

The Commonwealth Caribbean and Europe: the End of the Affair?

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Introduction

The relationship between the Caribbean and Europe is undergoing real change. It is not just the independent countries of the Commonwealth Caribbean that are being affected, but also the Overseas Territories associated with the United Kingdom (UK). However, the trajectories of the respective relationships are diverging. For some time now global pressures, new priorities and approaches in European Union (EU) development policy, and unfulfilled expectations in the Commonwealth Caribbean have all contributed to the weakening of that relationship to a point where it is now under serious threat. The article analyses the key events that have led to this situation. In particular, it considers the ending of trade protocols; the erosion of African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) preference as a result of a series of free trade agreements negotiated by the EU; the re-focusing of EU development policy towards the least developed countries; and the effective split in the ACP group through the establishment of a controversial regional Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). In way of comparison the article also looks at relations between the EU and the UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs), which have actually been strengthened by the recently agreed Association of the Overseas Countries and Territories. But first the article considers the relationship between the Commonwealth Caribbean and the EU.

Where it all began: the Lomé Conventions

When the UK joined the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973, a key issue was what kind of relationship the Commonwealth Caribbean (from now on referred to as the Caribbean) should have with the Community. Prior to the UK's accession, the Yaoundé Convention had been agreed between the EEC and the associated states of the existing six member states, which extended Part IV of the Treaty of Rome in response to the new political and legal situation in the newly independent states. Having been signed in 1963, and renewed in 1969, the Convention was due to expire in January 1975 and so there was a good opportunity to establish a new agreement which would also incorporate the Caribbean.

The preliminary conference at which the enlarged EEC had its first discussions with the independent Caribbean countries, as well as the African Yaoundé signatories took place in Brussels in July 1973. The Caribbean countries, in order to benefit from the expertise of their African colleagues in dealing with the EEC, initiated regular contacts and consultations with the region. This led in time to the creation of the African, Caribbean and Pacific grouping (the ACP), which the participants hoped would maximize the strength of their negotiating position. Indeed, the ACP felt that a fundamentally new 'association' with the EEC could be negotiated. The Caribbean wanted a form of relationship that was *sui generis* (Gonzales, 1997, p. 72). The region called for non-reciprocity, protection of traditional arrangements, and no difference in treatment between independent Caribbean countries and the self-governing territories of EEC member states in the region. In many respects, the First Lomé Convention met the objectives that the Caribbean had set itself. The aim of the Convention was 'to establish a new model for relations between developed and developing states compatible with the

aspirations of the international community towards a more just and more balanced economic order' (*The Courier*, 1975, p. 3).

Lomé I was agreed in 1975, while Lomé IV was signed in 1990 and remained in force until 2000. There were three central pillars of the Lomé Conventions—trade provisions (preferences and protocols), financial aid, and political dialogue. As Flint argues, '[...] Lomé I appeared to offer ACP countries a number of favourable concessions. The demands for reciprocity and Free Trade Zones inherent in Yaoundé were dispensed with in favour of non-reciprocal tariff preferences for ACP countries' (2008, p. 14). Flint also calls Lomé I the 'high water mark' for ACP relations with the EU, allowing for 'a true sense of partnership' and autonomy for ACP countries over their economic policies (2008, p. 15). Similarly Holland and Doidge suggest '[...] that the goals of the Convention were innovative and established a First – Third World relationship that was progressive and unparalleled for its time' (2012, p. 55). And despite the fact that later the EU demanded new conditions to the relationship, including on issues such as human rights, good governance and the rule of law, Lomé represented 'a singularly good deal for ACP states' (Hadfield, 2007, p. 42). Nevertheless, by the early 1990s, a number of factors combined to undermine the basis of the Lomé regime, such as doubts over its effectiveness both in terms of encouraging growth in the ACP and improving trade performance. Also, changes to the political economy of global trade, particularly the growing influence of organisations like the newly created World Trade Organisation (WTO) '[...] drew attention to Lomé's inconsistencies with the broad principles of trade liberalisation', meaning '[...] the need for fundamental reform of the EU's relations with the ACP was becoming increasingly evident' (Holland and Doidge, 2012, p. 65).

