RE-INVENTING CARICOM: THE ROAD TO A NEW INTEGRATION

INTRODUCTION

Between the time of its establishment in July 1973 and the end of the 20th century, the Caribbean Community has undergone profound change. It is in the process of transition from a Community to a Single Market and Economy. This transformation has proceeded from the recognition that the political and economic philosophies which underpinned its original structure are no longer applicable and could not accommodate the forces released by globalisation. This publication shows, through the study and analysis of the resolutions, communiqués and other documentation concerning the decision taken by the Heads of Government of CARICOM for the period 1973 to 2000, how such a transition has come about. These documents assume both validity and importance by virtue of the fact that, in the absence of a deliberative forum, they originate from the highest decision-making forum of the Community.

A greater appreciation of the task at hand would be obtained is obtained by a brief description of the situation antecedent to the establishment of the Community. The Community arose out of a general trend of countries associating to form powerful economic blocs. In Europe which led the way; in Central America where the Central American Common Market (CACM) was founded; in Africa where the East African Economic Community (EACM) was created; and in Asia where Asian blocs came into being, this phenomenon was pervasive. The significant implication of this development did not escape the Caribbean Leaders. One of the founding fathers, Dr. Eric Williams, then Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, noted in July 1963 that the Caribbean was about to:

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\text{enter a world dominated increasingly by regional groupings, both economic and political. Western Europe has succeeded, Africa is succeeding, and efforts are being made to translate the political association in the Western Hemisphere into Regional Economic Groupings — the Latin American Free Trade Area and the Central American Common Market. Small countries like ours encounter great difficulty in establishing their influence in a world dominated by power and Regional Associations.}^{1}
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In studying the history and documentation of the establishment and evolution of CARICOM, an important point emerges: A point which scholars, decision makers and other interested parties to Caribbean history and development must ponder upon. I first made this observation in the introduction to the publication *Integrate or Perish*: that while the movement towards the first phase of integration had a pronounced West Indian bias, everything that happened subsequent to the demise of the Federation has had a pronounced Caribbean orientation. Thus, we have moved from the West Indies Federation bias (which involved only

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1 Dr. Eric Williams: Address to the First Conference of Heads of Government of the Commonwealth Caribbean, Trinidad and Tobago, July 1963
those countries within the West Indian archipelago) to the Caribbean Community (which strives to include all the countries of the region). It is a matter that Dr. Norman Girvan has also taken up in his article ‘El Gran Caribe’. This is how he has characterised it.

_The new awareness seeped into the popular consciousness. By the 1960s, in the aftermath of constitutional independence, Anglophones had started to call themselves and their institutions ‘Caribbean’ rather than ‘West Indian’. Note how the West Indies Federation gave way to the Caribbean Community – CARICOM. Today we have a host of other ‘Caribbean’ organisations: the CXC, CAREC, CARIRI, the CTO and many others. No matter that the membership of most of these institutions is exclusively or mainly Anglophone. What is significant is the subtle shift in proclaimed identity._

It was not only a question of establishing the influence of the Caribbean States in international affairs, it was also the determination to avoid the looming threat of marginalisation and the challenges of economic development generally and specifically those associated with poverty and unemployment. This was and is beyond any single State in the Region. Unity had to be forged. The single objective of a unified and economically dynamic Community had to be sought. No credible alternative offered itself.

Recognising the need to proceed as a united entity, the Leaders of the Caribbean Community launched a set of initiatives which saw the region move from a Free Trade Area in 1968 to a full fledged Community five years later. As was to be expected, this Community, politically, economically and institutionally, was coloured by the existing philosophical trends of the time. In consequence, the Community aimed primarily at self-containment and self-sufficiency.³ This is well summed up by Arnold McIntyre when he says: “Traditionally, regional integration arrangements have tended to be inward-oriented with the expansion of trade and investment among Member States behind protective barriers.”⁴ CARICOM was not an exception. But the difficulties encountered by the Community in the 1980s and the fundamental changes in the international system demanded a restructuring of this paradigm. The Nassau Understanding of 1984, the Grand Anse Declaration of 1989, in particular, and subsequent decisions of the Heads of Government Conference were to effect major and fundamental change in the political, economic and institutional architecture of CARICOM. This matter will be given greater treatment further on in this introduction.

