INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS OF THE CARIBBEAN

Conceptualizing the Caribbean

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Main objectives

1. To examine different perspectives used to define “The Caribbean”

2. To establish a pertinent framework to define the Caribbean for International Relations experts in the context of globalization

Question for debate

What is the Caribbean?

?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n0UtUmzxI0I

Speakers: Neville Duncan, Ken Post, Angel Quintero-Rivera, Eric Wolf

Defining the Caribbean

IDENTITY

The Caribbean identity easily seen by:

- **Geographic proximity** and sharing of a common water resource (**Caribbean Sea**)
- Perceived cultural and anthropological affinities such as food, music… (local music is identified with the beat of Afroantillean drums and beats, **but there are different rhythms**)
- Christian religions incorporate animistic and polytheistic traits from the African Diaspora and indigenous populations, **but Santería is not equivalent to Voodoo**
- Food is prepared from similar ingredients, **but all are articulated in different ways** across countries and across language-defined regions

What is the Caribbean?

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Defining the Caribbean:
Geographic proximity

- Antilles: from the mythical *Antilia*, the island of the seven cities linked to the myth or legend of Atlantis
- West Indies: Columbus mistaken
- **Caribbean** Sea
- Wider /Greater **Caribbean**
- **Caribbean** Basin

Caribbean, to originate with the Caribs, the indigenous population that most fiercely resisted European colonization

Geopolitics (from Colonial World to post WWII)

Defining the Caribbean:

Colonial history and plantation territories

1. It was colonized by European nations
2. Importation of working force: Europe, Africa and Asia
3. Extermination of native population

The Caribbean is a case for which *mestizaje* is not an accident but rather the essence, the central line.

The Americas: a culture of descendants

Let us bear in mind that our people is neither European nor North American, but a composite of Africa and America rather than an emanation of Europe; for even Spain fails as a European people because of her African blood, her institutions, and her character. It is impossible to assign us with any exactitude to a specific human family. The greater part of the native peoples has been annihilated; the European has mingled with the American and with the African, and the African has mingled with the Indian and with the European. Born from the womb of a common mother, our fathers, different in origin and blood, are foreigners; all differ visibly in the epidermis, and this dissimilarity leaves marks of the greatest transcendence.

Simón Bolívar, *Message to the Congress of Angostura* (1819)

Social Structure

- Rigid
- Stratified
- Organized by the racialization of the social relations
- Signed by slavery
- Abolition in the Caribbean

1. Haiti (1804)
2. English colonies (1833)
3. Dominican Republic (1844)
4. French colonies (1848)
5. Dutch colonies (1863)
6. Puerto Rico (1873)
7. Cuba (1886)

Defining a Caribbean Identity

Shared History

- ✓ Ethnography
- ✓ Demography
- ✓ Plantation economy
- ✓ Slavery experience

Caribbean, from the *Caribes*

Indigenous population exterminated; new blend with Europeans, Africans and Asian components; specific socioeconomic organization

Own Cultural Expressions

Defining the Caribbean:
Denominations (Andrés Serbín)

- ✓English
- ✓French
- ✓Spanish
- ✓Dutch

Plus intraregional differences stemming from the local languages, pidgins, Creole and Papiamento

Linguistic-Colonial Heritage

Defing the Caribbean:
Denominations (Charles Wagley)

Euro-America

Indo-America

America of Plantation (Central Afro-America)

Cultural-Historical

Beyond differences, there are

main common experiences

Plantation colonies **Insular/Smaller condition**

Which are the limits?

?

