SHIPRIDER REVISITED: SECURITY AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME IN THE CARIBBEAN

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Introduction

Caribbean countries are having today to deal with a vastly changed and qualitatively different security and crime environment than was previously the case. New security concerns, escalating levels of violence and new kinds of crime are bringing into question the very viability of some of these small Caribbean states and their capacity and will to fulfill the most important responsibility to populations – that is, the provision of security in its various aspects.

Taking as its point of departure the Shiprider controversy that erupted in late 1996, this analysis explores the problematic of security and transnational crime in the region currently. It is set within the larger global security framework, especially post-September 11, and the transcending globalization process. The contention is that the substantially transformed security and crime situation in the Caribbean necessitates a wholly new model of management. In revisiting the earlier Shiprider debate, the aim is to show that the fundamental flaws of the Shiprider process in dealing with drug-trafficking are pertinent to ongoing attempts to find effective and sustainable solutions to the interrelated security and crime challenges.

The analysis begins by briefly putting Caribbean security and crime in traditional perspective. The next section looks at contemporary security and crime in the region, exploring the Shiprider episode in this context. It is followed by an examination of the challenge of managing security

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1 The Caribbean countries dealt with in this analysis are the English-speaking members of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM). The analysis recognises that, within this grouping, the specific priorities and urgencies might be different for individual countries. However, the common characteristic of their security environment has to do with the range of new, non-traditional threats that they face, on the one hand, and their severe capacity constraints that limit effective management on their part, on the other.

2 Shiprider refers to the bilateral agreement entered into between most of the Caribbean countries and the US at various times between 1996 and 1997 with regard to their role as key transshipment locations for drugs from producer-South American countries destined to the major consuming countries in North America and Europe.
and crime currently and concludes by outlining some necessary factors and critical requirements in the task of urgently reconstructing security and crime management in the Caribbean.

Security and Crime in Perspective

Historically, security has been the most primordial of human concerns. As Burke (2002: 1) notes: “We know that security is one of the most fundamental human needs: an irrefutable guarantee of safety and well-being, economic assurance and possibility, sociability and order; of life lived freely without fear or hardship.” A transcending raison d’être of the state has thus been the provision of security, both for its citizens and territorial expanse.

Security in this conception has both an internal and an external dimension. Traditionally, these two dimensions were largely conceived and operationalised as discrete spheres of state policy-making and tasks. Management of domestic and external security thus generally devolved to distinct operational agencies. It is not being suggested that governments did not see the need to ensure a measure of cooperation or coordination across these two levels. The fact that most states established national security agencies – one of the main aims of which has been just that – indicates as much. In practical terms though, coordination between internal and external security agencies has at best been highly problematic, at worst virtually non-existent.

Insofar as external security is concerned, it traditionally involved threats to state survival from external sources, basically - but not exclusively - from other states. In this sense, security focused on external military threats and the state was the exclusive agent responsible for its provision, with management responsibility devolving to the military and diplomatic establishments. From this vantage-point, external security was a wholly state-centered phenomenon.

Countries of the Caribbean and Third World, more generally, did not wholly or uncritically conform to this traditional outlook. Even before the current rethinking of security, they had already challenged this mainstream view on the basis of their specific realities, articulating a perspective that is closer to the evolving conceptualization in terms of its broadening and scope and the origins of threats that they faced.

With regard to internal security, this had basically to do with the management of crime. Traditional crime related to criminal acts perpetrated against individuals and groups, and against their properties. It also included white collar crime and crimes against the state.

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Jurisdictionally, the perpetration of criminal acts in general was linked to a specific national territory. And, the provision of security against crime was exclusively a state responsibility via institutions such as the police, judiciary and prisons. More recently, community participation in crime management has been growing and evolving.

A summary profile of traditional crime in the Caribbean reveals certain broad patterns.\(^5\) First, where violence was involved, it was generally person-on-person, as against organized violence - the latter being more the exception than the rule. Second, the technology of violence was usually very basic and, where firearms were used, the technology in the hands of criminals lagged behind that available to enforcement agencies. Third, most of the violence involved crimes of passion, and communal or family crime. Fourth, much of the crime was property-targeted. Fifth, there was a high incidence of petty crime.

Security and Crime in the Caribbean in the Contemporary Period

Security and interrelated crime in the Caribbean have undergone dramatic change over the last decade or so. Broadly, the contention is that it is not feasible to compartmentalize external and internal security. As Cha (2000: 397) observes:

> “Globalization creates an interpenetration of foreign and domestic issues that national governments must recognize in developing policy. One example of this ‘intermestic’ approach to security policy might be an acceptance that the transnationalization of threats has blurred traditional divisions between internal and external security.”