The end of the trade protocols

A key development that reflected the changing approach to trade policy came in relation to the pressure on Lomé's trade protocols. The eventual scrapping of these provisions removed a central plank of the Caribbean-EU relationship. The first protocol to come under attack was the one for bananas that helped to maintain EU market access for relatively expensive Caribbean producers. Cases brought by the United States (US) and several Latin American countries at the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and then at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in the early and mid-1990s ripped the heart out of the protocol and the import regime. The GATT and the WTO ruled against not only certain aspects of the EU's banana regime but also questioned the legality of the preferential arrangements within the Lomé Convention. Fundamentally, they argued that the discriminatory tariffication of banana imports was against the most favoured nation (MFN) commitment, by which tariff concessions must be extended to all other members on an equal basis, and thus the Lomé Convention itself, with its preferential treatment of ACP goods was also unlawful. The EU dismantled its banana regime and the banana protocol followed. The consequence has been a large reduction in the volume of Caribbean bananas entering the EU market and an ever-reducing tariff preference which is the remaining legacy of the original banana regime.

With strong attacks on the banana protocol and the provisions of Lomé more generally, the other protocols were also fatally undermined. The sugar protocol went further than the one for bananas and guaranteed duty-free access to the EU market at a fixed preferential price for an agreed quota of sugar. However, in September 2002, Australia and Brazil complained to the WTO about the export subsidies provided by Brussels in its sugar regime (Thailand requested consultations with the EU on the same matter in

March 2003). In October 2004, the WTO ruled that EU subsidies, which benefited sugar producers in the Caribbean and elsewhere, broke global trade rules. In response, the EU agreed to revise its regime in late 2005, which included a measure to phase in a 36 per cent cut in the EU's guaranteed sugar price. Then, in September 2007, the EU announced that its sugar protocol would end entirely in 2009, which it did. In its place, Caribbean sugar exports were given duty-free access, but no guaranteed price. More changes are planned for 2017, which will end EU production quotas and fully liberalise the market. The impact of these changes is already being felt with recent sharp falls in the price of sugar in the EU (*The Daily Herald*, 2015). One outcome of falling prices and higher EU production may well be the end of most Caribbean sugar exports to the EU, with perhaps only Belize retaining an interest. In regard to the rum protocol, it gave bulk rum exporters from the Caribbean duty-free access under quota to the EU market. However, a deal between the EU and the US in the margins of the WTO Singapore Ministerial Meeting in March 1997 liberalised MFN duties and quotas on some categories of bottled and bulk rum entering their respective markets. As Dunlop argued, '[t]his was negotiated without consulting ACP exporters of rum, whose competitive position has been eroded as a result' (1999, p. 15). This in turn caused Caribbean producers to experience a large reduction in exports to the EU (Cantore et al., 2012).

The margin of preference slips further

The preference levels for the Caribbean's key commodities have been further eroded in recent years by a growing number of free trade agreements (FTAs) signed by the EU. Woolcock (2007) argues that FTAs have been pushed because of difficulties in multilateral trade negotiations, in response to US trade policy, and due to a change of

approach in the European Commission's Directorate General (DG) Trade. So the EU has signed FTAs with Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, South Africa, and the Central American Common Market (ratification pending). Further, the EU is negotiating FTAs with MERCOSUR (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay) and India.

Several studies have been undertaken to assess the impact of the FTAs on Caribbean exports. Anania (2010) looked at the implications for bananas of the FTAs between the EU and Andean and Central American countries. Anania observed that 'the EU has agreed to progressively reduce its import tariff on bananas originating in these countries to 75 €/t' (2010, p. 1). This is below the 176 €/t at the time of the 2009 deal to end the WTO dispute, and the 114 €/t amount planned for 2019. As Aiyaz Sayed, Fiji's Minister of Industry and Trade said, '[i]t is worth noting that these new concessions jeopardise the balance sought in the Geneva Agreement on Trade in Bananas, and completely nullifies some of the benefits that ACP countries could have gained from the EPAs' (ACP Press, 2012). In relation to rum, Cantore et al. (2012) suggested that '[...] a number of planned or concluded FTAs between the EU and third countries threaten to erode [existing] preferences' (p. vii). The authors contended that if the EU agrees FTAs with Central America, Peru, Colombia and MERCOSUR, Caribbean rum exports would decline at the very least by three per cent, equivalent to €¾ million each year. Individual countries, such as Guyana, would be affected particularly badly. The worst case scenario would be if Central America, Peru and Colombia were allocated quotas and MERCOSUR duty-free access: losses for the Caribbean could then amount to 16.5 per cent of exports, equivalent to about €4 million (Cantore et al., 2012). Meanwhile, for sugar, the FTAs are allowing greater competition from lower cost sugar producers and this will exacerbate the Caribbean's already tenuous position in the EU market.

