Chapter III

US HEGEMONY AND THICKENING OF CIRCUM-CARIBBEAN SECURITY-DEVELOPMENT NEXUS

INTRODUCTION

The US ‘homeland’ security measures essentially conceive of the Circum-Caribbean as ‘third border’ more than that of its innovative domestic political construct in the wake of the events of 11 September 2001. The US involvement in the Circum-Caribbean has a history of its own. Since the ‘Spanish-Cuban-American War’ of 1898, US with its ever changing policy has attempted to conserve its hegemonic interests in the name of preserving stability in the region. Homeland security is one of the several changing facets of the US geo-politico-economic policies in the Caribbean Basin. Understandably, the measures have considerable impacts on the polity and economy of the ‘small’ and ‘micro’ states of the region. The physical size of the Circum-Caribbean states and the perceived consequences are most significant in evaluating the impacts of the homeland security measures on them. Equally relevant is the background of the Cold War and the current economic crisis that fuel the homeland measures in the Circum-Caribbean.

The chapter begins with briefly sketching the history of the US hegemonic involvement in the Circum-Caribbean with emphasis that the American security and economic interests in the region are interwoven. The next segment argues that post-9/11 US diplomacy differences towards the region, seen particularly as different ways of engagement by the Democratic Party and the Republic Party, have become narrow due to homeland security paradigm. The following section, while looking conceptually at the US homeland security and observing whether it is a ‘21st Century Roosevelt Corollary to Monroe Doctrine’, maintains that US has become smart in projecting itself in the Circum-Caribbean with an innovative strategy of ‘smart
power’. Finally, it is argued that US initiatives, instead of advancing the Circum-Caribbean betterment, are complicating the security-development nexus in the region.

**US HEGEMONY AND CIRCUM-CARIBBEAN**

The US President Bill Clinton proclaimed in Georgetown, Guyana in 1997 that US is a ‘Caribbean state’ (Payne, 1998); followed by his successor George Bush, Jr. declaring the Caribbean as ‘third border’ (Nafey, 2004: 25) of US in Quebec, Canada. The tail of Florida of US definitely reaches the Caribbean Basin adjacent to the Bahamas; none of the known Circum-Caribbean or American literature has defined US as a Caribbean state either geographically or historically or culturally. Similarly, the visual cartography of the region does not validate any of its part as a border of America. Thus, Clinton’s aspiration to ‘Caribbeanse’ US and Bush’s wish to carve a ‘third border’ call for a geo-political and geo-economic comprehension of the post-Cold War and post-9/11 political and economic policies of Washington towards the Greater Caribbean along with possible security and developmental implications. In this context, it is worth noting what Louis Perez (1982: 167) observed that the 50 mile strip of land in Panama had become as vital to the national interests and international aspirations of US as the 100 mile stretch of water in the Florida Channel has been to Spain. ‘Dating back in the 18th Century’, wrote Andrew Axline (1988: 215), ‘the Caribbean received at least as much attention from the major world powers as it does today.’

1. **POST-SPANISH-CUBAN-AMERICAN WAR OF 1898**

The end of the Spanish-Cuban-American War of 1898 established the hegemonic exclusivity of US in the Circum-Caribbean as well as entire in the western hemisphere. It passed the conduct of international affairs under the jurisdiction of Washington. After the defeat of Spain, it was rebirth of exclusivism over the Circum-Caribbean under the aegis of US (Perez, 1982: 167). No significant rival was left in the Circum-Caribbean to challenge the American hegemony. Since then America has devised policies of varying colours to preserve its geo-political and –economic interests in the region.
US has always been concerned for ‘stability’ of the Caribbean Basin because of conventional vulnerability syndromes. ‘Promixity, vulnerability, and instability are not new features of the Caribbean or of Caribbean-United States dynamics’, noted Griffith (2003: 3). US thought after the war of 1898 that European intrusion in the region would be a great threat to its interests. Therefore, prevention of instability in the Basin was crucial to keep the European rivalries at bay. This could at best be done by not letting any Circum-Caribbean country to default a payment of a foreign loan, and not allowing any treaty to concede foreign military base (Perez, 1982: 168). But, Louis Perez further wrote that

stability was more than a means to keep Europeans out. It was also the necessary condition to bring American capital into the region.

(Perez, 1982: 168)

Since, America had already secured its hegemonic presence in the Circum-Caribbean, preserving the economic interest was obvious in the queue. This is what the Europeans did earlier. Thus, Anthony Payne and Paul Sutton (eds.) (1993: 4) observed, ‘The broad impact of imperialism upon the Caribbean was not only formative: it set in motion an important and enduring contradiction between legacy of political fragmentation, on the one hand, and economic uniformity, on the other’.

Security issues of the region have historically involved geography and national prestige (Maingot, 1985: 316), but the American economic interest in the region gradually became prominent. Since the American companies became integral part of the hegemonic scheme, Washington had to monitor the policies of the Circum-Caribbean national governments to help companies expand their business. This inevitably led to American intrusion in the internal affairs of the countries. Thus, Washington’s concern for the Circum-Caribbean stability actually stabilised American business interest in the region. In the words of Perez (1982: 188), ‘The stability once demanded in the name of American security interests now became a requirement to protect American capital interests’. It was a blending of American political and economic interests; the continuity of this blending could be seen even in its contemporary policies towards the Circum-Caribbean.