Their radically changed environment is a derivative of a complex of powerful forces in both the global and national political economies, the most obvious being globalization and information technology. They have together led to fundamentally new realities for Caribbean countries. Foremost in this regard are (i) a growing interdependence of political economies and peoples worldwide; (ii) the resultant non-insulation of national political economies from both positive and negative global forces and trends; (iii) increasingly permeable borders and (iv) a sense of diminishing sovereign control.

More specifically, these realities are manifested in a tremendous expansion of the security threats that these countries face.\(^6\) Even as traditional security concerns remain of high saliency for many of them, new ones have emerged as existential threats and glaring vulnerabilities, posing real dangers to their survival. These threats relate to the economic, environmental, societal and political domains of their

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existence. Moreover, they have led to an emergent novel conceptualisation of security, under the rubric of human security, that is increasingly engaging the policy and academic communities globally.\(^7\)

Thus, when we think of security today, several precise threats come to mind. They range from natural disasters to high levels of economic vulnerability, poverty and unemployment to transnational crime (most prominently drug-trafficking) to the devastating scourge of HIV/AIDS to ethnic and tribal-based political contestation in some Caribbean countries.

The post-September 11 global milieu has elevated the threat of terrorism to a major priority worldwide. However, with the probable exception of Trinidad and Tobago (hereinafter Trinidad) with its relatively recent experiences of violent challenges from the Muslim-based Jamaat al-Muslimeen, terrorism is not obviously a major security threat to Caribbean countries. Nonetheless, they have been forced to address it as a result of two main factors. First, the principal affected country, the United States, has defined an uncompromising alternative for countries in the global, American-led anti-terrorism campaign, summed up in President Bush’s position that “either you are with us or you are with the terrorists”\(^8\) with its implicit threat of punitive measures in the event of an American judgement of non-support. Second, they have been severely impacted by the fall-out of the September 11 terrorist attacks, particularly with respect to their tourism, financial and aviation sectors - so critical to Caribbean economic performance and viability.

While terrorism might not be a major direct threat, its potential for destabilisation in Caribbean countries is sufficiently serious that they have to plan and prepare for it as a matter of priority. Post-September 11, the main target countries in North America and Europe are workingconcertedly to seal themselves off from devastating terrorist attacks or, at least, to minimise their occurrence. Terrorist groups in turn are themselves adjusting by, among other things, targeting American and European interests beyond their home bases. Soft targets in third countries thus become particularly vulnerable.\(^9\) Caribbean countries, highly dependent on tourism and with economies dominated by American and European investment, become potential targets of terrorist attacks. Diplomatically, therefore, these countries have joined the global consensus condemnatory of terrorism and have formally subscribed to the global anti-terrorism campaign.

Turning to the interlinked issue of transnational crime, we are basically marking it off from traditional crime that state institutions were established to manage. Traditional crime in its various

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7 See Nef, J (1999), Human Security and Mutual Vulnerability, Ottawa, IDRC.
9 This is the clear message of such terrorist attacks as those in Bali, Indonesia in October 2002 and in Saudi Arabia in May 2003.
manifestations obviously remains a major internal security concern for Caribbean countries. Critically, however, transnational crime has been added to it, and it is this transnational crime that is seemingly overwhelming - and engendering a sense of helplessness in - some governments, with the Trinidadian Prime Minister in November 2001 virtually conceding that the government “cannot ever win this battle” against crime.

Transnational crime is a creature of a substantially different order from traditional crime. It is distinguished by several crucial elements. There is the type of crime involved, such as terrorism, drug-trafficking, arms smuggling, money laundering, trafficking in people, including females for sexual exploitation purposes - to name the most prominent. These crimes have been around for a long time and are not new. What distinguishes the contemporary manifestation is the combination of the following additional elements with which they are associated.

There is the organizational aspect, involving at its most sophisticated level, transnational criminal organizations, and less sophisticatedly, gangs and warlords. There is next the matter of the jurisdictional location of the perpetration of such crimes: the multiple locations that usually come into play. There is the issue of the multiplicity of nationalities of perpetrators and victims involved. In addition, a critical feature of transnational crime in the Caribbean is the issue of the deportee phenomenon.

While transnational crime is not a respecter of any geo-political environment, it more easily flourishes in political economies of certain types. In contexts of economic crisis and high levels of poverty and unemployment, severe political conflicts and instability, societal alienation, and weak, ineffective and corrupt state sectors, the incentives for and risks of transnational criminal activity are greatest. Several Caribbean environments fit this contextual profile either partially or fully.

There are other contributory factors to the substantially deteriorating security environments in the Caribbean. Politically motivated violence has emerged as another vital layer of national security, threatening state viability in Guyana and Jamaica.