A final issue related to declining preference margins was the ‘fateful decision’ (Heron, 2014, p. 16) to implement the Everything But Arms (EBA) initiative in 2001. This covers the world’s poorest countries (mostly located in Africa; with only one—Haiti—in the Caribbean) and gives duty-free access to the EU for all goods except arms and ammunition. This was an important development as it ‘[...] breached the long-established policy of offering the ACP preferential advantages over all other developing countries’ (Holland and Doidge, 2012, p. 88). Concessions were made to the ACP so that duty-free access for sugar, bananas and rice would be phased in; but by 2009, free access in these sectors was established. Thus the Caribbean ACP saw another downgrading of its preferential position.

Broader changes in EU development policy

Related issues that have underpinned the changes noted above are the re-positioning and re-focusing of development policy within the EU. The process began in the late 1990s when plans were put in place to restructure the European Commission, which included the downgrading of the Directorate-General for Development and Relations with ACP States (DG DEV). The DG, which had played a central role in supporting ACP interests, lost its responsibility for ACP trade policy. The Trade Commissioner took over that undertaking, and as a result the important link between trade and development was broken. Then in 2010, the European External Action Service (EEAS) was established and assumed DG DEV’s task for bilateral relations with the ACP countries. Within the EEAS, a Managing Directorate for sub-Saharan Africa was established, but the Caribbean was included only as a unit in the Managing Directorate for Latin America.

With these changes, aid was to become a much more explicit tool of EU foreign policy. The first indication of this came in a 2003 strategy paper by Javier Solana, the EU's High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy. The paper, 'A Secure Europe in a Better World', suggested that external assistance should support the EU's security agenda (Solana, 2003). For the Caribbean with little strategic significance, the paper's conclusions were a concern. More recent changes have aligned EU development policy with the Millennium Development Goals, which though important for African ACP countries are less significant for the Caribbean. The European Consensus on Development and the 'Global Europe' strategy (both from 2006), the 2009 Lisbon Treaty, and the 2012 'Agenda for Change' placed greater focus on the eradication of poverty. Although an attempt was made in 2012 to re-emphasise the Caribbean-EU link via the Joint Caribbean-EU Partnership Strategy (Council of the European Union, 2012), this has done little to stem the tide away from the Caribbean. One consequence is a clear focus on differentiation, in other words '[...] graduating higher middle income countries from bilateral official development assistance [...]' (Pape, 2013, p. 732). This was implemented from 2014 via the 11th European Development Fund (EDF). As Jessop (2013) argues the '[...] policy is intended to place the future development emphasis on the world's poorest nations; move most development assistance for the Caribbean, other than Haiti, from national to regional support; and place its focus on issues such as the private sector, the environment, security and other cross cutting themes'.

Another reform which has undermined the EU's formerly close relations with the Caribbean is the enlargement of the EU. At the time of the signing of the first Lomé Convention, the EEC had nine member states. Today, the EU has 28 members—a large

number of which are in Central and Eastern Europe and have little or no interest in the Caribbean. Also, the newer members have relatively high levels of poverty with wage levels and living standards far below the levels present in the states that were EU members prior to the 2004 enlargement. This means they are more conditioned to receive aid than to give it. As a result, there is little sympathy for, or understanding of, the challenges facing the Caribbean. This lack of interest is felt in all aspects of EU activity. There is now a majority of member states that have no historical ties to the ACP countries whatsoever, meaning that the balance within the EU has now shifted away from the ACP towards other geo-strategic interests. Also, even those members, such as the UK, with long-standing ties with the Caribbean are focusing their attention and resources elsewhere. As far back as 2004 Jessop argued: '[t]he Europe that the Caribbean has grown up with will cease. In its place will be a Union with a radically different relationship to the Caribbean and other relatively marginal regions of the world''. This scenario has unfortunately come to pass.

The Cotonou Agreement: the last hurrah?