But the American policy in the region has never been static. The facets of policy have changed their colour over time. Perez, for example, further observed:
While the premises and long-term objectives of policy may remain constant, the means employed in their pursuit, and the weight accorded to these means, have been in constant state of flux. They are subject to the vagaries of changing global, regional, partisan, and domestic developments.

(Perez, 1982: 180)

However, the Cold War period was the phase of most aggressive American involvement in the Circum-Caribbean. Securing the ‘area of influence’ was more than the national pride for America (Maingot, 1985). The Circum-Caribbean states faced recurrent American military interventions during that period. Guatemala in 1954, Cuba in 1961, the Dominical Republic in 1965, Grenada in 1983, and Panama in 1989 are among the most highlighted in the series of military interventions in the region. American governments have even used the Central Intelligence Agency to sponsor covert military operations against the states of the region. Military operations in Guatemala (1954) and Cuba (1960-65), for example, fall in this category (Rabe, 1988: 207). Such actions even preceded the Cold War. According to Stephen Rabe:

Military intervention has been the most conspicuous feature of U.S. policy in Latin America. During the first third of the twentieth century, U.S. armed forces intervened some thirty-five times in the Caribbean Basin nations of Cuba, Panama, Mexico, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua.

(Rabe, 1988: 206)

But were American interventions merely for military occupation? Given the Cold War security preoccupation, such understanding would immediately follow as the American rivalries were arguably extending their respective ‘area of influence’ in the Circum-Caribbean. The thesis of merely military occupation would not pass the test, however. As Rabe (1988: 207) argued, the interventions signify more than armed landings and military occupation. Referring to the Louis Perez’s 1986 book *Cuba under Platt Amendment*, Rabe argued that the American investors wanted stability and docile workers in Cuba. Thus, America vetoed national development projects, set national budgets, and interfered in labour disputes. And why not! The American direct investments in Cuba had reached 200 million dollars in 1911, and had crossed one billion by 1925 (Rabe, 1988: 210). American economic interest was interwoven in its military policy as the Circum-Caribbean was potentially fulfilling the American national interest. But the region was potentially ‘unstable’ and ‘explosive’. ‘The Caribbean has been perceived as an area, Anthony Maingot opined (1985: 314), ‘where volatility and the propensity for collective unrest are constant because of
unemployment, rapid and chaotic urbanization, the youthfulness of the population, and a historic capacity to articulate and agitate for redress of perceived ills.’ This way the Circum-Caribbean was perceived as an area of vital national interest for America along with explosive possibilities. Thus, if American government wished to avoid any loss of domestic political support due to lengthy military involvements, it had to actively search for other means of achieving stability (Maingot, 1985: 314); and therefore the extension of the American policy towards economic means. It suggests that United States’ goal of preserving its hegemonic interests persevered over a period, but the policy, as Perez (1982) would argue, was in a constant state of flux. Hence, the post-Cold War American policy of ‘Caribbeanisation’ and post-9/11 strategy of carving a ‘third border’ can fruitfully be understood in the context of shifting policies and perpetual hegemonic goals.

II. POST-COLD WAR AND POST-9/11

The end of the Cold War was interpreted from various angles. Collapse of the Soviet System and victory of America, seen as one and the same, were prominent ones. Equally important was the recognition of the emergence of the ‘Third World’ problems. There is one more; often missed out. It is the re-appearance of the post-Spanish-Cuban-American War scenario in several forms. The end of the Cold War, like the Spanish-Cuban-American War, was re-assertion of the American ‘imperialism’ of late 19th Century in a different but wider context. Both the wars deepened and widened the American reach and interests in the Caribbean Basin. Soviet Russia was not Spain, however. The latter invaded the ‘New World’ whereas the former’s ideology was selectively welcomed as a ‘movement’ by several states in the region.

Meanwhile, the end of the Cold War, it is argued, ended the threat of communism to the American ‘national’ security; causing automatic alteration in the US perception and policy towards the Caribbean Basin. Pragmatism rather than ideology was assumed to govern the Circum-Caribbean-US relations after the Cold War. This section of the chapter shows that these expectations, though optimistic,
were hastily formulated ignoring the historic pattern of American involvement in the Circum-Caribbean region.

Harold Molineu observed:

If it is true that intervention has been the most persistent characteristic of U.S. policy in Latin America, then is it reasonable to expect Washington to abandon the option merely because communist threats are withering away? The interventionist impulse preceded the cold war and therefore seems likely to remain afterward.

(Molineu, 1994: 223)

After the Cold War, two US interventions in Haiti validated Molineu’s insightful observation of the interventionist impulse. Therefore, it becomes important to know that what causes Washington to intervene when the Soviet System has disappeared! One way to look into it can be through the ‘resiliency of the leftist guerrillas’ (Kryzanek, 1992: 141). But it is useful to remind that ‘leftist guerrillas’ nowhere qualify the degree of threat to the American security that was posed by the Cuban missile crisis. Moreover, the leftist guerrillas signify at best the domestic ‘movement’ in the small states in the region and not the activities to destabilise the American society.iii

After the Cold War when the traditional security policies seemed less convincing, it is argued that US put weight on democracy and development for stability in the region. Option of democracy directly underscored the hegemonic impulse because the US now had to influence the national governments by overt and covert actions. Concern for development, on the other side, meant controlling the business of the region through American companies. None of these options were new. The political and economic aspirations of America were very much present during and before the Cold War. The post-Cold War era vividly marked the official American policies of blending the political and economies facets. In fact, it was the time of simultaneous opening of the polity and economy in the region. ‘No democracy without development’ and ‘no development without democracy’ underlined the spirit of hemispheric political economy under the aegis of American domination. Furthermore, the role of the international financial institutions was subsequently deepened in the region.