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⁴ The leaders of the Community in 1983 were seeking ‘self-sufficiency through inter-regional trade’. Fourth Conference of the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, 4-8 July 1983, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad.
Thus far the developments of the Community have been sketched against a background of the zeitgeist of the period as defined by the decades of the 1970s and the 1980s. With the onset of the forces of globalisation, the leaders of the community understood that their approach to international affairs and its institutions had to undergo a major transformation. Beginning in 1989, a number of wide-ranging decisions were taken, with the intention of bringing the Community into the 21st Century.

But the economic difficulties encountered by the Community in the 1980s, in particular and the radical and seminal developments of this decade, as characterised by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the forces of globalisation, demanded its restructuring. The leaders of the Community demonstrated that they were equal to the task. Two documents, the Nassau Understanding of 1984 and the Grand Anse Declaration of 1989, lay the foundation for a shift from a Community that was defined by the zeitgeist of the 70s to one that was equipped to face the challenges of the 21st century.

It would be pertinent to point out that at all times the nature of the task of taking the Caribbean into the 21st century has been understood. An example of this recognition is contained in the following Declaration:

*We are convinced that as our people have uplifted themselves from the conditions of abject poverty to improving social and economic conditions, that they have risen from subjection to established democratic governance in free societies. As they have responded to the challenges of the last fifty years, they have summoned from within themselves the strength and creativity to succeed over the next fifty years and more.*

A fact that has been remarked upon is the return to a consensus on the internal arrangements of CARICOM. Before the tragic but seminal events surrounding the invasion of Grenada by the United States – the first time it had done so to an English speaking state in this hemisphere – the Agreement that made the smooth working of CARICOM possible appeared to be disrupted by what was called “ideological pluralism”. (A phrase coined by CARICOM leaders to indicate the varying ideologies of Member States of the Community. Ideological pluralism became pronounced in the 1980s after states such as Guyana, Jamaica and Grenada opted for socialism in contradistinction to the rest of the region which maintained a political and economic system based on traditional Western liberal democratic principles). After Grenada, this issue

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5 Montego Bay Declaration: 18th Heads of Government Conference, Montego Bay, Jamaica, 4 July 1997. Two more assertions of this kind are worth noting:
(i) “The entire history of the Region, notably from the phase of emancipation to political independence, has represented a triumph of human assertiveness over deeply entrenched prejudices and powerful institutional and political constraints.”
(ii) “The Region must once again demonstrate its capacity to shake loose from traditional modes and practices in assuming responsibility for its destiny.”
disappeared from the agenda and the Community returned to consensus on political arrangements characterised by a form of liberal democracy. It is this consensus that made possible the major shift in the approach to the development of a unified Community as compared to the competing path to development which some states had adopted.

Dr. Girvan got it right when, in explaining the revival of CARICOM in the 1990s, he noted

... the tendency towards ideological and policy convergence among Member States due to the debt and adjustment crisis of the 1980s; to the collapse of the Socialist experiments in Jamaica, Grenada and Guyana, and to the end of the Cold War... These developments paved the way for a regional consensus on the necessity from market oriented policy reforms in domestic, economic management and for its correlate, 'Open Regionalism' as the model of regional integration. The shift was initiated in the Nassau Understanding of 1984...6

The Nassau Understanding is a remarkable document and quite emphatic in its purpose: “The governments are determined to steer the economies away from a situation of economic and social breakdown.”7 It sets out the task undertaken: “It essentially involves a conscious and determined shift to a new development path to accelerate development while adapting to major external or interior shocks in the economic system.”8 The Nassau Understanding also recognized “the intricacies of the development problem in the Caribbean.”9 While incomes per head may appear to be high in comparison to other developing countries, “these rest on rather fragile foundations.”10