The previous sections have highlighted how over time the relationship between the Caribbean and the EU has diminished. It was within this environment that a new agreement was needed to replace the fourth Lomé Convention, which had clearly run its course. Although the Cotonou Agreement incorporated commitments relating to political cooperation, trade and aid, many of the more progressive elements of Lomé were lost. Perhaps the most important pledge was that the 'ACP and the EU have agreed to conclude WTO-compatible trade agreements that will progressively remove barriers to trade between them and enhance cooperation in all areas relevant to trade' (European

Commission, 2002, p. 6). The European Commission claimed that the planned Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) were ‘the way to help create a modern, twenty-first-century business environment, attract foreign direct investment, to grow markets and trade in order to reduce poverty’ (CARICOM Secretariat, 2007). Negotiations for the EPA began in 2002 and it was signed in October 2008 between the EU and fourteen CARICOM members plus the much larger and economically stronger Dominican Republic (known as CARIFORUM). Crucially this was an agreement between the Caribbean and EU only, and not the wider ACP grouping. It has been suggested that this ‘shattered’ long-standing ACP solidarity (Sanders, 2012a). This certainly weakened the Caribbean’s negotiating position, although the importance of the ACP Group should not be over-stated as its role had been in decline for some time (see Negre et al., 2013).

The first priority of the negotiations between the Caribbean and EU, as indicated above, was to create an EPA that conformed to WTO rules, particularly to Articles XXIV of the GATT and V of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) that demand reciprocity and the liberalisation of ‘substantially all’ tariffs over a ‘reasonable period of time’. However, both the EU and the Caribbean agreed to a degree of asymmetry in the application of the EPA. The EU committed to provide duty free/quota free (DFQF) market access to the EU for all CARIFORUM goods. Also, the DFQF market access under the EPA was now protected under WTO rules governing free trade areas, and this provided a degree of security for several traditional exports—although as we have seen the level of preference has since been undermined. For services, the EU agreed to liberalise 94 per cent of its sector. The Caribbean for its part agreed that 87 per cent of all goods from the EU would be liberalised by 2033, but that many revenue-sensitive

products would not be liberalised. The transition period was agreed to give CARIFORUM time to find other revenue sources and for the region's industries to adjust to increased competition. For services CARIFORUM agreed to open up 65-75 per cent of its sector.

When the EPA was being negotiated and afterwards, there were considerable disagreements over its likely impact on the Caribbean. Those involved in the talks argued that the agreement would open up significant new export opportunities in goods and services for the Caribbean, improve competitiveness, and build regional markets. However, many academics and NGOs were critical. One critic suggested that the EU 'had "worked" a monumental deception on the region through a mixture of blatant bullyism, bribery, cajolery, deception, intellectual dishonesty and plain bluff' (Thomas, cited in Girvan, 2010, p. 92). For Girvan (2008; 2010), the EPA was in line with the EU's liberal global trade policy and would damage Caribbean interests. He claimed *inter alia* that local companies would lose out to European companies in regional markets; governments would be unable to encourage the development of new national firms and cross-border production integration by regionally owned firms due to rules requiring equality of treatment with European companies; prospects in the EU services sector would be less than expected because of stringent eligibility criteria; Caribbean exports to the EU would still be limited by many non-tariff barriers; and FTAs negotiated by the EU would undermine the region's DFQF access.

Almost six years after the EPA was signed, some of the views of Girvan and other critics have perhaps been more prescient, but inaction and indifference have largely prevailed. Overall, implementation is progressing slowly. Only seven CARIFORUM states have ratified the EPA, and many have not yet implemented the necessary tariff

reductions. The creation of EPA Implementation Units in each Caribbean country took longer than expected. All countries now have such a unit, but several are embedded within other government bodies and do not have sufficient money or staff to work effectively. Similarly it has taken several years to establish the complex and costly set of institutions to oversee the agreement. In regard to trade flows, CARIFORUM service providers, a group that could benefit from the EPA, have been unable to access the EU market, while an increase in European goods and firms penetrating the Caribbean has not taken place. As Jessop (2012) suggested ‘very little that is practical has happened’. ‘It is impossible to point to a single EPA specific success story [...] No one can point to any big investment or new trade flows’. Little has changed to challenge that view. Several reasons can be offered to explain the problems noted above. (1) The aggressive way in which the EU undertook the negotiations has left a degree of bitterness and distrust on the Caribbean side, which has inhibited its engagement. As Bharrat Jagdeo, former prime minister of Guyana argued, the EPA is ‘another instance of the European Union using its trade might and economic might bullying a developing country into an agreement’ (BBC Caribbean.com, 2008). (2) A weakened and marginalised WTO undermined the intellectual rationale for the EPA (Heron, 2014). (3) Even though the EPA was sold as a development agreement there is little belief, on either side, that this will be the case. (4) Because the negotiations were largely an elite-driven process, the level of buy-in and commitment on the part of civil society and the private sector is small. In turn, they do not fully understand the agreement nor believe it has much to offer them. As Jessop (2012) argued, ‘[m]any companies say it is an irrelevance’. Even the tourism sector ‘has largely given up on the EPA’ (Jessop, 2014). (5) The onset of the global economic crisis hit the Caribbean hard, which meant many states have been