10 Trinidad Express, November 30, 2001, “PM: Govt can’t win war on crime.”


14 A good description of the Jamaica case can be found in Report of the National Committee on Political Tribalism, 23 July 1997, Kingston, while the Guyana situation is discussed in Granger, David (2002), “Where Does Violence Come From?” (Text of an Address to the 14th Anniversary Conference of the Pan-African Movement, Guyana Branch, Ocean View Convention Centre).
Another serious new reality has arisen in consequence of evolving immigration policies in the Caribbean’s main traditional migration outlets – Canada, the UK and the US. While deportations are nothing new, Caribbean countries are facing a substantially different reality in the 1990s and more so from the mid-1990s. They have to contend with the phenomenon of large-scale deportees,15 with profound implications for an emergent new crime culture, structure and profile. This issue is especially contentious with regard to the US policy. Following enactment of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 and other anti-terrorist laws and policies in this regard, they are encountering a major influx of deportees from that jurisdiction.

Between 1997 and 2002, Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad received a total of over 10,000 deportees from the US alone, with a notable increase in the numbers since 1997. The average annual numbers received by Barbados rose from 28 in 1993-1996 to 44 in 1997-2002, while for Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad, the numbers were 77 and 128, 914 and 1330, and 124 and 171, respectively – see Table 1.

In aggregate terms, Jamaica has been the largest receiving country, with 20,800 deportees from all sources between 1990 and 2002 – see Table 2. The severity of the problem is seen from the trend of deportations over this period. In 1990, Jamaica received 691 deportees, but a decade later the number had nearly quintupled when it received 3,306 in 2002 – a record level for that country to date. Similarly, the severe problem posed for Guyana is evident from the fact that, whereas the average number of deportees returned from the US was 106 in the six-year period, 1995-2000, in the 11 months spanning mid-November 2001 and mid-October 2002, a total of 207 (nearly double the previous average) was received.16

Since most of these criminal deportees are drug offenders, then their presence in already fragile societal contexts compounds the manifestly inadequate anti-drug campaign by security forces. While empirical work on the link between deportees and growing crime in the Caribbean is scant, Griffin concludes relative to Barbados that, though the available evidence supports the involvement of criminal deportees in criminal activity, no systematic pattern is attributable to them.17

However, pending necessary empirical work, there is a strong intuitive conviction that overall such a connection

16 Stabroek News, October 21, 2002 “268 deportees in last 11 months”. With regard to Guyana, 2001 represented an anomaly with 41 deportees received from the US. This is explained by the fact that Guyana-US relations on this issue had deteriorated significantly in that year when the US authorities accused Guyana of not putting into place administrative arrangements to receive over 100 deportees. The upshot was that the US imposed a punitive visa ban on Guyana government officials, leading ultimately to a resolution of the deportee impasse at the end of 2001 – see Stabroek News, October 25, 2001 and Guyana Chronicle, January 4, 2002.
Table 1
Number of Criminal Deportees from US to Selected Caribbean Countries
1995 – 2000

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barbados</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>(44)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guyana</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>774</td>
<td>(128)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>3675</td>
<td>1235</td>
<td>1221</td>
<td>1371</td>
<td>1343</td>
<td>1298</td>
<td>1517</td>
<td>7985</td>
<td>(1330)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinidad</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>1029</td>
<td>(171)**</td>
</tr>
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* ( ) Annual average over 1993-96 years
** Annual average over 1997-2002 years


Table 2
Deported Jamaicans, 1990-2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Deportees</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>691</td>
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<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>812</td>
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<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>979</td>
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<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>1,031</td>
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<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>1,434</td>
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<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>1,582</td>
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<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>1,765</td>
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<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>1,699</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>1,216</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>2,071</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>1,685</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2,529</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>3,306</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20,800</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

exists in other Caribbean countries. The fact is that there is a strong correlation between the intensification of criminal deportations post-1996 and the dramatic rise in crime and violence, on the one hand, and the qualitative shift in Caribbean crime environments, on the other, that have become evident since then. Moreover, Caribbean security leaders have explicitly averted to such a link. For instance, Jamaica’s National Security Minister observed in 1999 that an increasing number of criminal deportees were involved in the country’s crime wave. Guyana’s Commissioner of Police in 2002 linked deportees to the severe crime situation bedevilling the country, indicating that they “are making a significant contribution to the present state of criminal activity.”

Drugs, deportees, organized criminal groups, money laundering, escalating violence and kidnappings pervade many Caribbean criminal jurisdictions. Harriott effectively captures the new structure and profile of crime in relation to Jamaica: “The new features of criminality involve a more complex division of labour with greater specialization of roles; development of more intricate organizational networks; the internationalization of these networks on the basis of a changed role in the international narcotics trade; and greater differentiation and integration within the underground economy, and its social embeddedness.” The scale of violence being experienced is facilitated by the arms-trafficking that is intimately associated with the drug enterprise. The frightening aspect here is the sophisticated arms at the disposal of the criminals and the skills that they exhibit in using them. No longer can it be said that the weapons technology available to these criminals lag behind that available to enforcement agencies.