Having set down these general markers, this document is frank in its assessment as to where the Community is in economic terms. It identifies a ‘sudden and sharp deterioration in the terms of trade’; ‘an abrupt increase in external debt servicing’; a ‘decline in the volume of major agricultural exports and local food production’; ‘the depletion of major natural resources’; ‘protracted fiscal deficits’; ‘contraction on imports and economic growth’ and a paramount need for ‘increasing deficiency of traditional sectors and developing non-traditional sectors.’11

Despite progress in industrial development, ‘the manufacturing sector has not yet developed linkages with the rest of the economy, local entrepreneurship is not broadly based and the export capacity of this sector is rudimentary.’ The productive sectors of the Caribbean

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8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
economies ‘are not yet in a position to provide sufficient employment opportunities for the growing labour force.’

The Nassau Understanding saw solutions to the problems of the Caribbean Community in a better educated population, the harnessing of technology for productive purposes, a vital and vibrant private sector and an efficient public sector. In particular, the Region is urged to place emphasis on self-sufficiency in food. Good nutrition was also recognised as an important factor.

The Nassau Understanding represented a budget of the ills of the Caribbean Community and a prescription for its revitalisation and regeneration. The Grand Anse Declaration which had undertaken to “strengthen the Caribbean Community in all of its aspects” built on the Nassau Understanding as did several important documents issued by the Heads of Government Conference of the Caribbean Community. From here on, the Community recognised that development is a multi-faceted exercise involving such critical questions as education, technology, health, nutrition and the environment.

In consequence, there was great emphasis placed on these matters in a number of the major declarations issued after the Nassau Understanding. The Kingston Declaration of 1990, for example, spoke to the importance of fostering human resources and sustainable development, while the Barbados Consensus promulgated entrepreneurial skills as being vital to the task of economic development. The education system, too, was regarded as an area that has to be completely revamped:

“The fundamental changes at the global level have created conditions in which economic well-being has become increasingly dependent on the availability of a highly educated and high skilled labour force capable of being re-trained to meet changing demands.”

The new approach to development and the revitalisation of the economies of the Caribbean Community must take place in the context of a democratic framework. Democracy in the new dispensation of the 21st century in the Caribbean, as in the rest of the world, has come to be regarded as a facilitator for development. In addition, democracy is seen as the principal link to that of “human rights, good governance, human dignity and the rule of law.”

With these developments, CARICOM has put itself on the threshold of a new era of existence. A new concept of regionalism has emerged. The centerpiece of the new, or ‘open’ paradigm of integration is the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), whose completion the leaders of the Community have set different target dates. According to the latest

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12 Ibid
13 Creative and Productive Citizens for the 21st Century c.f. The World Bank’s assertion: “Until the primary schools can significantly improve the performance level of their graduates, and secondary schools and tertiary institutions offer a sound education for a much larger proportion of the age group than is currently the case, it is unlikely that most Caribbean countries’ labour force will be capable of supporting a developing strategy dependent more on human than natural resources.” (Norman Girvan: Societies at Risk? The Caribbean and Global Change: p.29 www.unesco.org/most/girvan.htm.
14 Bridgetown Declaration of Principles, Bridgetown, Barbados, 10 May 1997.
Annual Report of the Caribbean Community “Parliamentary Counsels of Member States had made significant progress in integrating the Nine Protocols into a single revised Treaty, with the anticipation that the new Treaty will be completed in 2001.” What does the Single Market involve? The intention is to create a single economic space for the five million people of the Community characterised by the freedom of movement of goods, services, labour and capital, with supportive fiscal, monetary and administrative arrangements.

Structurally, the Community has also undergone an institutional transformation. In order to involve the people more fully in the integration process, the Assembly of Caribbean Parliamentarians (ACCP) has been created. The Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) has been established to mediate disputes and other misunderstandings which may occur among Member States of the Community.

