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## SMALL STATES, STATESCRAFT AND THE CHALLENGES OF NATIONAL SECURITY: THE CASE OF GUYANA

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**Abstract.** Small states all over the globe have peculiar challenges foisted on them by their meagre population which may make some unviable and inconsequential in the comity of nations. While this can be said to be normatively politically correct, the realities have proven otherwise. Countries like Singapore, Qatar, Oman, Switzerland, etc., have crafted enviable statecraft that positioned them in strategic socio-economic and political vantage positions. For the Caribbean country of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, the quest to succeed as a strong and virile small state has remained daunting due to a lot of intervening internal and external dynamics. This study is therefore poised to evaluate the Guyanese national trajectory towards a sustainable and stable Caribbean nation in the face of precarious post-colonial history, political alliance and nuances of intra and inter-regional influences on a country with great economic and geo-strategic potentials and the contradictions of a small population. In achieving this, the study relied on historical research design which is qualitative and explorative in nature. Study therefore relied extensively on secondary source of data via literature survey of books, reports from dailies and periodicals, government official publications, conference papers, journal publications and internet sources. Study also proffers policy options that can ameliorate the Guyanese post-colonial political challenges occasioned by the precarious colonial experiences, internal and external security challenges.

**Keywords:** Challenges; Small States; Statecraft; National Security; Caribbean Countries; Guyana

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**JEL Classifications:** F52, F54

## Introduction

Like every other pre-colonial societies of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, Guyana has unique and complex historical foundations and several transformations from the pre-colonial to colonial and from the colonial to post-colonial albeit postmodern societies. The country known today as Cooperative Republic of Guyana (CRG) located at the northern corner of South America (see Figure 1) derived its name prior to European settlement from the name of the land “Guiana” which means the “Land of water” and that which in its present day reflects its British and Dutch colonial past, and is the only English speaking country of South America (Bonham, 2020). Ethnically, the country is presently a multiracial society with the people of India, Africa, Portuguese and Chinese descents. The Afro-Guyanese are said to account for 33% of the country’s population, while the Amerindian account for 8% and mixed of the white and other groups account for 11% of the total population of the country (Guyana Development Policy Review, 2003:1).



**Figure 1.** Location of Cooperative Republic of Guyana (CRG)

*Source:* CIA World Fact Book

The country was discovered in 1498 by the Europeans centuries ago but gained her independence on 26 May, 1966 from the United Kingdom as a dominion, and a republic on 23 February, 1970. The nation which is considered part of the region of the Caribbean is surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean to the north, Brazil to the south and southwest, Venezuela to the west and Suriname to the east making it one of the smallest sovereign states on the mainland of Southern America after Uruguay and Suriname. It is also a member of the Commonwealth of Nations as part of her historical British heritage. The history of the nation is characterised by several battles ranging from internal migration to the battle for supremacy and possessions by foreign invaders of the Spanish, French, Dutch and Britain origins (Wells, 1990; Odeen, 2009).

The earlier settlers were believed to be the nomads from Asia about 35,000 years ago and who later became the Carib tribe and the first settlers at the interior end of the ancient nation. There are also the Arawak tribe located

along the Coast. Both ancient tribes of Guyana were believed to have their origin traced to South America having migrated to the South American hinterland and to the present-day Guiana and in the Caribbean islands. It was also believed that these migrants met the Alonso de Ojeda's first expedition from Spain in 1499 at the Essequibo River. The ancient society of Guyana was believed to be dominated by the nomads who gradually migrated from the Central and South America before the experiences following Christopher Columbus's voyages changed their pattern of behaviour (Frank van de, 2013).

While the Arawak were mainly farmers, hunters and fishermen settlers along the Caribbean islands, the warlike migrants of the bellicose Carib from Southern America moved towards the interior and altered the tranquillity of the Arawak society on arrival. The warlike behaviour of the Carib made them displace the Arawak throughout the islands of the Lesser Antilles – a group of islands in the Caribbean Sea. Following Christopher Columbus discovery of the Arawak settlers, the Spanish moved in to explore the settlers who were easier to conquer than the warlike Carib tribe who fought back and resisted the invasion of the intruders to maintain their independence. This period marked the origin of the consolidation of colonial empire in the ancient region with the Dutch (the Netherlands) as the first Europeans to settle in the modern day Guyana after her independence from Spain in the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries and had emerged as the major commercial power and traders with the English and French colonies in the lesser Antilles (Hirsch, 1977; Brereton, 2004; Frank van de, 2013).