Another troubling development is the apparent links being forged between crime groups in different Caribbean countries – as attested by St. Vincent’s Prime Minister who stated that “there was a lawless element in St. Vincent who had accomplices from Trinidad and Tobago who have been creating havoc in his island.” In Guyana’s case, Trinidad nationals have been killed when crime gangs were


19 Starbuck News, October 21, 2002, “268 deportees in last 11 months”. See also Trinidad Express, June 17, 2003, “Deportees behind crime, says security chief”.


21 As the Jamaican representative to the 9th plenary of the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF) noted: “The problem of illicit traffic and use of firearms has been plaguing Jamaica...[and] criminal elements have been able to acquire revolvers, semi-automatic pistols and sub-machine guns such as M16s and AK 47s and have used them to commit heinous crimes ranging from robberies to murders” – see www.ciatf.org/eng/typoexe/illtrad/index.pdf.

22 Trinidad Express, May 23, 2003, “Gonzalves urges region’s Govts to reject criminals”.
confronted either by the police or other criminal elements and the police authorities have specifically linked foreign mercenaries with drug gangs in that country.  

Reinforcing unstable crime contexts is another potent destabilizing factor - the high levels of corruption in the Caribbean. Public policy is instructively weak in this area. Munroe points to a 1999 poll which places corruption (48.7%) as the greatest threat to Jamaica's democracy, surpassing by far the next major threats - drugs (31.8%) and armed groups (8.8%). Corruption was a major campaign issue in the most recent national elections in Trinidad in late 2002 and undoubtedly influenced the electoral outcome. It is a dominant public concern in such countries as Guyana and Antigua and Barbuda.

Public perception of pervasive corruption in the public and private sectors - the elite sectors - in these countries is high. Moreover, public perception of high-level involvement in drug-trafficking - Harriott's (1996:68) "multi-class criminal networks" - is equally strong. Public confidence in some state institutions has declined because of the widespread perception that they have been penetrated by corruption but, it is more than a perception. For instance, the 1986 Scott Drug Report on drug trafficking in Trinidad painted an extremely troubling picture with regard to official corruption. In Guyana, police officials were implicated in 2002 in a major visa racket involving a convicted American consular official.

Compounding the corruption issue is the fact that high-ranking officials seem immune from the consequences of their acts. Prosecution is rare in the Caribbean. This sense of the untouchability of officials and private elite personages makes it difficult for the state to act decisively against drug "dons", gang leaders and the like. Unchecked corruption substantially weakens the ethical foundations, the enforcement efforts and the credibility of anti-crime programmes.

Further, it reinforces the emergent culture of non-collaboration of individuals and groups with enforcement agencies. This particular aspect of the crime context in several Caribbean countries is especially worrisome. Granger speaks about public "contempt for, and the collapse of confidence in the Police with alarming, but predictable, consequences" in Guyana. It

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27 Trinidad Guardian, October 5, 2002, "Corruption is King".

has gained potency as a result of another troubling reality - the practice of extrajudicial killings by sections of the police force in Guyana and Jamaica. The US 2001 Country Report on Human Rights in Guyana indicated that the police continued to engage in extrajudicial killings, while Amnesty International in 2003 noted the "regular pattern" of extrajudicial killings in Jamaica.29

Additionally, in Jamaica, the garrison community phenomenon and, in Guyana, the recent situation in the Buxton community - where an explosively conflictual situation emerged pitting the security forces against the community30 - are features of the internal security/crime environment that represent a major management challenge. Since the phenomenon is more developed in Jamaica, it is instructive to pinpoint some of its major dimensions.

It is apposite to note the fact that it was originally based on the distinctive political tribalism of inter-party competition. More recently, there has been the significant reduction of its political foundation. Taking its place as the driving forces and key authority figures are the gunmen, gangs and, outstandingly, the "dons."31 Then, there is the trend toward diminished state control and authority and a correlative "increasing reliance on self-help violence and community self-regulation."

This alienation of some communities from enforcement authorities complicates crime management because agencies such as the police have historically been dependent on community support in crime-fighting. It has also led to both adversarial relations between police and groups in certain instances and to cases where the police presence is virtually non-existent.