In seeking to deepen its relations with Latin America and also to create opportunities in the context of the ‘new Regionalism’, the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) has been established and significant players in the sub-region have subscribed to the Agreement. The belief is that the ACS can improve the bargaining power of the Caribbean Community both in the context of the factors of globalisation\(^\text{15}\) and the creation of the Free Trade of the Americas (FTAA). It represents one of the significant developments of this period in that it seeks to expand regional structures of the Anglophone Caribbean to include non-English speaking countries. Dr. Norman Girvan in his “Notes on CARICOM, the ACS and Caribbean Survival” has noted:

\textit{The expansion of CARICOM’s membership and the establishment of CARIFORUM and of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) were key institutional expressions of this trend. Expansion of regionalism represented one of the responses to a changing external environment.}\(^\text{16}\)

The creation of the ACS is significant; a few words ought to be said about it. The concepts of ‘deepening’ as opposed to ‘widening’ have challenged the leaders of the Community. Before 1992 the former was the preferred option. However, with the establishment of the West Indian Commission, there was a change. It recommended the deepening of the Community while widening functional cooperation with the independent and non-independent States of the Caribbean Basin. This idea became institutionalized with the coming into being of the ACS in 1994,

\(^{15}\) Dr. Anthony Bryan in his testimony to the American House Committee on International Relations stated that “…the ACS have a population of 216 million, an accumulated GDP of US$506 billion, and does approximately US$180 billion in merchandise trade. In a real sense, these statistics are an indication of the economic potential of a Caribbean bloc that is emerging.”

Given the structural transformation that the Community has undergone and the consequential orientation it has assumed — political and economic — the consensus has emerged that the Community ought to be equipped to respond to the challenges of the new Century and to take advantage of the opportunities offered.

A point needs to be made. In order to give some structure to the material covered, it has been necessary to arrange it according to periods. Periodisation has its difficulties but it is the only rational method which could bring some order and consistency to this documentary account of the journey that CARICOM has made from a Community to a Single Market. It would be in order to say also, that the periodisation is not uniform. For example, it makes sense to refer to the establishment of the Community as occurring between 1973 and 1975. However, when it comes to the critical phase of the Community’s existence, during which the leaders of the Community were pre-occupied with economic matters, it makes eminent sense to give the end year as 1991, when a new phase of CARICOM was about to begin. The sections on functional co-operation and foreign policy are not susceptible to similar treatment, however, and the relevant periods are therefore set down in a uniform way.

The structure of this publication will follow the lines of the three main pillars of the integration movement: Economic Integration; Functional Co-operation; and Foreign Policy Coordination. Extracts from the Communiqués and Declarations will be given under the respective headings. Also, despite the general introduction, some attempt will be made to summarise the events which highlight the developments in the context of these three headings.

- **ECONOMIC INTEGRATION**

The economic integration envisaged by the Treaty of Chaguaramas in 1973 involved the removal of trade restrictions and the abolition of migratory constraints among CARICOM countries. Since the creation of the CARICOM, what quickly emerged was an emphasis on the question of free trade among the individual Member States. It is to be noted that with the establishment of the Community, there was a clear movement from the position where tariff and quantitative restrictions were abolished in order to boost trade, to one which incorporated the removal of restrictions on the freedom of movement. This should be borne in mind for when it arises later in the discussion on the creation of a single economic space, minus the restrictions on the movement of capital and labour.

Economic integration is one of the principal aims of CARICOM. It is provided for in the Annex to the Treaty of Chaguaramas. Five areas of activities are specified under the Treaty and these constitute the Common Market arrangements: Trade Liberalisation; the Common External Tariff (CET); the Common Protective Policy (CPP); Factor Mobility; Co-ordination of Economic Policies and Production Integration.

Despite these prescriptions of the Treaty, the emphasis as it evolved fell squarely on the question of Free Trade. The Community did and does experience many problems with the foregoing four of the five areas of activities. However, as the documents under review clearly
establish, the main emphasis and concern of the leaders of the group was with Free Trade. Indeed, the expansion and deepening of the integration movement was linked to the question of Free Trade. In the period under consideration, that is, from 1973-2000, the question of Trade was liberally mentioned in the documents issued by the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community. In fact, those documents issued contained approximately 30 references to the question of Trade.\(^{17}\)