Following the 1899 ruling of an international tribunal, the land of Guyana which is a country on the northern mainland of South America and considered part of the Caribbean because of its strong culture, historical and political ties with other Caribbean countries was awarded officially to Great Britain (Wells, 1990). The post-independence state of the CRG also has its remarkable history and origin which started in 1814 as a British colonial territory, but gained her independence in 1966 but became a republic in 1970. During the period of colonial rule to the early years of post-colonial era, agriculture and mining were the major enterprises of the people, though controlled by two British companies: Booker McConnell and Jessel Securities both of which also controlled the largest sugar estates until the 1970s. By the early 1980s, the new government of the Republic of Guyana had completely taken charge of the control of the nation's resources and administration (U.S Library of Congress, 1991).

Fundamentally, the post-independent state of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana is structured along parliamentary democracy with a constitution, a National Assembly, a multiparty system, elections, and a president chosen by the majority party, a minority leader, and a judicial system that is based on common law like any other democratic states in the world. The republic has often witnessed several statecraft challenges and some of which were complicated by the emerging natural resource wealth including crude oil resources. As a consequence, the nations' foreign policy posture has always been influenced by these national problems since its independence (Tim, 1992).

According to Ellis (2019) the new oil wealth has provided the republic (CRG) an enviable status within the nations of the Caribbean and among the comity of nations despite the emerging challenges occasioned by the seemingly regular internally and externally induced challenges in the form of domestic political unrest, as well as criminal activities such as human trafficking, money laundering, production of narcotic substances and trafficking, illegal timber extraction and mining related offences, cum external challenges of its territorial borders and sovereignty by its neighbouring Venezuela and Suriname (Ellis, n.d). The inability of the government of the republic to respond adequately to these daunting challenges has impeded the progress of the state and has also deprived the state the expected admiration from its citizens and the international community as a whole in recent times.

Over the years, a lot has gone wrong with the within the ambit of statecraft in the republic following the government inability to contain the country's domestic challenges in its post-independence era. Essentially, the

challenges of statecraft have been linked to the state's post-independence political experiences, leadership skill and diplomacy. The national goal of contemporary state of CRG has been in the hands of who manages the affairs of the state, his powers and positions as well as policies towards the neighbouring states of the Caribbean.

### **The Nature of the Problem**

Small states all over the globe have peculiar challenges foisted on them by their meagre population which may make them unviable and inconsequential in the comity of nations. While this can be said to be normatively political correct, the realities on ground have proven otherwise. Countries like Singapore, Qatar, Oman and Switzerland etc have crafted enviable statecraft that positioned them in strategic socio-economic and political vantage positions. For the Caribbean country of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, the quest to succeed as a strong and virile small state has remained daunting due to a lot of intervening internal and external dynamics. The unanimous hypothesis of the inherent deficiencies of small states as endemically prone to limited capabilities and potentials in the spheres of the economy, politics, governance and security have remained sustained .

Analysts and researchers have identified the subjective perception of small states as weak and incapable of mustering a formidable military capabilities, making them vulnerable to attacks and intimidation by bullying neighbours or regional hegemonic powers. As a corollary to the above, the apparent extensive reliance of small states on trade in the face of limited exports, finance and human resources remains a viable recurring decimal.. This reality is an anathema to strong international trade negotiations amongst nations where economic virility is a sine qua non in advantageous trade relationships. This is the prevailing global reality even among large nations. Consequently, the Cooperative Republic of Guyana (CRG) with an interesting colonial and postcolonial history enmeshed in the vicissitudes of the contradictions of development has been providentially blessed with a new wave of petro-wealth and an incredible positive economic growth trajectory that should be properly managed. It is therefore pertinent that this great opportunity be optimally utilised. As a wasting asset, oil wealth has remain an Achilles heel in a lot of development countries in South America and indeed Sub Saharan Africa and the Middle East. The lessons therefrom should be adequate for sustainable public policy in Guyana.

The Caribbean region and indeed Guyana has in the recent years been battling with challenges of governance-delivery of basic services, criminal violence and endemic corruption. In the same vein, increased migration, rising populism and the deficit in the support for democratic rule in the Caribbean albeit Guyana has dampened the expectations of citizens from the government.

These inherent vulnerabilities of small states accentuated by the impregnable forces of globalisation and regional hegemonic powers naturally predisposes the Cooperative Republic of Guyana to reposition herself within the CARICOM platform and indeed other global multinational institutions to achieve her state policies. This step will help create a sustainable buffer from the onslaught of real threats to Guyana sovereignty and the whole gamut of human security in the country.

