

Regional cooperation and security
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It has been said that terrorism is the “the weapon of the weak”—an instrument that is used against an adversary with an overwhelming preponderance of conventional military power. If that is so, then security may be said to be “the preoccupation of the strong”—it reflects the need of the dominant power or powers to maintain the status quo. But both notions become more nuanced, for the concept of security is also used as a means of protection of the weak from the strong – the principle of security from the use and abuse of the arbitrary power of the state against the individual in the national sphere, for example; or security from the unilateral action of strong states against weaker states in contravention of international law.

Such a reconceptualisation of security has its counterpart in the reconceptualisation of terrorism to include state terrorism, that is, brutal and repressive and illegal acts undertaken by the state or with official sponsorship or sanction, with the aim of instilling fear and panic in the general population, and thereby ensuring their compliance with a system of domination. Hence the beheading of hostages in Iraq by members of the resistance, shown throughout the world wide web, quite properly regarded as acts of barbarism, has its historical counterpart in the beheading of the Inca Emperor, Atahualpa by the Spanish Conquistadores in the 16th Century, and the public

display of his severed head to his demoralized people; or for that matter, the public display of the severed heads of rebellious African slaves, by the colonial authorities, a common practice during the three centuries of plantation slavery. The historical continuities of state terrorism of course continue to the present day.

The current debate over the meaning of security, that has been present as sub-theme in this encounter, and the associated issue of definitions of terrorism, can be seen as one of the principal arenas of contestation in a world system characterized by the dominance of an over-arching imperial power, or at least are with the military capacity to dominate the planet, on the one hand, and on the other hand the existence of a wide variety of other actors, by no means homogenous, whose principal shared characteristic is some degree of subordination to the dominant power and whose own domestic and regional agendas, and therefore their perspectives on what constitutes security and security threats, including terrorism, can and often do vary among themselves. It is this shared characteristic of asymmetrical subordination with respect to the dominant power that creates the compulsion to contest the former's highly restrictive definition of security in terms of the "global war on terror". But it is the heterogeneity of their respective positions vis-à-vis the hegemon and in their own national circumstances with regard to size, politics, economics and geography, that give rise to disparate dispositions among themselves and impede the scope of regional cooperation. One can illustrate this by reference to the positions on the matter taken by the Caribbean in the OAS, the ACS and CARICOM.

A glance at a map of the greater Caribbean immediately points to the conclusion that the states of the region have a joint interest in presenting a common front to the United States on the matters of drug trafficking, small arms flows, migration, border controls, and monitoring criminal individuals of persons with criminal intent, whatever the nature of the crimes. That they have on the whole failed to do so is largely due to their propensities to negotiate such matters bilaterally and the pressures on them to do so by the hegemon and the power of the hegemon to link cooperation on security matters, as it defines such security, to favourable treatment in other areas such as trade agreements. Several participants have suggested that the Association of Caribbean States ACS, by virtue of its membership that embraces the entire Greater Caribbean region, is ideally suited to be the institutional and political vehicle for the creation of a Greater Caribbean security system. Indeed it is. But achieving this is not necessarily a simple matter.

But let me share an experience that happened during my term as Secretary General. In the run-up to the 4th ACS Summit that was originally scheduled for late 2003, the then Chairman of the Ministerial Council, the former Foreign Minister of the Dominican Republic, convened a special meeting on security within the Greater Caribbean with the object of inserting this theme into the ACS programme of cooperation, including a proposal to make security the main theme of the 4th Summit itself. This initiative did not bear fruit for a number of reasons. Some had to do with the financial constraints of funding the initiative, others with the political problems associated with the postponement of the Summit itself. But a major issue was the distinct lack of political enthusiasm on the part of the major state players in the region. For

example, Mexico preferred to pursue the matter either hemispherically within the OAS, for which it was in the process of hosting a hemispheric conference on security in late 2003, or bilaterally in the context of its relationship with the United States, in which the status of Mexican workers in the latter country is the major issue. Colombia's position was similar, given the exigencies of the conflict in that country and the bilateral dynamics of the Plan Colombia. CARICOM Task Force had recently constituted its Regional Task Force on Crime and Violence, which had presented nearly 100 recommendations to the Heads of Government at their meeting in July 2002, few of which have so far been implemented. Even Cuba, which one might think would have a strong interest in regional security cooperation, appeared to be uneasy with the idea in the light of the strong political and military relationship between the United States and several countries in the region.

In this context one might wish to reevaluate and re-visit the position advanced by many governments and civil society, regarding the desirability of a 'multi-dimensional approach' to security centred on the concept of 'human security'. The issue here is not the substantive importance and merits of the areas that are encapsulated in this approach, but rather the tactical feasibility of widening the concept to include all aspects of the development problematique, including poverty, health, and the environment. An alternative approach might be to assert the primacy or at least equal status of the development agenda, accepting the more restrictive notion of security that focuses on the physical dimension, but insisting that even in terms of this restrictive definition effective action requires cooperation in areas that have not so far been prioritized, especially such areas as control over the small arms trade, drug demand reduction, cooperation in

migration including the matter of deportation of criminals, cooperation in the control of criminals and terrorist activities of all types and originating in all countries in the region, and support for community policing and initiatives such as the such as the PMI.

It may be that that elaboration of a security agenda, expanded in this manner but still restricted to security from criminal violence or all kinds and motivations, may have the potential to secure a cooperative approach on these matters within the region.

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* “Security is one dimension of development”

* CARICOM fought long and hard for multidimensional approach to security - don't follow it.

- Whose security
- Who pays

* CARICOM – existential crisis – supranational authority.