Different perspectives

- Eric Williams: *From Columbus to Castro: History of the Caribbean, 1492-1970*

- Juan Bosch, *De Cristóbal Colón a Fidel Castro: El Caribe, frontera imperial*

Gulf of Mexico
Atlantic Ocean
UNITED STATES
Miami
THE BAHAMAS
ANDROS ISLAND
Havana
CUBA
Yucatan Channel
Cancún
MEXICO
WEST INDIES
GREATER ANTILLES
CAYMAN ISLANDS
Guantánamo
Santiago de Cuba
Windward Passage
Gonaives
Port-au-Prince
HAITI
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
Santo Domingo
San Pedro de Macoris
Mona Passage
Ponce
Mayagüez
Montego Bay
JAMAICA
Kingston
Belize City
Belmopan
BELIZE
GUATEMALA
Guatemala
HONDURAS
Tegucigalpa
San Salvador
EL SALVADOR
NICARAGUA
Managua
Bluefields
COSTA RICA
San José
Limón
Panama Canal
Colón
Panama
PANAMA
Gulf of Panama
Caribbean Sea
Pacific Ocean
Cartagena
COLOMBIA
Bogotá
VENEZUELA
Choroní
Caracas
NETHERLANDS ANTILLES
ARUBA
CURAÇAO
BONAIRE
Willemstad
LESSER ANTILLES
LEEWARD ISLANDS
ANGUILLA
ST. MAARTEN/ST. MARTIN
ST. EUSTATIUS
SABA
BARBUDA
ST. KITTS
ANTIGUA
NEVIS
St. John's
MONTSERRAT
GUADELOUPE
Basse-Terre
DOMINICA
Roseau
Fort-de-France
MARTINIQUE
Castries
ST. LUCIA
BARBADOS
ST. VINCENT & THE GRENADINES
Bridgetown
Kingstown
GRENADA
St. George's
Port-of-Spain
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
WINDWARD ISLANDS
Georgetown
GUYANA
SURINAME
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Gulf of Mexico
Atlantic Ocean
Caribbean Sea
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UNITED STATES
Miami
Straits of Florida
THE BAHAMAS
Nassau
ANDROS ISLAND
Havana
Yucatan Channel
CUBA
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Guantánamo
Windward Passage
GREATER ANTILLES
CAYMAN ISLANDS
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Gonaïves
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DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
Santo Domingo
Mona Passage
Ponce
San Juan
VIRGIN ISLANDS
LEEWARD ISLANDS
ANGUILLA
ST. MAARTEN/ST. MARTIN
ST. EUSTATIUS
BARBUDA
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Barlovento
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GUYANA
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Question for debate

An insular or continental Caribbean?

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Differences between island and continental territories

- Many of the continental countries that border the rim of the Caribbean Basin define their **identities not as Caribbean** but as Andean (Venezuela and Colombia), Central American (Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua) or North American (Mexico). **Latin-American countries.**
- For these countries the **Caribbean is but a sub region**, often marginalized.
- **Territorial disputes** such as Venezuela's claims over the Essequibo region of Guyana, and Guatemala's claims on Belize (Latin American countries and CARICOM, English speaking countries)

Guatemala’s claims on Belize

http://www.banrepcultural.org/blaavirtual/ayudadetareas/materias/geografia/cartograf%C3%ADa/conflictos-territoriales-actuales

Venezuela's claims over the Essequibo region

http://www.banrepcultural.org/blaavirtual/ayudadetareas/materias/geografia/cartograf%C3%ADa/conflictos-territoriales-actuales

Defining a Caribbean Identity

Economic exchange

The creation of **Regional Economic Communities**

After WWII development and reconstruction economics advocated the creation of regional economic communities as a means of taking advantages of **economies of scales and complementarities** to further economic reconstruction and development (Pantojas, 2008).

- At the economic level, the Caribbean continues divided by economic competition and political rivalries (**no economies of scales nor complementarities)**
- **Economically**, the Caribbean includes oil producing countries (Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela); industrialized economies (Jamaica, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic); international service centers focused around tourism and offshore banking (The Bahamas, Cayman Islands).
- **Similarity of the Caribbean Basin economies**: tourism, agriculture and assembly manufacturing for export (*maquiladoras*) are axes of the region's economies

Regional integration schemes

- 1968: Caribbean Free Trade Association
- 1973: Caribbean Economic Community (CARICOM)
- 1994: Association of Caribbean States (ACS)

http://mundinews.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Caricom44.jpg

In the Caribbean

Culture, geography and history produce a clearly identifiable regional complex

But at the political and economic levels heterogeneity prevails over synthesis

- **Politically** the Caribbean is made up of independent countries, non independent territories and regions or provinces of independent countries.
- Some countries are republics (Santo Domingo), other are Westminster style democracies, while other are socialist states (Cuba).

There are still ethnic and xenophobic prejudices

- Dominicans refer to Haitians as “blacks” (*negros*), while the lighter-skin black Dominicans are referred to as Indians.
- Puerto Ricans refer to migrants or visitors from the Eastern Caribbean as “those people from the islands” (*los de las islas*).
- History of mistrust among “West Indians” and “East Indians” (people of Indian descent) within the English speaking Caribbean.