These manifestations were significantly responsive to the peculiar macro-context of socio-economic crisis in the 1980s and 1990s. Many Caribbean countries were constrained to adopt externally defined adjustment programmes that placed a premium on stabilization and structural reforms. The tragic victims were their social sectors,32 as reflected in relatively high poverty and unemployment levels, severe deterioration in critical areas of education and health, and the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The available data show that 43% of the population currently live below the poverty line in Guyana, while for Trinidad and Jamaica, the respective poor populations are 30% and 34%. With

30 See in this regard the analyses by Selwyn Ryan, "Empowerment at what cost?" and "Cleaning out Buxton" in Sunday Express, April 6 and 17, 2003.
33 The edited work of Lefranc with regard to Jamaica's experiences could be applied across the Caribbean - Le Franc, Elsie (1994), ed., Consequences of structural adjustment: a review of the Jamaican experience, Kingston, Canoe Press.
regard to unemployment, the level has grown significantly for Trinidad and in the adjustment period – from 9.9% in 1980 to around 20% in the mid-1990s and standing in the vicinity of 11% at the beginning of 2000. Unemployment rates for Guyana and Jamaica are currently in the 11%-12% range. Youth unemployment is especially disturbing, ranging from about 20% for Trinidad in 1999 to about 25% in Jamaica.34

The Caribbean environment is also characterized by another trend that is undoubtedly impacting negatively on internal security/crime structures. This is the manifest alienation of many male youths from education and the increasing attraction of the enticements of the drug/crime culture to many of them.

Poverty and unemployment are breeding grounds for insecure societal contexts and crime. Moreover, the thousands of criminal deportees disgorge on the Caribbean in the 1990s certainly will not find legitimate economic or employment opportunities in these situations. Thus, even if they are inclined to move into legitimate activities, the socio-economic conditions clearly are not conducive.

It was in this dynamically evolving security/crime context that Shiprider arose specifically with respect to drug-trafficking.35 It led to acrimonious debates at policy, political and academic levels, to fundamental policy divergences among Caribbean countries and to sharp controversy between the US and the CARICOM states of Barbados and Jamaica. The proposition here is that Shiprider was instructive of some of the substantive issues involved in the management of new security and transnational crime, and of the flaws of the policy response process and the actual measures implemented.

For the purposes of this analysis, the revisit of Shiprider is done with regard to three broad areas of concern. These are (i) the diagnostic of the instant case; (ii) the resultant management methodology employed and (iii) Caribbean diplomacy – or, rather, its ineffectuality at a historical moment that required creative and novel diplomacy.

It is axiomatic that, if the diagnostic of any problem is wrong, then the recommended management methodology will be inadequate to deal with it. The drug-trafficking issue with which Shiprider was concerned is a case in point. Based on an understanding of drug-trafficking in terms of the tripartite division of labour entailing producer-transhipment-consumer specialization, the US unilaterally defined responsibilities for countries.


Even were we to see the problem in these terms, what stands out in the US strategy is its tendency to place the burden of dealing with drug-trafficking on the supply and transit countries. This is the implication of its unilateral practice of certification, with non-certification resulting in the imposition of punitive measures. The two big questions here are: who certifies US efforts, as the main drug-consuming country, on the demand side and doesn’t an even greater burden of responsibility fall on it since effective demand reduction necessarily severely limits the incentives on the supply side?

Regarding the transnationalisation aspect, the focus had to do overwhelmingly with the Caribbean as the vital link between producer and consumer countries and also as money-laundering sites. This was a limited conceptualization, as we will see, of the matter. Shiprider then was a response to the problems faced by the Caribbean as transshipment sources. From this perspective, the crucial diagnosis related to their immense resource inadequacies in policing their maritime and air transit routes. In dealing with this issue, therefore, the overriding response was an essentially military one.

There were other transnational concerns that fell outside Shiprider’s scope, thereby severely limiting its effectiveness as a management approach. The main ones were the deportee phenomenon and gun-smuggling - some of the core concerns of Barbados and Jamaica in their objection to Shiprider as crafted by the US. What this says loudly is that there are sectors of Caribbean leadership that are capable of good diagnostics based on local realities. The problem was that the remaining policy leadership not merely abdicated their responsibility in this respect, but displayed a lamentable helpless acquiescence in the face of big-power pressure and assertion, leading Best to scathingly characterise Trinidad’s leadership as displaying “the most supine of postures towards the so-called Shiprider transaction.”

The narrow compartmentalization of these issues is inconsistent with the required holistic diagnostic of these types of global problems. The latter would see drug-trafficking in its more comprehensive dynamics, including both the previously indicated isolatable dimensions and, importantly, the integral interlinkages with socio-economic realities of poverty, unemployment, and societal disintegrative tendencies. Barbados’ Prime Minister pointedly underscored such a conceptualization at the time: “Those who wish to assist us in the fight against drugs must be informed that such a struggle will fail unless it is part of a general effort to develop our region, socially, politically and economically.”