The American policy towards the region and the whole of Latin America marked with inclusion of another new dimension, that is, formulating a co-operative
framework of political economy. It was wisely felt by the American strategic community that the end of the Cold War necessitates reworking of the hemispheric strategy because continued emphasis on the traditional threat would expose the naked hegemonic impulse. Therefore, attempts to establish and strengthen bilateral (and multilateral to some extent) relations were taken up. A growing sense of Circum-Caribbean regional identity based on geography, ethno-history, and political economy among the small states was no less important as far as the new dimension of American policy was concerned.

The continuity of the hegemonic impulse can further be understood with American drug and immigration policies in the hemisphere. There are candid observations that drug trafficking is a grave and multifaceted problem for the small and micro states in the region. The states have also been co-operating with the American agencies to control the menace, apart from attempting at institutionalising various regional mechanisms to deal with it. Similarly, immigration benefits the states with remittances and also sucks their ‘human resources’. It also increases the problem of narcotic trade, apart from adding the criminal elements into the regional societal fabric. But drugs and immigration, in effect, provide the most potent strategic substances to America in formulating its post-Cold War geo-political and geo-economic policies.

The Circum-Caribbean region is witnessing a further addition/modification in the continuing US hegemonic caprice in the wake of the events of 11 September 2001 (or 9/11). It is the amorphous ‘threat of terrorism’ to the US ‘homeland’ security. Terrorism has engulfed the American global perception to the extent that it does not seem to distinguish an act of terrorism and trading in narcotic substances. Therefore, ‘geo-narcotics’ (Griffith, 1993, 1993/1994, 2003) and ‘narco-terrorism’ (Nafey, 2004: 48) have taken the front seat in the 21st Century American hegemony in the Circum-Caribbean. ‘The act of terrorism on 11 September 2011 (commonly referred to as 9/11 in US’, Abdul Nafey (2004: 23) noted, ‘have profoundly altered, perhaps irrevocably, the security and geo-politics, including geo-economics, in the Caribbean Basin.’

It seems that the post-Cold War and post-9/11 diplomacy in the region marks another understudied changing nature of American involvement in the Caribbean Basin. This is of distancing from the region physically or militarily and substituting it
through high power technology for monitoring, intercepting, and preventing activities of drug trafficking and allied activities. Post-9/11 American Iraqi occupation is suggestive that America will try at its best not to directly intervene in a state with military deployment. Vietnam, however, could not deter such an action during the Cold War. But it inevitably raises the issue of international legality, resource burden, and jeopardises domestic political support. The ongoing economic crisis further prohibits any such direct military involvement in the Circum-Caribbean area. This has equally enabled America in preserving its hegemonic identity in a safer way as it helps avoid the traditional notion of intervention into a sovereign nation and helps prevent loss of lives and properties; therefore less possibility of losing ‘homeland’ political support. Given the inadequate resources at these states’ disposal, this newest form of hegemony impinges the region in an unprecedented manner. The physical/resource ability of several of the small and micro of the region is so negligible that they cannot even afford to have policing capacity. The political culture in some of the states is so much unstable that a political faction can manipulate the state police to topple the government in its favour at any time. Such conditions are often proverbially articulated by the hemispheric hegemon as potential threats to homeland security as they can be manipulated by terrorists through drug barons. The reality is that the hegemonic articulation is more based on perceived threats, whereas the threats to these small and micro states emanating from the newest form of American hegemony are more authentic. iv

In this context, one has to understand the opportunity that 9/11 gave to Washington. In last one decade American pre-emptive actions to prevent further terrorist attack on its homeland have caused reassertion of the American hegemony more than it provided an upper hand to the traditional notion of security due to the American militaristic style of ‘war on terrorism’. The political economy of anti-terrorism policies, as a consequence, is primarily governing today’s inter- and intra-state exchanges and interactions. Moreover, the issue of poverty in the global South has been linked with the issue of security of the global North; and has given the world politics a form which is significantly altering the post-Cold War security and development discourse.

The emerging security and development context (and the nexus, as discussed in the previous chapter) warrants that the current economic crisis in the American
economy should be brought into discussion. According to the data available with the US Department of the Treasury (2011), the annual average rate of unemployment in America has increased from 4.6 per cent in 2006 to 9.6 per cent in 2011. The growth rate in industrial production has sharply gone down from 2.3 per cent in December 2006 to –2.9 per cent in December 2009, it shows significant improvement in the following years, however. Similarly, the trade balance (in billions of dollars) figures –500.0 in 2010, as the Department of Treasury displays. The foreclosures increased in 2007 and 2008 (Gerardi et al., 2008); and the Treasury had to prepare emergency options to rescue one after another collapsing companies and troubled institutions (Swagel, 2009). Consequently, Washington’s diplomatic consideration of the Circum-Caribbean geo-economics in a crisis-ridden time is undeniable. The US homeland security measures are anti-immigration measures too. The measures adversely impact the Circum-Caribbean immigration to the US causing huge remittances loss to the small economies of the region. Though it heightens the perception that ‘security’, not economic interest, is in priority list of the American strategic community, the new anti-terrorist architecture has fundamentally changed national and international priorities and concerns, perceptions of security, roles of state and bureaucracy, the nature of relationships between the state and society (Haque, 2002: 172). Circum-Caribbean economic weakening can potentially favour American policy to go for new economic arrangement in the region. It can further guarantee preserving long run political and economic interests of America in the region. Post-9/11 Washington’s emphases on drugs/immigration/instability/terrorism etc. seemingly prioritise American national/homeland security concerns; and, in effect, seeking co-operative security arrangement with the Circum-Caribbean states makes more convincing.