The Free Trade Regime outlined in Chapter Three of the Common Market Annex is similar to that which obtained in the CARIFTA Agreement. The difference was that provision was made for concessions to the Less Developed Countries (LDCs) of the Community. Initially, intra-regional trade, which was intended to give effect to the implementation of a Free Trade Area, and which predated CARIFTA, had an auspicious beginning: It has been estimated that the value of intra-regional trade ballooned from US$35.5 million in 1968 to US$247.7 million in 1974, an increase of 700 per cent.\(^{18}\) However, after the initial spurt in free trade, there was a precipitous decline. This was a consequence of the world economic crisis which was triggered by a substantial increase in the price of petroleum and its related products in the early seventies. The deliberations by the leaders of CARICOM underscored their deep concern about this matter and the need for corrective action. They recognised that a possible destruction of the Free Trade regime would have negative consequences for the larger issue of regional integration.

When the meetings of the Community resumed at Ocho Rios in Jamaica in 1982, Member States had been urged “to remove completely by the end of 1983, quantitative restrictions imposed on inter-regional trade since the establishment of the Common Market.”\(^{19}\) The urgent need to revitalise intra-regional trade and to arrest its deterioration again seized the attention of the leaders of the Community, a fact dramatised by the expansion of extra-regional trade.\(^{20}\) Measures to retrieve this situation were urged; practical steps recommended. Nevertheless, the Heads of Government at the 1987 Summit were constrained to note “with deep concern the continuing serious decline in the level of intra-regional trade and the fact that the value of intra-regional imports in 1986 had declined to less than 50 per cent of the 1981 level.”\(^{21}\)

The Nassau Meeting 1984 in fact crafted the Nassau Understanding, which constitutes a comprehensive review of the economies of the Member States of the region and the recommendation for structural adjustment. The implementation of the measures identified under the Nassau Understanding, among other things, was expected to revitalise intra-regional trade.

Intra-regional trade has not recovered the levels of the early days after the founding of the Community. But the point here is that its leaders did make every effort to ensure its revival and

\(^{17}\) Further references to Trade will be found in Section IV  
\(^{18}\) Boxhill, Ian, CARICOM: Its Shortcomings and the Case for Ideology of Regionalism, German Common Market Studies  
\(^{19}\) 3\(^{rd}\) Conference of the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, 15-18 November 1982, Ocho Rios, Jamaica  
\(^{20}\) 5\(^{th}\) Conference of the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, 4-7 July 1984, Nassau, Bahamas  
\(^{21}\) 8\(^{th}\) Conference of the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, 29 June-3 July 1987, Castries, St. Lucia
stability. It was not an easy task. Mechanisms such as the Caribbean Multilateral Clearing Facility (CMCF), which facilitate intra-regional trade, had a rather unfortunate existence as it folded after being in operation for several years. The consequences of the world crisis meant that most of the Member States of the Community were distracted from questions concerning intra-regional trade and focused on their survival (that is trade beyond the region). However, by the end of the century, there was some indication that intra-regional trade might have a better lease of life in the context of the Single Market and Economy.

One of the bugbears of intra-regional trade and the overall process of economic integration was the supervision of the question of debt. This issue of the debt burden came sharply into focus with the onset of the world economic crisis as it constrained economic growth. At Deep Bay, Antigua, in 1989, the Heads of Government

> reflected on the intense nature of the debt crisis and took cognizance of the position now generally accepted by the international community that external debt of the developing countries could not now be paid as at present structured, given the prevailing economic realities.\(^{22}\)

Previously, at Nassau, the Heads had recognised the gravity of the situation. The debt question therefore came under scrutiny in the Nassau Understanding and there too it was recognised that structural adjustment was an essential step in the resolution of this difficult problem. The debt question can be said to have abated in the late eighties and early nineties, but re-emerged as a matter of particular concern towards the end of the decade.

The solution to the problem of debt is usually cast in terms of the developed states making concessions to the developing states. However, in the context of CARICOM, there was a development which turned this generalisation on its head and which needs to be recorded. Most of the resources available under the CMCF had been utilised by Guyana to purchase petroleum products. As a result, the country had incurred a massive debt of US$500 million to Trinidad and Tobago. The debt stood for a long time, but in 1996, Trinidad and Tobago was congratulated for “writing off a substantial proportion of Guyana’s bilateral debt under Naples Terms”.\(^{23}\) The lesson, here, is that the countries of the Caribbean should look among themselves for possible solutions to their own problems.