reluctant to move ahead with tariff reductions and lose much needed revenue. (6) When governments have removed tariffs on EU goods, the early signs have been that ‘a number of local companies have found themselves unable to compete’ (Sanders, 2012b). Thus this has created domestic pressures to slow down or even reverse the process of liberalisation. (7) Only limited resources have been provided by the EU to assist the Caribbean with implementing the EPA and the process for accessing those funds has been ‘cumbersome and bureaucratic’ (Lindsay, 2013, p. 13). (8) Caribbean exporters continue to face non-tariff barriers in the EU market. (9) There is a view in Europe that the Caribbean is not an attractive trading partner due to its lack of unity and widely different levels of development. As a consequence, these concerns and others have limited the impact of the EPA and raised new questions about the utility of maintaining the present model of Caribbean-EU relations in the future.

The EU and the UK Overseas Territories

As was highlighted above when discussing the origins of the Lomé Convention, Part IV of the Treaty of Rome in 1957 first established links between the EU and the then colonies of some of its member states. Many of the colonies then became independent states and signed the Yaoundé and Lomé Conventions. However, a number of other territories did not move to independence and thus stayed under the provisions of Part IV, as Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs). This status is still in place today, and there are 25 OCT countries linked to the UK, France, the Netherlands and Denmark. The UK has 11 OCTs spread across the globe with five in the Caribbean; six if one includes Bermuda. These non-self governing territories are not part of the EU and thus are not directly subject to EU law, but they are associate members of the EU. In the

Treaty of Rome, the EEC's objectives to the OCT were: 'To promote the economic and social development of the countries and territories and to establish close economic relations between them and the Community as a whole' (Part IV, Article 131). The two fundamental elements of the relationship were 'the gradual freeing of trade between the associates and the EEC member states, and the provision of financial aid by member states to the associates through the European Development Fund' (Sutton, 2012, p. 106). Because of their shared origins, the OCT-EU relationship was in essence a 'light version' of the ACP-EU link, 'including more or less the same provisions' (Hannibal et al., 2013, p. 80).

However, since 1991 when a new Association Decision was signed, OCT-EU relations have begun to diverge from the ACP-EU model. For example, as early as 1991, all OCT products were given free and unlimited access to the EU market, and in 1997 the OCTs were able to access a limited number of EU programmes '[...] on the grounds that many of the inhabitants of the OCT were citizens of the EU and therefore eligible to benefit from them' (Sutton, 2012, p. 108). Also, while the voice of Caribbean ACP countries was weakening in the EU, the influence of the OCTs was strengthening. For many years the OCTs had little say on the arrangements that affected them, but over the last decade they have been brought into the discussions. The OCTs now influence policy via structured dialogue with the EU, informal contacts, and the Overseas Countries and Territories Association (OCTA), which recently established an office in Brussels. However, the OCTs '[...] continue to face restrictions on account of their non-sovereignty' (Sutton, 2012, p. 112), and in many cases the EU still plays second fiddle to the long-standing and dominant role of the administering powers.

In 2009 consultations began for a new Association Decision, and the European Commission stated that it was ‘in favour of a significant change in the approach to the association of the OCTs with the EU’ (Commission of the European Communities, 2009, p. 19). In particular, the Commission suggested that the new approach should recognise: 1) the OCTs as being part of the same ‘European family’ as the member states and 2) their ‘unique relationship’ with the EU. After much debate a new agreement was adopted on 25 November 2013 (Council of the European Union, 2013). It aims to modernise the relationship between the OCTs and the EU, ‘moving beyond development cooperation and focusing on a reciprocal relationship based on mutual interests’. A key provision is the creation of closer economic relations between the EU and the OCTs, such as through an improvement in market access for OCT goods and services, and relaxation of the rules of origin. Others include enhancing the OCTs’ competitiveness; strengthening their resilience and reducing their vulnerability; and creating more reciprocal relations between the EU and the OCTs based on mutual interests and shared values. There are also several financial instruments linked to the new Decision. Total EU funding for the OCTs via the 11th EDF is €364.5 million—a sizeable increase on the previous allocation. Two-thirds of that amount will be allocated to individual OCTs. In addition, they will receive funding under programmes by way of the EU’s general budget.