In short, the end of the Cold War might have led to decline in American concern for traditional military security and increase in complex economic interdependence with the Circum-Caribbean states, the effect of 9/11 cannot be exclusively reckoned with heightened security perception. The post-9/11 economic interest of America is explicitly present in the region and is underscored by the current economic crisis that America faces.
9/11 AND THE US HOMELAND SECURITY ACT

In response to the events of 11 September 2001, US enacted the Homeland Security Act (HSA) in November 2002. The Act was seen in US as an overhauling of the political administration and was also argued as a triumph of the New Public Management (NPM) to catch up with countries like New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Australia (Moynihan, 2005: 171-73). Understandably, different facets of homeland security were discussed at maximum length in the public administration literature. Public Administration Review, journal of the American Society for Public Administration, for example, published a special report in March/ April 2002, followed by a special issue in September 2002.

The enactment of the HSA is arguably linked with 9/11. ‘It is the administrative response’, wrote Donald Moynihan (2005: 171), ‘to the emergence of a new government function, the systemic threat of terrorism.’ According to Frank Thompson (2002: 18), a fundamental question in the wake of the 11 September is how the four key functions associated with homeland security [and the HSA] – prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery – will be performed. In his own words:

> prevention refers to the activities designed to reduce the inclination and ability of individuals to commit terrorism; preparedness, efforts to develop the plans and capacity needed to respond effectively to terrorist attacks, should they take place; response, the immediate actions taken by public activities, private parties, and citizens to limit injury, death, physical damage, and impairment of critical societal functions when an attack occurs; and recovery, taking the short-and long-term steps needed to rebuild, restore, and revitalise the area subject to terrorist assault economically and in other ways.

(Thompson, 2002: 18) (emphases in original)

Thus, homeland security arrangements signify a major reorganisation of the public administration; adoption of New Public Management in the US administration; and creation of a seamless web of governance. The terror of 9/11 prompted the US government to opt for drastic changes in domestic rules of governance.

In addition to terror-driven emergencies, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is tasked with breaking the links between illegal drug trafficking and terrorism (Moynihan, 2005: 181). Ivelaw Griffith (1993, 1993/1994, 2003) has been consistently working on this aspect in Caribbean archipelago-American context, in
particular. Though all these are the ideas to secure the ‘homeland’, Freedberg did not see division between ‘at home’ and ‘abroad’ anymore. This is only a tightly interconnected world of dangers for him. It is tumbling down of the walls of division of labour between different departments and administrative levels (Freedberg, 2001; in Wise, 2002:144).

US has always been in the forefront for an interconnected world. American Wilsonian vision of the world has been an international community standing together for co-operation (see Chapter I for details). Now this interconnected world threatens the security of the very country which provided leadership for international co-operation. This only compels one to think about the implications of the events of September 2001. The implications have gone to the extent that the academic and policy circles do not want to distinguish between trading narcotic substances and terrorism, as Moynihan indicated. Moreover, 9/11 stands as a watershed in the history of international politics after the Cold War. The latter is partly overtaking and partly complicating the contemporary domestic and international political issues. Ultimately, homeland security remains the gravest concern in the 21st Century American society with growing debate, as James Dempsey observed, questions the trade-offs between liberty and security in the aftermath of 11 September 2001 (Dempsey, 2001-2002, in Haque, 2002: 170).

There are several, however, who doubt the direct causal links between 9/11 and HSA. ‘The White House used the HSA as an opportunity’, opined Moynihan (2005: 173), ‘to overcome a highly stable policy subsystem and achieve preexisting public management policy to the issue image of security.’ A similar opinion is expressed by Charles Wise. In his words, ‘the debate over the appropriate organizational structure to combat terrorism preceded the events of September 11, with various proposals emanating from commissions and committees studying the problem’ (Wise, 2002: 131). Moreover, the Office of Homeland Security had already been established in October 2001 before the enactment of the Act, therefore, leads one to think about various possible links between 9/11 and HSA.
I. **HOMELAND SECURITY: 21ST CENTURY ROOSEVELT COROLLARY TO MONROE DOCTRINE?**

US announcement of Monroe Doctrine in 1823 preceded its ‘great power’ status. But the announcement had unequivocally conveyed the message that US was determined to have the western hemisphere within its supervisory purview. It had warned the European states that their efforts to re-colonise any part of the hemisphere would be seen as aggression; would invite American intervention. The Doctrine was an early post-colonial hemispheric policy. But there were seeds of domination dormant in the Doctrine that got showered with the American victory in the Spanish-Cuban-American War of 1898; coagulating the American hold in Latin America and the Caribbean particularly with Roosevelt Corollary to the Doctrine in 1904. The Corollary was a demonstration of American ‘right to intervene’ in the Latin American and the Caribbean nations in the case of ‘chronic wrongdoings’. Venezuela’s refusal to pay foreign debts and damages suffered by European citizens in its civil war and consequent European naval blockade of Venezuela in 1902-1903 was the inventive background of the Corollary.