Generally, a number of small states have emerged outside what can be tagged with the descriptive taxonomy like those from Asia, Africa, Latin America and some of the Middle East that neither belong to the First World or the Western Industrialised Nations of Western Europe, USA, Japan nor of the bloc of the Second World which include the former Communist nations of the former Soviet Union and those of the Eastern Europe (Handelman, 2001). Undeniably, these small states have historical commonalities and experiences as well as internal security challenges such as slavery, colonialism, low Gross Domestic Product (GDP), high unequal income distribution, poor infrastructures, high level of illiteracy, low level of unemployment, high birth rate, high death rate, systemic corruption, unstable economic and political environment, and rural-urban inequalities (Audu, Ologbenla, Anifowose & Abdul-Rahooof, 2013). Unfortunately, the CRG in its post-independence era like some of its Third

World counterparts from Asia and Africa has witnessed diverse internal and external national issues that seem to have impeded its internal statecraft and socio-political and economic developments.

Despite these ugly and emerging situations confronting the state of Guyana, the government seems to lack the capability to resolve them to the admiration of its citizens and the international community, thus, attracting attention to state's internal affairs in recent times. The obvious dichotomy between the big states of Western Europe, USA, Japan, etc., and the small states of underdeveloped nations or the Third World Countries or the global south, particularly the small states of the Caribbean have manifested itself in the Guyana's case that has been consumed by a sheer governments' ineptitude to contain internal challenges confronting the nations of the global south. This circumstance, undeniably, requires urgent or immediate explanations and attentions by the government of the CRG.

Apart from the common challenges confronting the state of Guyana, its meagre population, geo-strategic location and external dynamics have also consistently affected the level of relations between the country and its immediate neighbours and at the same time made the country apparently unenviable within the comity of nations. Essentially, while some states within the global south have proven otherwise by designing and implementing enviable robust statecraft template that has placed them in strategic socio-economic and political vantage positions in the international system, Guyana is yet to key into this progressive paradigm. The entire business of statecraft in the republic of Guyana remained largely as a resulting of choking internal and external existential human security challenges confronting the country.

The country has a lot to learn and adopt from viable and strong states like Singapore, Qatar, Oman, and Switzerland and significant others which have continue to remain strong, virile and geo-strategically relevant in global affairs. The conduct of state affairs (statecraft) in the country's post-independence era, thus, has been seriously impeded by internal challenges or domestic issues emanating from a polarised political environment cum ethnic rivalries between the two major tribes of India and African descents. The 21 December, 2018 political crisis between the Guyana's principal opposition political parties of the People's Progressive Party (PPP) dominated by the Guyanese of Indian descent successfully passed a vote of no-confidence against the coalition government jointly formed by A Party for National Unity (APNU) and the People's National Party, the core party dominated by Guyanese of African descent, and the Alliance for Change (AFC), and the subsequent mass defections of members of the AFC to the other party has also impeded the smooth conduct of statecraft in the country (Ellis, 2019). This spectacular political incident resurrected the ethnic rivalry that was already blossoming in the country's socio-political landscape, it has been identified by analysts and observers alike, as one of its greatest domestic challenges in recent times.

Furthermore, Granger (2009), Neuman (2013), The Guardian (2015) and Bebi (2018) cited in Ellis (2019) have argued that the Guyanese government have been confronted by critical challenges that have threatened the country's national security as well as its sovereignty over the years. The internal challenges emanating from mining related criminal activities, money laundering, illegal extraction of timbers, human and narcotic trafficking, and a host of other criminal activities within the national border of the country have been identified as critical challenges confronting national statecraft in the republic. The external threat emanating of the continued pursuit of Guyana's territory along the Essequibo River in the Eastern part of the country cum the threat of the claims of two Guyana's offshore Exclusive Zone which is the source of Guyana's new oil wealth along the maritime border close to the sea, are also identified as problems confronting the government of the republic in recent time (Ellis, 2019).

Also identified as critical problems confronting statecraft in Guyana is the Surinamese government interference in the Guyanese territorial border along the eastern end of the country, as well as Suriname's continuous claims of the remote and sparsely populated portion of Guyanese land located at the interior end of the New River Triangle.



The May 2018 incident which took the lives of 16 Guyanese fishermen alleged to have been killed by Surinamese pirates seen as reprisal attacks for the prior killing of a Surinamese drug Lord, also poses exponential threat to Guyana's national security and has remained a potent threat that is likely to repeat itself in the future if not properly managed (Bebi, 2018). The plethora of challenges confronting the Guyanese government and the government inability to contain these national issues or challenges have undeniably bedevilled the state's foreign policy posture and other sundry external diplomacies, and most consequentially, making statecraft a very difficult task for the Guyanese national government in recent times. There are, however, several academic debates relating to the major reasons behind these disturbances confronting the country over the years, why the successive governments have not been able to contain the internally and externally induced perturbing challenges, as well as the best policy alternatives or options to that could resolve these national security problems confronting the state of CRG. This study therefore is poised to examine the causative factors or the reasons for the security challenges confronting the CRG, a small state in the Caribbean, and to offer the best policy options to resolve these internal security problems in the over the years.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The broad objective of this discourse is to examine the link between the challenges of statecraft in small states with a focus on the Republic of Guyana. While the specific objectives are to:

