circumvent parliamentary procedure leading to opposition protests and a walkout from parliament.²⁵ Although the Prime Minister eventually gave in to the opposition demands for parliamentary transparency, the bitter struggle between the two parties over this issue would have done irreparable damage to the cause of integration in the eyes of Jamaicans.

The Trinidad Scenario

In Trinidad where the CCJ is headquartered, the opposition party, the opposition United National Congress (UNC) which championed regional integration while in office initially, tied its support for the CCJ to the government's agreement to constitutional reform. After an electoral tie that saw the President favoring the rival People's National Movement (PNM) to run the government, the UNC had been clamoring for constitutional reform. Since the ruling PNM has ignored this when the issue of the CCJ arose and the government needed opposition support to pass legislation in this regard, the UNC seized the opportunity to hold the government at ransom and in the process held regional integration hostage. Here once again what is paramount for both parties is not the realization of a regional institution but their partisan political survival.

Speaking as Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago at the Twelfth Inter-Sessional Meeting of CARICOM Heads in February 2001 UNC leader, Basdeo Panday, was emphatic about his party's support for the CCJ:

²⁵ Balford Henry, "Debate on new CCJ Bill stalls," *Jamaica Observer*, April 6 2005.

Let me assure the Conference of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago's continuing commitment to and support for the establishment of the Caribbean Court of Justice. Indeed, the temporary Headquarters of Port-of-Spain for the Court will be ready for occupancy by the end of April 2001.²⁶

But following the UNC's electoral defeat, it adapted a similar position to that of the JLP. In an about turn Panday asserted, "Our position remains unchanged. We believe that there is need for fundamental constitutional reform in Trinidad and Tobago before we could move on to anything else and unless we have that we do not intend to support the move for the setting up of the Caribbean Court. Without constitutional reform the court could be very dangerous [and] with a Government like the PNM in office and in power one has to be extremely careful in setting up that court."²⁷

Since unlike Jamaica, Trinidad required a two-thirds majority to pass the CCJ legislation, the government had to withdraw the bill. Although Prime Minister Patrick Manning pleaded that the matter "should be above the cut and thrust of politics" and had "nothing to do with the PNM or UNC" and although CARICOM tried to mediate, the UNC was unmoved. Like the PNP which did not budge on the JLP's referendum call, the PNM remained equally unmoved on the UNC's call for constitutional reform in Trinidad.

When the vote was taken on the bill to enact the CCJ as a court of first resort, which required a simple parliamentary majority, the UNC MPs abstained. One opposition MP called the CCJ a "Trojan Horse" that will be a "Caribbean Court of Injustice."²⁸ She predicted that it will lead to a destruction of democracy and an erosion of Trinidad and Tobago's independence and sovereignty.²⁹ The UNC has contended that there should have been a two-thirds vote even to enact the CCJ in its original jurisdiction and has threatened to take legal action.³⁰

Conclusions

The refusal of ruling parties to hold referenda to decide on regional institutions such as the CCJ and the CSME is a direct result of the nature of domestic politics. Since a referendum would be treated as a national election ruling parties are less likely to want to

²⁶ CARICOM Secretariat, "Statement by the Honorable Basdeo Panday, Prime Minister, Trinidad and Tobago, at the Twelfth Inter-Sessional meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, St. Michael, Barbados, 14 February, 2001" (Georgetown: CARICOM Secretariat, February 16, 2001).

²⁷ *Trinidad Express* "Bas says no to CCJ," April 14, 2005.

²⁸ *Trinidad Express* "UNC backed CCJ in 2001," February 3, 2005.

²⁹ *Trinidad Express* "Amended CCJ Bill passed with simple majority," February 4, 2005.

³⁰ Anna Ramdass, "Putting the cart before the horse," *Trinidad Express*, March 11 2005.

go in that direction. In any case, these ruling parties interpret their election victories as a source of empowerment to act on behalf of the nation even when such issues entail extraordinary implications, such as sovereignty. On the other hand, opposition parties are more eager for a referendum since it allows them a medium through which they can hold the government accountable and possibly erode their influence and confidence. Sanders makes this observation in relation to the failed attempt at political unity among the OECS countries:

It can be seen, therefore, that by not actively seeking to involve the opposition parties fully in the process toward a political union, the governments had wrong-rooted themselves. For the parties, which never wanted union, could oppose the process on the basis that the governments were acting undemocratically.³¹

The ruling parties' refusal then to go to the people on regional issues opens them to opposition charges of authoritarianism. In the process, regional issues become attached to the notion of authoritarian rule. A referendum on the CCJ in Jamaica, for example, will more likely than not become a referendum not on regional integration but on the government's stewardship. Hence the CCJ becomes a victim of the extreme tribal competition between the two major Jamaican parties.