The events of 11 September 2001, the inventive background of the Homeland Security Act, had a broader context than the European naval blockade of Venezuela with the speciality that the events took place in the American ‘homeland’; the events were given a civilisational palpitation with ‘war on terror’.

The American strategy of forming an informal empire without colonies in Latin America remained constant throughout the last century (Gilderhus, 2005: 313); the context of post-9/11 homeland preparedness has engendered a wider concern for a grand strategy that America is apparently devising to re-assert its hegemonic Pan-Americanism in Latin America and the Caribbean. Luis Suarez Salazar calls it ‘new Pan-American order’ with a synthesised strategy and complex relationship of domination, co-operation, competence, and conflict that he observed between 1989 and 2005 (Salazar, 2007: 103). In fact, the most striking feature of the post-9/11 American homeland security strategy is, as Melvyn Leffler (2003: 1047) said, its marriage of democratic idealism with the exercise of pre-emptive power. This is how the Roosevelt Corollary is being reshaped to fit into the dynamic context of the 21st Century.
After the Cold War, a significant American thrust was upon re-conceptualising national security with the prism of non-traditional threats among which drug trafficking constituted prime concern. This threat was gradually elevated to the status of ‘narco-terrorism’ (Nafey, 2004: 48) and, as William LeoGrande (2005/2006: 26) wrote, Bush Jr. administration added ‘radical populism’ in the list. Given the context, Joshua Kertzer’s (2007) thesis of paradigm shift in American security strategy from counter-terrorism to counter-insurgency bears obvious logic. Unsurprisingly, Michael Cox (2004: 589) observed that the most extraordinary phenomenon in the age of Bush was the ‘imperial turn’ of America. LeoGrande concluded that far more democratic governments have been dethroned in the entire hemisphere by their own armed forces than by insurgents, drug traffickers, and radical populist combined (LeoGrande, 2005/2006: 33). Therefore even Obama’s ‘indifference’ towards recent military coup in Honduras brings the American opportune desire into light buttressed by the ‘wounds’ of 11 September.

II. SMART POWER STRATEGY

Understanding of the post-9/11 homeland security architecture in the context of Roosevelt Corollary is partial without bringing ‘smart power’ or ‘smart strategy’ into discussion. The nature of interactions among various processes in the post-9/11 era are fundamentally different from that of the post-Cold War ones where efficacy of any single strategy is doubtable; causing for more practical ways of engagement. This is true for any state big or small. Thus, American adoption of smart power strategy is to be frameworked in today’s multi-faceted complexities.

Suzanne Nossel (2004: 131) wrote, ‘The unparalleled strength of the United States, the absence of great-power conflict, the fears aroused by September 11, and growing public scepticism of the Bush administration’s militarism have created a political opening for a cogent, visionary alternative to the president’s foreign policy’. Nossel thinks about the strategy of ‘smart power’ as the visionary alternative. Nossel (2004: 138) conceptualises smart power as ‘...knowing that the United States’s own hand is not always its best tool: U.S. interests are furthered by enlisting others on behalf of U.S. goals, through alliances, international institutions, careful diplomacy, and the power of ideals’. Joseph Nye, Jr. (2004: 270) in the concluding remark of his
article *Soft Power and American Foreign Policy* too expressed that success of US depends upon becoming a ‘smart power’ by developing a deeper understanding of the role of ‘soft power’ and balancing it with ‘hard power’. This is how with an agenda of reclaiming liberal internationalism (Nossel, 2004), smart power strategy seeks to combine all forms of diplomacy along with retaining military force in foreign policy consideration.

In his critical appraisal of the smart power strategy of US, Luis Suarez Salazar (2011: 77) wrote that it has validated or strengthened the major components of the interventionist defence and security strategies with regard to Mexico, the Caribbean Basin (including central America), and the Andean-Amazon region advanced by the Bush, Jr. administration. The recent American policies towards Honduras, Cuba, and the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI) go in three different directions; aptly fitting into the most recent elocution of smart strategy. During her Senate confirmation hearing on 13 January 2009, Hillary Clinton said, ‘We must use what has been called smart power – the full range of tools at our disposal – diplomatic, economic, military, political, legal, and cultural – picking the right tool, or combination of tools, for each situation’ (CBS News, 2009). Even the policy engagement of the Washington leadership in last few years in the Circum-Caribbean is smart power engagement.

**END OF BI-PARTISAN DIPLOMACY DIFFERENCES TOWARDS CIRCUM-CARIBBEAN?**

It is said that the American diplomatic gestures towards the Circum-Caribbean, as well as the whole of the western hemisphere, have vacillated along party-lines and also will changes in government in Washington. According to Julia Buxton:

> The goals of U.S. foreign policy in Latin America are seen to be limited to the defense and promotion of an ill-defined “national interest,” but *divergence can be seen* in the ways presidents have interpreted, defended, and pursued this interest. This is traditionally accounted for through *partisanship*.