A study of the documentation shows that the economic integration of the Community has not proceeded as well as would have been expected; a situation that is common to all integration exercises, given the inherent fragility and weaknesses of the constituent states and the unpredictable nature of the international environment. The integration of production which was expected to be so fundamental an aspect of the integration process seems to have fallen off the agenda from the early days of the movement. Yet it was recognised as an essential element of the integration process. At the 7th Meeting of Heads of Government of Commonwealth Caribbean Countries in October 1972, for example, it was noted “that steps should be taken to

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\(^{22}\) 10th Conference of the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, 4-8 July 1989, Deep Bay, Antigua

\(^{23}\) 17th Conference of the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, 3-6 July 1996, St. Michael, Barbados
integrate production within the Region by creating linkages between such activities in the various Territories of the Region.”

It should be stated, however, that a definite move was made in this direction when Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana and Jamaica sought to set up an aluminium smelter. It was scuppered, however, when Jamaica signed agreements with Venezuela and Mexico to establish their own smelters. This brought on the anger of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr. Eric Williams. Williams regarded the Jamaica Agreement as a violation of that reached with the three CARICOM MDCs (More Developed Countries). The impact of this agreement should not be underestimated. It appears to have put to rest any further notion of the integration of production. There are no further references to this issue in the documents.

There are other issues that the Community has neglected to the detriment of the integration process. Food production, an important matter for the Caribbean, after its initial treatment by the Heads, has been left in abeyance. The Regional Food Plan was first announced at the 2nd Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community held in St. Lucia in 1975. An agreement was reached at that meeting:

“The Conference adopted proposals for a preliminary work programme for the Corporation including the development of a proposed livestock complex relating to milk and dairy products, mutton and lamb, pork, poultry, and hatching eggs.”

The Regional Food Plan failed to achieve its objective even though the Region continues to expend substantial sums of money on the importation of food items, most of which are geared towards the tourist industry.

What is said in relation to the Regional Food Plan, also applies with equal force to the fate of the Regional Energy Plan, Regional Air Transportation and other schemes intended to promote the economic integration of the Region.

The failure of the Federation casts a long and gloomy shadow in the sense that any suggestion of a supranational authority or effective mechanisms for the implementation of decisions taken by the Community are carefully avoided. An example of this remarkable fact can be found in the document. The Secretary General of the Community Secretariat was mandated at the Fifth Heads of Government Conference, “to conduct a study, in consultation with Member States, of the system of decision making in the Community in respect of which

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24 Jamaica, Guyana and Trinidad were given equity shares of 33%, 33% and 34% in an aluminium smelter which was to be established in Trinidad. Jamaica, however, sought Bauxite supplies from Venezuela. The Project never got off the ground. Eric Williams objected to this course of action because he believed that it represented an assault on the agreement to build the smelter. The conflict clearly arose from different views of the States of Latin America. Williams saw them as a threat to the integrity of the Region; Manley saw them as a partner in development. Williams’ position is polemically set out in his address to the PNM entitled “The Threat to the Caribbean Community in the Seventies.”

25 The Caribbean imports some US$35 billion worth of food and as late as 1982
consideration could be given to the introduction of the voting procedure other than by unanimous vote.”

Nothing was done and this matter was raised again at the Sixth Meeting of the Heads of Government Conference but still failed to become a major consideration until the publication of the West Indian Report.

Monetary Union is also an important aspect of any integration process. This was demonstrated recently when 12 European States covering some 300 million people agreed to accept a single currency. Commentators observed that this development constituted a major fillip to the cementing of the integration of the European Union. The importance of a single currency has also been the subject of deliberation by the Heads of Government Conferences of the Caribbean Community. However, the treatment of this issue does not appear to have been consistent or vigorous.