Turning to Shiprider as a management methodology, it understandably flowed from the restricted diagnostic highlighted. The approach translated into a strictly bilateral venture involving the US and individual Caribbean countries. Based on the latter’s severe resource constraints, Shiprider placed the burden of resource

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36 Trinidad Express, March 8, 1997, “Prematurely Independent?”

37 Trinidad Express, March 24, 1997, “How Can Region Fight the Drug Trade?”
provisioning on the US and of interdiction activities on the US security services. It represented a traditional response in its military-oriented approach. Mechanisms of secret negotiations were involved and it was a solely stated-based management modality. Crucially, it was premised on the admitted articulation by the Caribbean leadership of an incapacity to credibly exercise their sovereign rights. The upshot was the hurried – if ill-advised – compromising of individual national sovereignty.

Shiprider represented an abject failure of both national and regional diplomacy. It privileged bilateral negotiations with the US when coordinated regional negotiations were the evident order of the day. Regional negotiations would have facilitated better outcomes in terms of a desired global approach, the linkage of the deportee phenomenon, arms trafficking and - crucially - broader issues of socio-economic development.

While the argument here is not that elements of Shiprider are unnecessary, the point is that it has turned out to be a minimalist approach. Post-Shiprider, Caribbean countries are not in a better-off situation. The opposite is actually the case - the situation has deteriorated substantially. As attested by U.N. Under-Secretary General Arlacchi in 2001, drug-trafficking continues to be a major growth industry in the region: "On the transit side, the region has seen a sharp rise in cocaine traffic in the past two years." The crime, violence and corruption associated with it are measurably on the rise. Six years after Shiprider, drug trafficking represents a greater threat than it was before it.

The Challenge of Reconstructing Security and Crime Management in the Caribbean

Security and crime management in the Caribbean is currently proceeding on the basis of the traditional understanding of the phenomena. However, Caribbean policy makers are fully aware that they are operating in a vastly different context and have begun the process of seeking a better understanding of the phenomena. This is the import of the Caribbean initiative in 1996 within the OAS to consider the special security concerns of small island states. It was also signalled by CARICOM leaders who established in 2001 a Task Force to undertake an analysis of the fundamental causes of crime and security threats in the region and to develop recommendations. Moreover, in the aftermath of September

38 At an Emergency CARICOM Summit in December 1996, Caribbean leaders conceded that mistakes were made in the handling of Shiprider, notably the absence of a coordinated position vis-à-vis the US - see Trinidad Express, December 17, 1996, “Caricom leaders at fault: Shiprider stands”.


40 Even though a convincing case can be made that Shiprider has resulted in more drug seizures, the fact is that in itself that in no way meaningfully deals with the drug enterprise and associated transnational crime, growing violence and corruption in Caribbean societies.
11, they decided to expand the Task Force's mandate to deal with overall threats to Caribbean security, including crime and violence, regional cooperation to interdict the illicit trafficking in drugs and firearms, the impact of deportees on crime and security and counter-terrorism.

The work in more comprehensively addressing these issues is in its early stages and has not as yet led to new management models, though specific partial steps and initiatives are being implemented. Recently, however, Caribbean countries have made great headway in the OAS in both the elaboration of new management approaches and in getting the wider hemispheric community to endorse this initiative. The OAS General Assembly in Barbados, in its resolution AG/Res. 1886 (XXXI-0/02) of 4 June 2002, decided to convene the Second High-Level Meeting on the Special Security Concerns of Small Island States with a view, inter alia, to adopt “a management model or better coordinating approaches through which these special security threats and concerns of small island states can be appropriately and adequately addressed.” That meeting was subsequently held in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and moved the process forward with the adoption of the security management model, as presented.

Yet, existing state institutions in both policy conceptualization and practice continue to lag behind the actualities of the situations. The immediate – and priority – challenge, therefore, is to arrive at an accurate diagnostic, with accompanying empirics, of the security and crime problematic. This is exactly what the CARICOM Task Force is engaged in. At national levels, it is a policy priority that has for some time focused the search for solution, but has proved so far to be an insurmountable challenge. The Jamaican experience, where over the past decade there have been two national commissions on crime and another on political tribalism, is instructive in this regard.

Shiprider has several important lessons. The outstanding one is that the Caribbean cannot allow an externally conceived – and imposed – diagnostic, as was the case with Shiprider. It was primarily responsive to the American diagnosis of drug-trafficking in relation to Caribbean countries. While Barbados and Jamaica were ultimately able to negotiate a marginally superior Shiprider agreement

41 The author proposed the need for a new security management model for the Caribbean in addresses before the Special Committee on the Special Security Concerns of Small Island States of the OAS in 2000 and 2001.


vis-à-vis other CARICOM countries, an optimum outcome was conceivable, had they all jointly negotiated with the US, based on an agreed, common diagnostic. Such a process would have involved a better definition of Caribbean interests consonant with the positions articulated by Barbados and Jamaica.