(Buxton, 2011: 29) (emphases added)
The Democratic Party, when in power, has shown ‘democratic’ behaviour, whereas the Republic Party has been relatively inhospitable in its policies towards the immediate neighbourhood of US. Robert Pastor identified:

The tie connecting the U.S. government to its businesses overseas has been more intimate during Republican administrations than during Democratic ones. Democratic preferred to support national planning, multilateralism, and social reforms more than Republicans, who more often stressed private investment, “the magic of the marketplace,” removal of the state from the economy, and unilateral approaches.

(Pastor, 2001: 316; in Buxton, 2011: 29)

Even the securitised approach of the Republicans has largely been of use of ‘sticks’ and of the Democrats of ‘carrots’ (Buxton, 2011: 30). The diplomatic policy differences, however, are said to be ending in the late 2000s given the growing relevance of issues, Buxton argued (2011: 31), and the nexus of domestic and Latin American policy such as illegal immigration, the illicit drug trade, and environmental insecurity. Such concern is bolstered by the Luis Suarez Salazar’s critical appraisal of the ‘smart strategies’ (Salarzar, 2011) of the Obama government as there is only continuity in his administration without any change (Weisbrot, 2011).

Three current developments (with US in the context) are primarily responsible for the concern of end of party-political differences thesis: political crisis in Honduras; American gesture towards Cuba; and initiation of a new American drug policy in the region.

I. OBAMA’S (IN)ACTION DURING HONDURAN MILITARY COUP

Jose Manuel Zelaya, democratically elected President of Honduras, was dethroned by the military in June 2009. This military coup was condemned by the United Nations, the European Union, and by every member of the Organisation of American States (OAS) excluding US. The OAS suspended Honduran membership on 5 July 2009. The state was re-admitted on 1 June 2011, however. According to the Latin American Perspective (2011a: 10-11), US condemnation of the coup would have triggered section 7008 of the US Foreign Operations Law requiring the termination of most US assistance to Honduras. Instead, US continued to have close relations with Honduran military including with the Honduran officers at the Western Hemispheric Institute for Security Co-operation. This is a direct violation of Article 2(b) of the Charter of the
OAS which states that one of its purposes is ‘to promote and consolidate representative democracy, with due respect for the principle of nonintervention’ (OAS, 2011a).

II. OBAMA’S CUBAN GESTURE

In relation to Cuba, Obama unveiled the Washington’s desire to seek a ‘new beginning’ with the country during the Fifth OAS Summit in April 2009 in Port of Spain (Trinidad and Tobago). 31 January 1962 suspension of Cuban OAS membership was lifted by the 39th OAS General Assembly on 3 June 2009. Noting the American concessions to Cuba, Latin American Perspectives described:

Restrictions on family travels, remittances, and telecommunications have been loosened, progress has been made in limited areas such as mail service, and in January 2011 the White House announced the easing of Bush-administration restrictions on educational and cultural exchanges with the island. Broadly hailed as a significant restoration of Clinton-era rules for academic, educational, and cultural engagement with Cuba, the new regulations also permit the sending of nonfamily remittances and opening of more airports for flights to Cuba.

*(Latin American Perspective, 2011b: 16)*

III. OBAMA ANNOUNCING CARIBBEAN BASIN SECURITY INITIATIVE

The recent concern with the end of partisanship difference is further fuelled by the Obama’s drug policy towards the entire Latin America and the Caribbean region. His announcement of the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI) in the Summit of 2009 is understood as the follow up of Bush’s ‘narco-terrorist’ strategy. The security strategy of CBSI is arguably focused on ‘citizen safety’ throughout the hemisphere. The Initiative has identified three core security objectives: reducing illicit trafficking; advancing public safety and security; and promoting social justice (US Department of State, 2011).

With the promise of delivering citizen safety, this Obama initiative securitises the market areas, means of transportation, and the street corners. Thus, while focussing on the ‘personal element’, the US Department of State (2011) wrote, ‘Our commitment to broad partnerships that advance citizen safety signals that the U.S.
understands that while security is a key priority throughout the region, people often understand security in a personal way on their street corners, on a bus to and from work, or in their markets’ (emphasis added). The CBSI sees even an act of ‘corruption’ with a security scanner.

Barack Obama’s gesture towards Cuba, at its face value, sends direct diplomatic impression that his government seeks a ‘new beginning’ in the Caribbean Basin. Probably, he should be trying to draw a line of diplomacy similar to that of Bill Clinton administration as both belong to the Democratic Party tradition. As a presidential candidate he had committed that he wanted to open a new chapter of cooperation and partnership to promote democracy, opportunity, and security across the hemisphere, and work for the common challenges like global warming, drug trafficking, and terrorism (Obama, 2008a). But this presidential new beginning is seemingly supported by George Bush Jr.’s Republican interlude (between Clinton and Obama regimes) particularly with post-9/11 ‘war on terror/ drugs’ than Obama’s initiatives themselves. In a radical response to 9/11, US waged a militaristic ‘war on terror’ worldwide. In return, it reaped loss in wealth and status. The cases of Afghanistan and Iraq are the post-9/11 ‘open veins’ of US. Though the world politics has entered the post-Cold War complexities with myriads of known and unknown issues, the post-9/11 pre-emptive actions of US to secure its ‘homeland’ are the symptoms of the Cold War mentality to preserve global hegemony. It is impressionistic, however, that Barack Obama (2008b: 5) expect America to lead the world to combat the common threats of the 21st Century – nuclear weapons and terrorism, climate change and poverty, and genocide and disease. Obama’s Cuban gesture is welcoming to many, but actually is little more than ritualistic. Moreover, Obama’s non-responsive policy towards Honduran military coup once again brings the dualistic policy standard into light that continues with current Washington leadership. Obama’s Honduran policy goes against his own commitment that he made during his presidential campaign that he will bolster US interests in the region by pursuing policies that advance democracy, opportunity, and security and will treat the hemispheric partners and neighbours with dignity and respect (Obama, 2008b: 77); further solidifying the similarities between the administrations of Bush Jr. and of Obama.
In fact, the Obama administration’s formal policy articulation of the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI) in 2009 and the Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI) in 2010 put it several steps ahead of Bush administration. Drug trade is undoubtedly causing enormous harms to the Circum-Caribbean society. Drug trade has to do more with the geographic location of the region (Seelke, 2011: 18); it is adversely impacting the economy as the immigrants are branded more as ‘narco-terrorists’ than potential contributors in the American and Circum-Caribbean society.