The key issue for Caribbean governments seems not to be a loss of sovereignty, but a loss of power. In fact regional integration will enhance sovereignty for Caribbean countries, as it would provide more leverage for the individual and collective defense of Caribbean sovereignty which given the neo-colonial grip of the developed countries on the region has never been fully established. What leaders fear is the curtailment of their power since in a regional political economy their ability to dictate and influence their domestic economies and dispense favors would likely be reduced. Similarly the power to influence the composition of the courts and the outcomes of their deliberations would not be easily transferred in their dealings with a regional court as it will take unanimous approval of the Heads of Government to amend the treaty.

The Westminster majoritarian model, which assumes a spirit of consensus within the letter of majority rule, has proven disastrous for Caribbean societies. Although there were moments of unity during the decolonization process, they have never developed any sustained consensus ethos. In the final analysis, apart from the external problem, the most worrying problem of Caribbean regionalization lies in the non-resolution of the problem of governance and decision making within member states. That is what is being played out in Jamaica and Trinidad; the CSME and CCJ are not the cause of the problem, but merely the occasion for a dramatization of it. As Hinds argues:

³¹ Ronald Sanders, *Crumbled Small: The Commonwealth Caribbean in World Politics* (London: Hansib Publishing Ltd.), 116.

While regional unity is welcomed, it will falter if it is not premised on democratic practices both at the center and inside of its sub-units or individual countries. In this regard Trinidad and Tobago's opposition UNC position of tying agreement to the CCJ to constitutional reform in that country should not be taken lightly. Similarly Jamaica's opposition JLP's call for a referendum on the CCJ should not be ignored. These two developments point to the necessary relationship between governance in the individual countries and governance at the regional level. There is no doubt that regional governance has to be premised on shared democratic governance or consensus among the member countries. Already governance at the level of the Heads of Governments is based on consensus democracy. This consensus model is, however, at variance with the majoritarian model used in the member countries. Hence part of the reason for the tension in Trinidad and Jamaica. The views and role of the opposition in the member countries cannot and must not be ignored. If governments continue to endorse CARICOM agreements by using the "part-democratic" majoritarian principle, then CARICOM itself will be plagued by the instability that arises from majoritarianism.³²

This disjoint between the decision making process within member countries and the necessities of the regional movement is, therefore, a matter of urgent concern. The implication of domestic conflicts for the regional movement is not confined to the pace of implementation of decisions; there is also the strong possibility that change of governments could lead to countries reversing decisions of their predecessors. The Jamaica case reeks of this. Imagine the negative impact on CARICOM if the JLP, which has vehemently opposed both the CSME and the CCJ, comes to power and pulls Jamaica out of these institutions. Unlike Europe, CARICOM cannot afford the absence of some of its members from the CSME. Dr Eric Williams' mathematical logic of "one from ten leaves nothing" still holds true to a large extent. Edward Seaga's warning that if the JLP came to power it would repeal any law establishing the CCJ in Jamaica is instructive.³³ Although new leader, Bruce Golding, has had a less confrontational tone, he has not wavered from the party line.³⁴

While one may, with some justification, dismiss the JLP and the UNC as obstructionists and anti-CARICOM, the matter is much more profound. The Caribbean is trying to build a regional movement based on consensus but the individual countries are wedded to a majoritarianism that has served to perpetuate differences and disharmony rather than similarities and harmony. These differences are direct and indirect legacies of colonization but they have been taken to higher heights since independence. For CARICOM to advance with any purpose this problem has to be solved both from within

³² David Hinds, "Whither CARICOM: Governance at National and Regional Levels must be Complimentary" *Guyanacaribbeanpolitics.com*. July 17, 2003.

³³ *Trinidad Express* "Sobion slams UNC, JLP for not backing CCJ," January 21, 2004.

³⁴ *Jamaica Observer*, "Golding sets Agenda – Wants limit on Gov't powers," February 21, 2005.

the states themselves and from without. Of course the leaders can proceed with integration by circumventing this issue--some would argue that they have no choice given the global imperatives--, but the process will be persistently handcuffed by the democratic contradictions within member states.

While the CCJ has highlighted the problem of regionalism in the Caribbean more than others, there are other concerns. For example, in the case of Guyana, where race is the central factor in domestic politics, the situation is even more complex. The then Indian PPP government in 1958 refused to take Guyana into the Federation. The PPP leader, Cheddi Jagan, cited as the main reason the East Indian fear of losing the majority status it enjoyed in Guyana³⁵ (Jagan 1972). The present PPP government, although an active participant in CARICOM, is known to favor a Guyana-Trinidad-Suriname union that would preserve the Indian majority. That the CARICOM Secretariat is located in Guyana means that these developments have serious repercussions for regional integration. Further, Guyana's persistent political instability resulting from its racial problems, which has attracted regional intervention in the past, must by necessity be of concern for the regional movement. In fact, CARICOM's intervention in Guyana, Trinidad and St. Vincent to mediate domestic problems is a clear signal of the relationship between internal instability and regional viability.