The first substantive reference to this matter came at the 13th Meeting of the Heads of Government Conference held in Trinidad & Tobago in July 1992. At that meeting the Heads received a report from the Prime Minister of Trinidad & Tobago on the progress made towards monetary union. “They noted that the Report however proposed that the movement towards monetary union to take place in three phases with the goal of attaining full union by the year 2000.”

Former Presidents Burnham and Hugh Desmond Hoyte of Guyana, and the Prime Minister of Barbados, Mr. Owen Arthur, have raised the question of the political direction of the integration movement quite frontally. In this regard, it is instructive to note what was published in the booklet produced by the Ministry of Finance of Trinidad & Tobago in September 1959 and which is widely regarded as having been written by Dr. Eric Williams:

> Only a powerful and centrally directed economic co-ordination and independence can create the true foundations of a nation. Barbados will not unify with St. Kitts or Trinidad with British Guiana or Jamaica with Antigua. They will be knit together only through their common allegiance to a central government.

Going into the issues which make for economic integration in great detail is not the objective of this exercise. Some of the important issues have been selected and discussed. The related documentation gives an idea of the scope and complexity of economic integration.

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26 5th Conference of the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, 4-7 July 1984, Nassau, The Bahamas  
27 13th Conference of the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, 29 June-2 July 1992, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad & Tobago. It is to be noted too that “Steps towards a Single Currency” was one of the recommendations of the West Indian Commission. The Prime Minister of Trinidad & Tobago had reported to the Third Inter Sessional Meeting on the 19th February 1992 in Kingston, Jamaica, and had indicated “that the relevant technical issues are under study.”  
28 “Integrate or Perish” Perspectives of Leaders of the Integration Movement 1963-1999 edited by Kenneth O. Hall p.xvii
• FUNCTIONAL CO-OPERATION

Functional co-operation has enjoyed a measure of success. But here again this important aspect of the Treaty of Chaguaramas predates CARICOM; it existed at the time of the Federation. Functional co-operation has made important contributions to the life of the Community and its peoples. It has done so in the areas of education, health, meteorology, culture and sports.

In the field of education, the University of the West Indies, predating CARICOM, is an outstanding regional achievement. The University has played an important part in undertaking studies essential to the creation of the first phase of the Integration Movement and continues to be a valuable pillar of support. In recent times, it has been at the forefront of improving, sustaining and honing the resource base of the Community. These activities are most likely to be beneficial to the Caribbean Community in the long term.

With the help of the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO), an array of Regional Institutions has been established. Member States have benefited accordingly. In the 80s the Caribbean Environmental Health Institute (CEHI), based in Saint Lucia, came into being. It coordinates a number of environmental projects supported by Donor Agencies. The Caribbean Epidemiology Centre hosted by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, co-ordinates the epidemiological surveillance throughout the Region. And recently there has been co-operation in the area of dealing with HIV/AIDS, health protection and maternal and childcare. The Caribbean Regional Drug Testing Laboratory, established in Jamaica, provides common services aimed at securing the safety of pharmaceuticals consumed in the Region. These are only a few of the areas in which much progress has been made regarding Functional Co-operation. Others can be added. In the words of the Report of the West Indian Commission: “The work of coordinating regional endeavours, sponsoring and supporting Community Institutions, and providing common services across the Region continues to be pursued through all the vicissitudes of the CARICOM experience.”

However, it is debatable whether the potential in this area has been optimised. There are particular areas of failure, or, perhaps more accurately, zones of mixed fortune. This can be gleaned from a reading of the declarations, resolutions and communiqués issued by the Conference of Heads of Government. Functional co-operation in the areas of sports, labour, tourism, health, transportation has taken place but there is a school of thought which believes that the activities in this regard can be broadened and expanded.

In the area of culture, in particular, the Community can still take advantage of the cultural dynamism of the Region and transmute its obvious potential into a source of major economic benefits. The documents studied do not evince an understanding that the Region has a major cultural product which could be available for markets beyond it, or that there is an appreciation that culture is an important and serious component of development.