It is to remind that during his presidential campaign Obama had committed for comprehensive immigration reform that secures American border, fixes immigration bureaucracy, and puts the 12 million undocumented immigrants on a responsible path to citizenship (Obama, 2008b: 53). The political health of the region too is not aloof of the domino effect of drug trade. Given the context, the CBSI and CARSI policies of Obama administration earn popular credit for formulating a drug policy towards the Circum-Caribbean. US launched the Merida Initiative in 2008 as counter-narcotics policy in Mexico and central America of the Basin. It announced for Plan Colombia in 1998, a similar drug policy in the Andean region with particular focus at Colombia. A large part of Colombian coastal area borders the Caribbean Sea. CBSI and CARSI are merely appendices to ongoing strategic involvement of US in whole of the Circum-Caribbean region. Starting with the Plan Colombia of 1998, the launch of the CBSI and CARSI complete securitisation of the American ‘third border’; heightening the perception that the diplomatic policy differences between the Democratic Party and its Republican counterpart towards the Circum-Caribbean are substantially narrowing.

**US AND THICKENING OF CIRCUM-CARIBBEAN SECURITY-DEVELOPMENT NEXUS**

One can reserve a limited space to argue whether the diplomacy differences between the Democratic Party and the Republican Party have narrowed down or not; the smart power strategy can act as defense. However, it will hardly conceal the truth that the American policies combined together have contributed to increasing the problems of security and development and the nexus between the two in the Circum-Caribbean.
During last two decades, the American ‘security’ policies of various kinds towards the Caribbean Basin have primarily centred on two issues: drugs and terrorism (one can add immigration separately). First drugs after the Cold War, and then drugs and terrorism after 9/11 were taken up, and in both the cases regional ‘instability’ has informed American policy making. The problem of instability has a larger background of ‘vulnerabilities’. As discussed in the previous chapter, the small and micro states of the region face a number of security problems which are said to emanate from their size, location, and the consequent economic and political settings.

Drug trade is a major problem for the Circum-Caribbean countries; they are even struggling hard to curb it down. But these countries are not the source of origin of narcotic substances. They serve as transit points due to their mid-way location between north and south of the Americas. These small and micro entities are not even final destination of narcotic consumption. The substances are mainly produced in the Andean region of south America, and exported to United States, in particular. In the two-way narcotic transactions, the Circum-Caribbean small and micro states are the true victims.xi

In addition, the way US understands terrorism and practices counter-terrorism in the Circum-Caribbean are rarely helpful for these states. It rather heightens security consciousness and exacerbates security-development nexus. The post-9/11 US homeland security measures have further intensified the image of instability in the region. It is only the geographic proximity along with perceived vulnerabilities of the states that have prompted US to unilaterally export its ‘war on terror’ in the region. Hence, it can be argued that both the problems of drugs and of terrorism are alien to these Lilliputs; and the Circum-Caribbean initiatives undertaken by US date little with the region. The initiatives are American policies imbibed in non-Caribbean outlook.

As part of its homeland security measures, US has securitised the immigration process. The US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has created a multi-layered Border Security Initiative to manage the borders and ports-of-entry (DHS, 2012). It includes a comprehensive immigration enforcement system. Immigrant remittances constitute of a large chunk of income for the entire region. Securitisation of the Circum-Caribbean immigration has strengthened vulnerability thesis. Why does US securitise immigration? DHS is concerned for the illegal/ undocumented entrants,
the background is ‘terrorism’. All undocumented immigrants are perceived as potential threat to American homeland security. Therefore, detection of the threat starts in the ports and in similar other places which constitute American definition of ‘homeland’. In reality, American threat perception in the Circum-Caribbean is mired by the region being an area inhabited by ‘poor’ and young population. 9/11 has functioned as catalyst between poverty and security in the Circum-Caribbean and, therefore thickening of security-development interactions nexus.

CONCLUSION

Clinton’s attempt to ‘Caribbeanise’ US and Bush’s policy to curb a ‘third border’ in the Circum-Caribbean are not isolated events. Since the Spanish-Cuban-American War of 1898, there is a history of continuity of American perceptions and policies towards the region. Even the changes are more about policy adaptations and innovations than about changing Circum-Caribbean-US relations. The post-Cold War ‘pragmatism’ and post-9/11 ‘smart strategy’ are aimed at ‘securing’ the ‘hemispheric homeland’.