The Caribbean was defined (in the 20st century) by:

New Geopolitical circumstances

- The irruption of **USA** in the area as an imperial power in 1898 -Cuba and Puerto Rico- (Antonio Gaztambide-Geigel)

Intellectual construction

- Its **many dimensions**: language, culture, racial mix, migration, geography, colonialism, plantation economy (plural, multiethnic, hybrids societies)
- **Cultural affinities** at the popular level have advanced by increased interisland migration, regional tourism and TICS.

Defining the Caribbean, nowadays, is usually linked to a very specific goal

Pushing forward
REGIONAL INTEGRATION

*Forging a **shared Caribbean identity** is, or may be, a necessary precondition to articulate a political project of regional integration* (Pantojas, 2008).

Newer approaches towards <u>regional integration</u> through <u>regional identity</u>

- **Institutional**
- **Social/Individual subjectivity**
- **Cultural production**

Regional sciences focused on geography and economic, demographic, political and institutional linkages and interactions in defining the makeup of a region (Pantojas, 2008).

Variables are rethought and mixed

GEOGRAPHY + POLITICS

ENVIRONMENTAL EXPOSURES + SIZE

CULTURE + ECONOMY

Understanding the Caribbean: Institutions

Nombre	*Cobertura*	*Principios*	*Organismos*
Cuenca del Caribe (Estados Unidos)	Continente e islas	Geopolítico/ hegemónico	ICC
Gran Caribe 1 (*Greater Caribbean*)	Continente e islas	Geoeconómico/ cooperación	AEC
Gran Caribe 2 (*Greater Caribbean*)	Continente e islas	Geosocial/ antihegemónico, nacionalista	CRIES, Foro Civil
Plantación caribeña o Afroamérica Central	Islas, las tres Guyanas y «el Caribe»/ comunidades negras en tierra continental	Etnohistórico/ antihegemónico	AECA
Insular o Islas caribeñas	Islas, las tres Guyanas y Belice	Etnohistórico	CCDC, AEC, CCD
Caribe de CARICOM	Estados anglófonos, Surinam, Montserrat	Cooperación económica, fuertes lazos culturales y lingüísticos	CARICOM
Caribe de GPACP	CARICOM, República Dominicana, Haití	Neocolonial/ negociación, en transición	CARIFORUM

Norman Girvan, "Reinterpretar al Caribe", *Revista Mexicana del Caribe*, Nº 7, 2000

SIGLAS:

AE	Asociación de Economistas del Caribe.
GPACP	Grupo de países africanos, caribeños y del pacífico signatarios de la Convención de Lomé con la Unión Europea (UE).
CARICOM	Comunidad del Caribe. Sus miembros son 13 Estados anglófonos, Surinam y Montserrat, un territorio dependiente de Inglaterra. Haití ha sido admitido en principio, pero el trámite aún no ha concluido.
CARIFORUM	Miembros caribeños del GPACP. Los miembros son el CARICOM, la República Dominicana y Haití.
AEC	Asociación de Estados del Caribe. Todos los miembros son Estados de El Gran Caribe, más tres territorios franceses ultramarinos (no ratificados como miembros asociados).
ICC	Iniciativa de la Cuenca del Caribe
CCDC	Comité Caribeño de Desarrollo y Cooperación de la CEPAL (Comisión Económica para América y el Caribe). Todos los Estados miembros pertenecen al Caribe insular únicamente más los territorios ultramarinos de Holanda y Estados Unidos, así como tres territorios dependientes de Inglaterra
Foro Civil	Foro de la Sociedad Civil de El Gran Caribe.
CCD	Centro Caribeño de Desarrollo, un conglomerado de organizaciones no gubernamentales del Caribe insular.
CRIES	Coordinación Regional de Investigación Económica y Social, una red de centros de investigación ligados a organizaciones no gubernamentales.
AECA	Asociación de Estudios del Caribe

New regional organizations

- **PETROCARIBE**
- **CELAC**
- **ALBA – TCP**

Latin American presence

- **SIDS (Group of 77)**

Developing Countries/ Third World Presence

Intuition?
Emotions?

- *The Caribbean is an emotional federation* (Derek Walcott)

- *Caribe: es el único mundo en que no me siento extranjero y donde pienso mejor* (Gabriel García Márquez)

Defining the Caribbean

DIVERSITY

Multiple Identities

Its **DIVERSITY (fragmentation / balkanization /insular condition/ diaspora)**

The “analogous differences”

- **There is not an identifiable single homogeneous Caribbean identity**. Rather, there are shared regional customs, practices and beliefs characterized by “analogous differences”.
- The concepts of Caribbean and “caribeñidad” (Caribbeanness) are **problematic** (Antonio Benítez Rojo).
- Within distinct and conscious national and or sub regional identities, there is a **shared experience** that can be said to be the basis of a Caribbean identity.