Another contentious issue has been the institution of free movement of some categories of labor within the region. In St. Kitts a Guyanese national had his work permit withheld on the grounds that his job was not properly advertised. This government action occurred shortly after a general election in which the opposition raised the issue of St. Kitts commitment to regional integration at the expense of the country's interest. A few years earlier two journalists were similarly denied work permits in Antigua and Trinidad because they were critical of the then government.

A consensus form of democratic governance will go a long way towards reducing adversarial politics, which in turn will reduce the possibility of regionalization being held at ransom. Regional consensus will always be vulnerable in the face of a lack of domestic consensus. Surely decisions on important matters such as committing sovereign countries to shared institutions should not be left to the discretion of a bare majority of the people's representatives. Both the Jamaican and Trinidadian governments should find a framework for consensus within their countries on the CCJ and CSME before proceeding with it. If prime ministers Patterson and Manning cannot find unity at home, how can they be serious about unity with others? Sanders is clear that the role of the opposition in regional unity is most important. To quote him:

If the people of these territories were to be persuaded to subsume their nationalist feeling for greater benefit under a political union, it would require all their political leaders to convince them; no one faction could do it alone...But the alienation of the opposition parties could not practically serve the purposes of any government which was serious about political

³⁵ Cheddi Jagan, *The West on Trial* (Seven Seas Press: Frankfurt: East Germany, 1972).

union. For the constitutions of all the OECS territories demand an affirmative vote of two-third of the members of some parliaments and three-quarters in others before a referendum can be held on any alternation to an entrenched clause of the constitution. Therefore, before the people of each state could be asked to vote in a referendum to alter the constitution allowing for political union, members of the opposition parties would have had to support such a motion in parliament.... It is highly unlikely that any government would have been able to secure two-thirds of the votes without the support of opposition parties.³⁶

Newly elected Prime Minister of Antigua, Baldwin Spencer, has called for involvement of the opposition in CARICOM. According to Spencer: (CARICOM Secretariat: October 8, 2004)

Very regrettably a “No Admittance to Opposition Politicians” sign continues to hang over the door of the councils of CARICOM... it is a pity that CARICOM has not yet sought to make itself a pasture in which the Region’s lambs and lions could lie down together. Think of how wonderful that would be!³⁷

Although there is an Assembly of Caribbean Community Parliamentarians (AACP) that includes opposition parliamentarians, this does not address the problem of the opposition’s role in the regional project. Ultimately decisions both at the national and regional levels are made in the executive. So if the opposition is to play any meaningful role, it has to be within this branch of the regional body. I would propose that rather than having an opposition delegation at CARICOM meetings, each country should have a joint delegation that include government representatives and representatives from the parliamentary opposition and where necessary members of Civil Society. It would make no sense for governments and their opposition to be sparring at a CARICOM meeting; that sparring within a consensus framework and a spirit of shared interests should take place before they go to the meeting.

Finally regional unity will falter if it is not premised on democratic practices both at the center and inside of its sub-units or individual countries. Regional governance has to be premised on shared democratic governance or consensus among the member countries. Already governance at the level of the Heads of Governments is based on consensus democracy. This consensus model is, however, at variance with the majoritarian model used in the member countries. Hence part of the reason for the tension in Trinidad and Jamaica. The views and role of the opposition in the member countries cannot and must not be ignored. If governments continue to endorse CARICOM agreements by using the "part-democratic" majoritarian principle, then CARICOM itself

³⁶ Sanders, 2005, 116-117.

³⁷ CARICOM Secretariat, “Opening Address by the Honorable Balwin Spenser, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda and Outgoing Chairman of the Caribbean Community at the Twenty-fifth Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government, St. George’s, Grenada, July 4, 2005,” (Georgetown: CARICOM Secretariat, July 5, 2005).

will be plagued by the instability that arises from majoritarianism. In this regard, Sanders is not incorrect when based on the OECS' experience he warns:

It also meant that political parties in those states would have to overcome their intense aversion to talking with each other. They would have had to learn that integral to operating the Westminster [style] of government, is that, on important issues of national concerns, political leaders of all sides of the house must hold dialogue as representatives of the people to whom they are accountable. If they failed to do so as they did, national consensus, which is an absolute prerequisite for altering their constitution and proceeding to a political union would never be achieved.³⁸

It follows, therefore, that forms of shared democratic governance have to be worked out within the member countries if regional unity is to be effective. For example, there is a contradiction between Prime Minister Manning's fierce advocacy of closer regional political unity and his dismal failure to advocate and work for a similar unity with the opposition in Trinidad. There is also the democratic contradiction of the regional heads making decisions on super government when they represent just over half of their populations. One way to begin to address this problem is for the member countries to move in the direction of power sharing based on shared democratic governance to compliment the evolving power sharing at the regional level.

³⁸ Sanders, 2005, 118.