The issue of security has been in the forefront with US. Post-9/11 heightened security perception is the latest in the basket. Such epoch-making events are interpreted as giving US chances to renew and reassert its grand strategy of domination. One important point is often missed out in the Circum-Caribbean context. The issue of security in the forefront has been used by US to advance its economic interests in the region; the two are inextricably linked. The current economic crisis is further strengthening the linkages.

The Circum-Caribbean states are suffering huge loss of immigration remittances due to post-9/11 US homeland security measures. The ongoing economic crisis is beating them hard. Given the context, US ‘aid’ in the form of Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARS) and Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI) make the American agenda of securitisation readily ‘acceptable’ to these states with adverse consequence of thickening of security-development nexus in the region. The US security initiatives have closely linked the issues of drugs, immigration, and terrorism, giving the outward perception of a comprehensive
strategy for the Circum-Caribbean betterment. But such policies are far from reality. Drug is more a social problem for these states than that of US perception of security. US immigration measures are increasing economic hardships in the region. Again, the perception of ‘vulnerabilities’ in these small states informs US diplomacy of ‘narco-terrorism’ rather than any perceived act of terrorism in the region. Instead of providing any solution, recent US policies have contributed to securitisation of the Circum-Caribbean development issues.
The thesis of ‘third border’ is not an original articulation of the Bush administration. The phrase has been used in earlier literature as well. Anthony Maingot, for example, used the phrase in 1985 in an article. He wrote, ‘... United States policy towards the Caribbean was, and is, premised on the belief that the rapidity of changes in the region makes it a critical ‘third border’ of the United States’ (Maingot, 1985: 314).

Rabe did not rule out ‘legitimate security concerns’, however. Referring to David Haglund’s 1984 book Latin America and the Transformation of U.S. Strategic Thought, Rabe took cognisance of Franklin Roosevelt’s concern of Germany’s hemispheric invasion plan, though, according to him (Rabe) no such evidence was found from German sources. Nevertheless, Rabe argued that Leslie Rout and John Bratzel’s 1986 work The Shadow War: German Espionage and the United States Counterespionage in Latin America During World War II conclusively demonstrates that German clandestine intelligence operations in Latin America were widespread, albeit ineffective.

In a recent work The Danger of Dreams: German and American Imperialism in Latin America, Nancy Mitchell (1999) argued that the US leaders early in the 20th Century consistently overrated the German threat in the Western hemisphere. Mitchell even renders the US apprehensions as mirage with no basis (Gilderhus, 2000: 1350-51)

One can question the way these guerrillas functioned in their respective countries for regime change, however.

This new face of American policy is so subtle that recognition of the same can even contradict with some of the observations made herein.

It is to be noted that several of the Wise’s ideas have found place in homeland security management of the US federal government that he expressed in his special report published in Public Administration Review in March/ April 2002.

The OAS General Assembly on its “Resolution on Cuba” [AG/RES. 2438 (XXXIX-O/09)] resolved:

1. That Resolution VI, adopted on January 31, 1962, at the Eighth Meeting of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, which excluded the Government of Cuba from its participation in the Inter-American system, hereby ceases to have effect in the Organisation of American States (OAS).

2. That the participation of the Republic of Cuba in the OAS will be the result of a process of dialogue initiated at the request of the Government of Cuba, and in accordance with the practices, purposes, and principles of the OAS. (OAS, 2011c)

The Central American Regional Security Initiative (CBSI), 2010 is another leg of the grand strategy towards the region.

1. Reduce Illicit Trafficking: through programs ranging from counternarcotics to reducing the flow of illegal arms/light weapons.

2. Advance Public Safety and Security: through programs ranging from reducing crime and violence to improving border security.

3. Promote Social Justice: through programs designed to promote justice sector reform, combat government corruption, and assist vulnerable populations at risk of recruitment into criminal organisations. (US Department of State, 2011).

Security has much deeper roots in the Circum-Caribbean. Let us have an example of drugs from Trinidad. John Clarke, Superintendent of Policy of Trinidad and Tobago, said that the police administration knows who and where the drug traffickers are; still they are at large. Just catching them and bringing to justice will not work, he continued. There are structural problems, Clarke concluded, from top to bottom. (He was interviewed on 3 July 2012 in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago).

In an interview, Comptroller of Customs and Excise Department of Trinidad and Tobago revealed that i) drugs and small arms are two main security problems that region is facing today; ii) regional commercial traffic carriers are used for drug trafficking between north and south America; and iii)
there is no evidence of ‘narco-terrorism’ (in Trinidadian context). (He was interviewed on 10 July 2012 in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago).

Now some amount of drugs are being left in the local market in these countries for local consumption. The quantity is insignificant. At the same time the impact of local consumption is not to be underestimated. Drug-addicts are increasing in the Circum-Caribbean society. Moreover, small arms accompany narcotics. These arms are used by the local traffickers to sustain turf-war. Violence is in rise and perpetuating fear in the entire society.

The context of small arms is often missed out while understanding the drug menace and related violence. Gene Bolton (2012) for example, recently tried to dissect the causes of drug violence and whether ‘drug legalisation’ in the western hemisphere is the key solution to the problems; he forgot to take note of small arms.