This takes us to another important lesson of Shiprider. For better or worse, the US is centrally involved in Caribbean security and crime interests. The US is currently the region’s and world’s pre-eminent power, with clearly defined strategic interests in the Western Hemisphere, one of which is drug-trafficking and associated transnational crime. The US, therefore, simply cannot be left out in any diagnostic of contemporary security and crime in the Caribbean.

The challenge for the Caribbean is to avert the US assuming a hegemonic role – as Shiprider was – which is a distinct risk in contexts where the involved countries are of such vastly differing power statuses and capabilities. Befitting the global essence of the security and crime problems, the objective should be cooperative processes that are genuinely founded on partnership and mutual respect. Caribbean countries need to strictly avoid unilaterally imposed solutions, big power diktat and divide-and-rule tactics.

Deriving from American unilateral definition of the transshipment aspect of drug-trafficking, and as the chosen instrument to deal with it, Shiprider teaches the Caribbean another lesson. The US was not concerned to address the indigenously defined interests of these countries which, apart from the matters involved in Shiprider, would have at minimum included the deportee and illegal arms trafficking issues.

By its indiscriminate deportee policy, the intensification of which virtually coincided with the Shiprider Agreement, the US not only displayed a soul-less lack of concern for Caribbean societal stability, but contributed to growing instability in national security in these vulnerable Caribbean states. For American officials either to dismiss the severity of the issue by speaking of the small numbers involved or to argue that the US is not the main sending country merely compounds the perceptual gap among these countries and circumscribes the search for mutually satisfying solutions. While from an American perspective the numbers might appear small, for the Caribbean they are significant relative to their overall criminal populations, the criminal skills, techniques and transnational contacts that they bring to bear, and the pressures that deportees who might wish to change their lives could

44 In May 1997, both Jamaica and Barbados concluded their Shiprider negotiations with the US. As Ramphal noted, by “sticking to their guns,” the two governments “had emerged with a better deal than the rest of the region” (Sunday Gleaner, May 11, 1997). That better deal was reflected, on Jamaica’s part, in various elements, including (i) the requirement of a case-by-case approval by the Jamaican authorities of US drug enforcement in the former’s maritime/air space, as against the blanket approval granted by other CARICOM countries; (ii) provision for reciprocal rights – absent from other agreements; (iii) American waiving of sovereign immunity in cases of claims for damages against US or its agents in the exercise of interdiction activities.

have on already inadequate socio-economic structures. The other fact is that, for the main receiving Caribbean countries, the majority of the deportees do come from the US.\footnote{Based on the data presented in Tables 1 and 2 for Jamaica, 68\% of its criminal deportee population came from the US between 1993 and 2002.}

Transnational crime is an integral part of the Caribbean’s new security environment. It is integrally linked to issues of economic vulnerability, high incidences of poverty and unemployment and governance instabilities. It is linked to other aspects of the global security framework, including immigration policies of major countries, permeable borders and facilitative information technology.

It cannot be addressed in a piece-meal manner, but must form a part of an overall conceptualization of the phenomena. Shiprider reflected the piece-meal approach and its failure to make any significant impact on the transshipment of drugs in the Caribbean was thus predictable.

If, diagnostically, new security and crime are defined fundamentally by their transnational essence, then a key implication is their international relations dimension. The basic premise of their “interdependence” nature is the substantive requirement of incorporating the external at both conceptual and operational levels.

Two critical challenges come into play here. First, there is the primordial issue of sovereignty for small Caribbean states. For our purposes, this issue can be posed from two perspectives: the consequences of new security and transnational crime for traditional sovereignty and its appropriate conceptualization in contemporary circumstances.

Regarding the former, drug-trafficking illustrates the problems involved. Addressing this matter in 1997, Grenada’s Prime Minister frankly remarked that: “I don’t see territorial integrity issue [sic] when the drug lords are the ones controlling it...We are not in control, the drug lords are, so as far as I am concerned the territorial integrity is about drug lords.”\footnote{Ibid. In similar vein, then Trinidad Prime Minister Basdeo Panday, in addressing the sovereignty issue, rhetorically asked: “I ask you, where is your sovereignty when the drug barons are in charge?” (Trinidad Guardian, June 19, 1997). Shelley, Louise. (1995), “Transnational Organized Crime: An Imminent Threat to the Nation-State?,” \textit{Journal of International Affairs}, 48 (2): 463-489. Sives, Amanda. (2002), “Changing Patrons, from Politician to Drug Don,” \textit{Latin American Perspectives}, 29 (29): 66-89.} This goes to the nub of the problem: the contending views among Caribbean leaders on sovereignty. The polarized outlook saw leaders like those from Grenada and Trinidad, who were dismissive of “outmoded notions of sovereignty,” as against Barbados and Jamaica who saw Shiprider as a threat to national sovereignty.