The new Decision has been largely welcomed by the OCTs, and will provide an important additional level of support above and beyond the metropolitan powers. As Sutton argues there ‘... is a shift of emphasis away from an Association Decision informed by EU relations with ACP countries towards one informed by the EU’s commitment to its ORs (Outer-most Regions)’. (The ORs are integral but distant

regions of EU member states.) Sutton continues, '[t]he EU's special relationship with the ACP has become more attenuated in recent years as the EU has at the same time invigorated its programmes with the ORs' (2012, p. 120). A key reason for this degree of convergence between the OCTs and ORs is that the arguments for assisting them are extremely similar: 'remoteness, insularity, smallness, climate, and economic dependence' (Sutton, 2012, p. 120). However, there will be limits to this convergence, mainly because the level of support from the EU to the ORs is very much higher than for the OCTs. Yet, as Hannibal et al. argue, '[t]he OCTs have a unique position in Brussels, as they make up a peculiar category of colonial remnants maintaining a privileged position in the EU' (2013, p. 90).

A broader Commonwealth perspective

The article up to this point has concentrated on the relationship between the Caribbean and the EU, with occasional references to the supporting role of the ACP Group. Of course The Commonwealth incorporates the vast majority of ACP states and plays an important role in promoting the interests of small states in the international system. However, The Commonwealth's role in the changes that have been documented in this article has been relatively small. In particular, despite its advocacy on the particular vulnerabilities of small states, the organisation been unable to meaningfully change the nature of global governance or the policy direction of the EU. Further, the ACP and CARIFORUM have been seen—for good reason—as the key interlocutors in relation to the EU, and therefore The Commonwealth has taken a back-seat. Indeed, perhaps the most tangible role has been through the Commonwealth Secretariat's management of the so-called 'Hub and Spokes' initiative (in collaboration with the ACP Group, the

Organisation Internationale de La Francophonie, and the EU). The programme aims ‘to enhance the capacity of key stakeholders in ACP countries to formulate suitable trade policy, participate effectively in international trade negotiations and implement international trade agreements’ (The Commonwealth, 2014). The programme has been operating since 2004 and has had some successes, for example providing a range of briefs and position papers to help ACP officials conduct trade negotiations, and assisting St Vincent and the Grenadines in drafting its national trade policy. Although not inconsequential, such support has not changed the underlying dynamics of the Caribbean-EU relationship, and the fact that the EU is by far the largest funder of the programme is a concern in relation to its independence and effectiveness. In the words of a Brussels-based ACP representative, EU support means it is ‘negotiating on both sides’ (Jones and Weinhardt, 2015, p. 238). In comparison The Commonwealth’s role with the OTs is negligible because member-countries are concerned about diluting the organisation’s primary focus on independent states, and therefore little support is forthcoming for the non-sovereign territories.

Conclusion

It is clear that the nature of the relationship between the EU and the Caribbean, both for the independent Commonwealth states and the non-independent territories has changed greatly over the last two decades. Commonwealth Caribbean – EU relations have been undermined on two fronts: a diminution of the level of support provided by the EU both in relation to trade and aid and growing disenchantment on both sides about how the Cotonou Agreement and EPA are functioning. Since the first Lomé Convention, the Caribbean has been on the wrong side of dominant economic and trade-related

narratives; but the region can also be criticised for not doing enough to build up its own diplomatic and economic position. Although the EPA will continue (largely because the EU is not offering a better alternative), the rationale for an ACP-wide post-Cotonou agreement is in doubt and it is difficult to see at the moment where the impetus will come for such a deal. For the EU, the Caribbean is a marginal interest, while the region is now exploring new opportunities with countries like Brazil, China and Venezuela. Vestiges of the old relationship will remain, but the Caribbean will likely lose the final aspects of its particularism and will be subsumed into wider EU-Latin American structures—a process which has already begun. However, despite the antipathy on both sides, such a development sits uneasily with the Commonwealth Caribbean, because of their past strong links with the ACP. Ironically, it is the larger and more economically diverse Dominican Republic—a relative newcomer to the ACP Group but also with strong links to Central America—that will benefit most from both the EPA and the EU's more general emphasis on Latin America. In relation to the UK OCTs, though starting from a similar place as the ACP states, have through their 'colonial' links with the UK become more closely intertwined with Europe. Being part of the EU, either directly or indirectly, has afforded a different approach to those outside of the Union. For as long as the OCTs remain tied to their metropolitan powers their relatively close relationship with the EU will be assured. However, the OCTs are small in number and in size, and they will be unable—even if the desire was there—to help reboot or sustain the broader Commonwealth Caribbean – EU relationship.

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