29 Report of the West Indian Commission, p 41.
• CO-ORDINATION OF FOREIGN POLICY

Article 17 of the Treaty of Chaguaramas provides for ‘the fullest possible co-ordination of foreign policies within their respective competencies.’ Article 34 of the Common Market Annex includes provision for Member States to “seek” progressive co-ordination of their trade relations with third countries or a group of third countries.

The Community has been successful in particular areas. It is a well-known fact that it played a leading role in establishing the ACP Group. In the words of the Report of the West Indian Commission, the Community has been outstanding in its role of “conceiving, designing and negotiating the Lom Convention which has become by far the most important conduit of benefits from the EEC to a large part of the developing World.”  

In this regard, it should be noted that the following observation was made in 1974 before the signing of the Georgetown Accord by which African, Caribbean and the Pacific States agreed to negotiate with the EEC as a single entity: “Conference reviewed the progress of the negotiations between the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries and reaffirmed its commitment to a joint Caribbean approach within the ACP Group.”

Decisions taken by some leaders of the Community in 1972 prepared the ground for the recognition of Cuba and co-operation with that country, which continues to this day a CARICOM/Cuba Joint Commission crisis. The Community took this position, despite the fact that the major power of the Region, the United States, sought Cuba’s isolation. Space does not permit a detailed account of the Foreign Policy successes of the Region. Suffice it to say, the Community has been a valued shield in assisting Guyana and Belize in protecting their sovereignty and territorial integrity and enabling both Member States to exercise their right to sit in the Councils of the Organisation of American States (OAS), from which they had been debarred for many years.

The Community has also successfully asserted its position on major regional economic questions such as the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI), the Enterprise of the Americas Initiative (EAI) and more recently the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). A new relationship appears to have been with the leading hemispheric power, the USA, and institutions have been created to mediate that relationship.

The trade relations between the United States assumed a more serious character after the Caribbean – USA Summit on May 10, 1997, in Bridgetown, Barbados, at which the Bridgetown Partnership for Prosperity and Security was adopted. This document envisaged, according to the decision reached at the 13th Meeting of the Heads of Government Conference of the Caribbean Community held in Trinidad and Tobago in July 1992 that emphasis would be placed on “the importance of expanding trade relations with the USA…”  

30 Ibid, p. 42
Government and the Caribbean Community “welcomed the arrangements for annual consultations between the Foreign Ministers of the Caribbean and the US Secretary of State and recognised the need for urgent and intense follow up to the decisions adopted at the Caribbean-USA Summit.”

The Community has had a long association with Latin America. The advocacy has always been to pursue closer ties with this region. Apart from being a member of the Rio Group, the Community has Mixed Commissions with Mexico, Cuba and Colombia. At the 12th Heads of Government Conference, Caribbean Leaders “noted the intensification of relations between CARICOM and Latin American states at both the bilateral and regional levels.”

The Community has also engaged the Central American region at the highest level. Notable in this regard is the following Declaration in July 1992 in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad & Tobago: “They (HOG) particularly welcomed the developments aimed at the strengthening of relations between the Caribbean Community and the countries of Central America, particularly the convening in Honduras in January 1992 of the First Ministerial Conference between CARICOM and the Countries of the Central American Isthmus.”

The Community has also maintained good relations with the major international organisations and institutions such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Discussions have been held with the Heads of these institutions at various times. The Presidents of Mexico and Venezuela have also engaged the Community Leaders in discussions, the results of which are reflected in the documents issued by the relevant conferences.

But the Grenada imbroglio demonstrated that competing national interest and different strategic perceptions could undermine the Community’s ability to present a united front to the World. Also, the fierce national pride that goes with the spirit of nationalism has been an obstacle for joint representation. Failure to co-ordinate the Foreign Policy of the Community has led to disappointment and psychological setback, as in the case of Grenada. This is aptly described by the West Indian Commission: “With disappointing frequency we fail to combine our disparate voices when it would be appropriate to do so, yet we have had sufficient success when acting and negotiating together….”

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32 18th Conference of the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, 30 June-4 July 1997, Montego Bay, Jamaica
34 13th Conference of the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, 29 June-2 July 1992, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad & Tobago
35 West Indian Report Op cit p. 42