Is there a Caribbean?

Frank Moya Pons establishes that the Caribbean only exists for three kind of people:

1. **Sales managers**
2. **Politicians**
3. **Academicians**

Frank Moya Pons. *Historia del Caribe: azúcar y plantaciones en el mundo atlántico*. Santo Domingo, Editora Búho, 2008

Looking for a definition will allow to have an analytical unit: politics, scholars, economists, citizens, common people…

How to do it?

Its destiny

Past: Boundaries of empires (*history*)

"El Caribe está entre los lugares de la tierra que han sido destinados por su posición geográfica y su naturaleza privilegiada para ser fronteras de dos o más imperios. Este destino lo ha hecho objeto de la codicia de los poderes más grandes de occidente y teatro de la violencia desatada entre ellos".

"The Caribbean is among the places on earth that have been intended by its geographical position and its privileged nature to be boundaries of two or more empires. This destination has made it subject to the greed of the greatest powers of the West and theatre of the violence between them."

Juan Bosch. *De Cristóbal Colón a Fidel Castro. El Caribe frontera imperial*. Casa de las Américas, La Habana, 1981.

Its destiny

Future: A community of diverse peoples (*political will*)

"(1) Reiteramos que la unidad y la integración de nuestra región debe construirse gradualmente, con flexibilidad, con respeto al pluralismo, a la diversidad y al derecho soberano de cada uno de nuestros pueblos para escoger su forma de organización política y económica.
(4) Subrayamos nuestro propósito de continuar avanzando unidos en la concertación y la integración latinoamericana y caribeña, y la consolidación de nuestra Comunidad, conforme los ideales y sueños de nuestros libertadores y próceres."

"(1) Reiterate that the unity and integration of our region must be built gradually, with flexibility, with respect for pluralism and the sovereign right of each of our peoples to choose their own political and economic system.
(4) Stress our purpose to continue working together for Latin American and Caribbean integration and coordination as well as for the consolidation of our Community in keeping with the ideals and dreams of our liberators and founding fathers."

Declaración II CUMBRE DE LA CELAC, 28 y 29 de enero de 2014, La Habana.
http://celac.cubaminrex.cu/sites/default/files/ficheros/havana_declaration_celac.pdf

Drugs traffic

Climate change

Solving the common problems

Open economies

Migration

The “certain kind of way” (Antonio Benítez Rojo)

“Fue una hermosísima tarde de octubre, hace años (…) parecía inminente (…) la catástrofe nuclear (…) dos negras viejas pasaron ‘de cierta manera’. Sólo diré que había un polvillo dorado y antiguo entre sus piernas nudosas, un olor a albahaca y hierbabuena en sus vestidos, una sabiduría simbólica, un ritual en sus gestos y en su chachareo. Entonces supe de golpe que no ocurriría el apocalipsis.”

“It was a stunning October afternoon, years ago (…) nuclear catastrophe seemed imminent (…) two old women passed ‘in a certain kind of way’; I will say only that there was a kind of ancient and golden powder between their gnarled legs, a scent of basil and mint in their dress, a symbolic, ritual wisdom in their gesture and their gay chatter. I knew then at once that there would be no apocalypse.”

Antonio Benítez Rojo. *The Repeating Island*. Duke University Press, 1996 (2006)

Question for debate

How to conceptualize the Caribbean from an International Relations' perspective?

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Concluding…

- The Caribbean understanding, its definition, is a ground of **permanent construction and confrontation**.
- **Definitions will depend on** backgrounds, purposes, theoretical frameworks (History, Geography, Politics, Geopolitics, Anthropology, Cultural Studies)
- Its conceptualization will respond to the **efforts of understanding internal process as well as the external influences and its impacts** on the region.
- In the **economic and political** sense, the Caribbean does not constitute an integrated complex.
- Nowadays definitions need to consider the **integration** schemes and **international organizations**' visions, as well as the growing importance of Caribbean **diaspora**.

Core readings

- Eric Williams: *From Columbus to Castro: History of the Caribbean, 1492-1970*

- Juan Bosch, *De Cristóbal Colón a Fidel Castro: El Caribe, frontera imperial*

Globalization and its impacts in the Caribbean

After WWII and before neoliberal globalization

After WWII and before neoliberal globalization

Question for debate

What major changes can be recognized in the Caribbean as a result of the current phase of globalization?

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