This takes us to the appropriate conceptualization of sovereignty for small Caribbean countries. Today, it might be drug-trafficking and transnational crime that impels big-power hegemonic inter-
ventionism. Tomorrow, it could be issues of governance and democratization, of terrorism, of economic policy. In other words, it is not an issue that will simply fade away in the globalised political economy of the foreseeable future.

Traditional notions of sovereignty are difficult to sustain for small countries. Individually, they do not have the material capabilities or strategic importance to defend such notions in the context of globalisation. This does not mean that they should give up their sovereign rights. Rather, it suggests the need for a serious rethinking of the best ways of doing so.

The proposition is that these countries need to envisage regional governance – the creation of a regional security community – as a practical and pragmatic way of opting for a notion of shared sovereignty on a collective basis. This is clearly consistent with the current process of integration deepening in the direction of the Caribbean single market and economy and a logical step in the regional maturation process. It signifies the aggregation of individual national sovereignty in defined security areas to strengthen the capacity to function with some degree of credibility and to withstand external pressure and threats.

Taking the work of the CARICOM Task Force forward, what this means is that the basis exists for not merely a regional diagnostic that will obviously take account of individual-country specificities. More fundamentally, as in the mature European regional process, its horizon in terms of mandate should be significantly expanded to begin the companion task of model-building for security/crime management on a regional basis.

The second challenge relates to the necessity of international cooperation. The problem is that, by its very nature, it entails several discrete, yet interlinked, levels of cooperation. These are (i) the bilateral, (ii) the regional and (iii) the global levels. This multi-level cooperation complicates the task for Caribbean countries in the context of limited human and financial resources.

In such circumstances, the temptation is to abdicate sovereign responsibility to superior-equipped external actors – as Shiprider showed. This need not be so if regional security governance is the agreed operating framework. For the Caribbean, on an immediate practical basis, the participatory scope of regional governance would correspond to the CARICOM countries. The other consideration would be to put a higher premium on regional and global institutions like the OAS and UN over bilateral arrangements where the chances of big-power dictation and pressure are more likely.

Reconstructing Security and Crime Management

In conclusion, it is possible to propose some preliminary ideas on the way ahead, by briefly looking at what are seen as the necessary tasks and requirements in any meaningful reconstruction of security and crime management in the Caribbean.

The first order of business is obviously the diagnostic. Caribbean countries must

arrive at the best understanding of the interlinked security/crime problematic, based on thorough empirics. The task is both an individual-country and a regional-based necessity. It will have to be facilitated and supported by an accompanying research programme which requires the collaborative engagement of the state, the academy and civil society.

The proposition is that it has to be overwhelmingly an indigenous undertaking. There are two bases for this. First, there is a sufficiency of expertise in the regional academy – including the Caribbean diaspora – and in the civil society and state sectors to pursue this task. Second, experience has shown that where externally-led diagnostics have been done along a range of Caribbean policy concerns, they have not been wholly appropriate and conclusive. Where external involvement is engaged, it should be largely in relation to funding and technical inputs into the diagnostic enterprise.

Even as the diagnostic proceeds, however, two priority policy areas – the social sector and corruption – should be addressed. In this regard, cognizance must be taken of the consensus about the strong relationship between security and crime, on the one hand, and certain key policy areas and extant societal realities, on the other. We are referring, first, to the acute economic vulnerability and the high and destabilizing levels of poverty and un-

employment in Caribbean countries and, second, the pervasive corruption at various levels of society, but outstandingly the elite sectors in both the public and private sectors. From this perspective, governments need to address these areas as urgent policy concerns.

Another proposition is the need to undertake certain minimal tasks involving the agencies engaged in security and crime management. Pending a completion of the diagnostic, issues like greater policy and operational coordination, information and intelligence sharing, utilising available information technology, and the more effective equipping of these agencies with basic equipment, resources and technology should be urgently addressed at both individual-country and regional levels. The facilitative core of this process should be the more effective deployment and use of available information technology.

Finally, what is absolutely critical in the task of reconstructing security and crime management is the overall matter of the methodology involved. Here we are talking about the participatory basis of the process. More specifically, in line with the new dimensions of the phenomena, the management process can no longer be an exclusive state affair and responsibility. The involvement of other actors, including civil society, will have to be a major item in the task of crafting new approaches.
References


