

BOOK REVIEWS SECTION

Stephen C. Vasciannie & Lisa Ann Vasciannie (2024). *Jamaica's foreign policy: 1962-2022*. Palgrave Macmillan under exclusive license to Springer Nature Switzerland AG. 456pp. ISBN: 978-3-031-58900-3 hbk US\$159.99. E-book US\$109.00.

Jamaica's foreign policy 1962-2022 is a wide-ranging text, ambitious in scope and coverage of themes. The authors aim to provide a comprehensive overview and analysis of the historical evolution of Jamaica's foreign policy, its international and domestic legal sources, and its political, socio-cultural, and economic dimensions during the first 60 years of the country's independence. In terms of timespan and thematic coverage, it could qualify as the most comprehensive study of Jamaica's foreign relations and diplomacy to date. The scope and length are such that it would have benefited from being divided into two volumes.

The study consists of eighteen chapters, bookended with an Introduction and Conclusion. The authors provide a clear, well-written introduction, stating their intent to highlight the main trends in Jamaica's international relations since independence and to explore conceptions, misconceptions, and controversies surrounding the country's foreign policy and diplomacy. They discuss the influence of ideology and pragmatism in the foreign policy choices of various leaders and the interplay of policy continuity and change during the administrations of Alexander Bustamante, Michael Manley, and Edward Seaga. They emphasise the geopolitical constraints of the global, hemispheric, and regional Cold War dynamics of the 1960s and 1970s. They also expose the significance and paradoxes of geography and history which led Jamaica to prioritise relations with the United States (US), United Kingdom (UK), and other major Western/Commonwealth partners, while also engaging with neighbours in Central and South America and the Greater Caribbean. The authors argue that these factors shaped foreign policy priorities for Jamaica but failed to fuel and sustain extensive trade and investment relations with Latin America. They point to geography and history – residual memories of the short-lived West Indies Federation – to explain why, despite Jamaica being a key member of the Caribbean Community, it has not always been at the centre of CARICOM.

The authors suggest that Jamaica has not fully exploited the economic opportunities available to small states in an evolving global political economy. In their view, more diplomatic energy and capital have gone into maintaining relations based on dependence, and lobbying for market preferences for traditional commodity exports and Special and Differential Treatment for small developing economies, than on agile adaptation to the changes wrought by globalisation, the neoliberal reshaping of the global economy, and its normative structures. The authors suggest that another motivational pillar of Jamaica's foreign policy is its self-image: striving to be seen as an influential small state, punching above its weight in the international arena, and thus pursuing a consistently principled foreign policy based on respect for sovereignty, human rights, multilateralism, and rule of law. This principles-based foreign policy approach has, at times, run into contradictions and controversy (pp. 6-7).

The stage is initially set with a compelling overview of the first three decades of Jamaica's international relations. These were characterised by the dominant personalities and juxtaposed world views of the national leaders, and by Jamaica's engagement with issues of decolonisation, self-determination, anti-racism, human rights, and the quest for an international order that would better respond to the development concerns of new states. This is followed by a chapter on economic foreign policy, from economic nationalism to negotiating trade and investment deals amidst the shifting sands of neoliberalism. It gives insight into Jamaica's decades-long, at times fraught, relationship with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). As karma would have it, the Jamaican populace has journeyed from suffering under painful

Structural Adjustment Programmes (in the 1970s and 1980s) to witnessing the appointment of their former Finance Minister as Deputy Director-General of the IMF in October 2024!

Two chapters address regional and hemispheric relations, viewed through the institutional frameworks of the Caribbean Community, Association of Caribbean States, Community of Latin American & Caribbean States, and Organization of American States. Following chapters discuss major multilateral topics, including United Nations (UN) Security Council reform, human rights in the UN and in the Inter-American system, and Jamaica's refugee policies. Chapter 18 reviews the policy debates and engagement of the Jamaican state and society with their far-flung diaspora communities, referring to the 2020 Draft Diaspora Policy and to the numerous diaspora-related initiatives in place. This vital chapter explores numerous aspects of diaspora identity, politics and development. It focuses mainly on the communities in North America, the UK, and Europe. Although referred to in a historical sense, there is little consideration of current foreign policy implications and opportunities offered by the presence of Jamaican diasporas in Central and South America, and parts of the Caribbean like Cuba. Chapter 19 rushes through a selection of multilateral and bilateral relationships between Jamaica and the Commonwealth, the European Union, African states, Russia, the People's Republic of China, and Middle Eastern actors, before the brief concluding chapter. At times, the organisational logic of the latter chapters may not be clear to all readers, and certain topics receive short commentaries, rather than detailed analyses.

Surprisingly, the book does not make even a passing acknowledgement of the substantial International Relations (IR) comparative foreign policy theoretical approaches, nor the burgeoning literature associated with small states studies, particularly Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Silence on these themes is rather disappointing. The analysis implicitly suggests a rational actor perspective, with occasional bureaucratic politics allusions, and all the themes covered in the book resonate with the lived experiences, sovereignty and development concerns, and bilateral and multilateral relationships of many small states, particularly SIDS. The analyses of Jamaica's diplomacy and policies on Law of the Sea themes and climate change issues are especially relevant to SIDS. The authors' methodological approach is predominantly legalistic, analysing the implications of international and domestic legal norms for Jamaica's foreign policy formulation and implementation. For students of IR, this underscores the significance of such normative structures. However, exploring such other key topics as notable political economy issues, and the Jamaican perspectives on the evolution of five decades of the Caribbean-ACP-European Union relationship, would have added value to the text.

Methodologically, a sterling contribution of the book lies in its vast, intricate, and meticulously documented footnotes and bibliography. The authors draw on an impressive array of Caribbean and other international relations literature, and a large assortment of primary materials that are not easily accessed, such as lively newspaper commentaries. This somewhat compensates for the otherwise limited attention paid to the roles of non-state actors in foreign policy matters. *Jamaica's foreign policy 1962-2022* is written in a clear, highly readable style. It is a valuable new resource for students, scholars, and policy actors working on Jamaica, the Caribbean and the Americas, and on small states and territories. The authors are to be congratulated on their significant new contribution to the repository of knowledge on Jamaican and Caribbean international relations.

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