1. Identify the root causes of the internally induced or domestic challenges in the Cooperative Republic of Guyana and their impact on the country's post-independence statecraft,
2. Identify the externally induced national challenges confronting the country and their impacts on the post-independence statecraft, and
3. Ascertain the similarity in forms and characters of the national challenges in the CRG and the other Small states of the Caribbean,
4. Ascertain the extent to which the government has been able to manage these internal challenges over the years, and
5. Proffer policy options to these challenges of statecraft in the CRG.

### **Research Questions**

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the root causes of Guyana's domestic challenges and their impacts on the country's post-independence statecraft?
2. What are the externally induced challenges and their impacts on the country's statecraft over the years?
3. What are the similarities in forms and characters of the Guyanese national challenges and those of the other small states in the Caribbean?
4. What are the efforts made by the CRG government to manage these internal challenges over the years?
5. What are the best policy options to the challenges of statecraft in the CRG?

### **Method of the Study**

**Considering the nature of this study, the historical design of research which is qualitative and explorative in nature was adopted.** For the Caribbean country of the CRG, the quest to succeed as a strong and virile small state has remained daunting due to a lot of intervening internal and external dynamics. This study, therefore, relied on secondary source of data via survey of books, government official documents and periodicals as well as journal publications and internet materials to evaluate the Guyanese national trajectory towards a sustainable and stable Caribbean nation in the face of precarious post-colonial history, political alliance and nuances of intra and

inter-regional influences on a country with great economic and geo-strategic potentials and the contradictions of a small population.

## Review of Related Literature

### The Concepts of Small States versus Big States

The crisis of underdevelopment and dependency plaguing the *Small states*, often identified among the Third World Countries (TWCs), particularly those located in the Caribbean islands of the continent of Southern America, and their post-independence challenges, motivated and attracted the attention of social scientists as well as the dependency and modernisation theorists alike, to understand the nature, reasons or causes of the dependency status of the Small states of the TWCs on the Big states (or the Developed countries); and by extension, the division of the world into two major blocs of the global south and the global north respectively.

Apparently, the division of the nations of world into blocs prompted scholars to attempt to provide clarification between the concepts of *Small states* from the global South, and *Big states* from the global North respectively. Historically, the disintegration of European colonial empires in Africa, Asia and South America, as well as the demise of communism following the collapse of the Soviet Union albeit Cold war in the early 1990s, undeniably, provided opportunities for the emergence of new states in the global world, and some of which are today striving to find their footings in the comity of nations despite their rich natural resources.

These circumstances inextricably created confusions among the scholars as to what actually small states are, and the circumstances that led to the division of the world into *Small* and *Big States*. There are immense debates over the past years on how best to define a Small state and to also have clear conceptual discernment of the concept of *Small states* and the *Big states*. In this regard as part of the scholarly debate, Peya and Jo-Ansie (2017:119) citing Prasad (2009) argued that “there is actually no single definition of the concept of Small states because the variables for determining small states are still evolving, thus, it is difficult to provide a generally accepted definition of the concept”. To this end, they defined small state in terms of its “size, the size of its population, small territorial size, economic strength or weakness, a state’s perception of itself as a small state, and a low level of involvement in global affairs”.

The Commonwealth and World Bank (2000) defined Small state in terms of its territorial size, the size of the state’s economy (low income), and population (8 million people and less). Archer, Bailes and Wivel (2014) cited in Vaicekauskaitė (2017:8) see Small states as those states that were not *great powers* neither were they *Second world countries*, but were those too weak to make any significant difference in the international order nor impacted any remarkable changes on the rules of the global system. For Jacque (1971) also cited in Vaicekauskaitė (2017) small states are those states that are “neither on the global nor regional scales and are unable to impose their political wills or protects their national interests among the comity of nations by exerting much of power politics, as well as unable to defend their national interests by exerting both political, economic and military powers”.

Bailes (2010) cited by Baldacchino (2012:15) sees the term from what characterises it as a small state such as “a shortage or lack of certain normal attributes of state power, autonomy and international standing among the comity of nations”. The obvious fact about the plethora of definitions of *Small states* above is that emphasis was based on material factors, such as the size of the state, and by implication, the population of the states. There are also emphasis on the capabilities of states’ foreign policy behaviours, military powers, strategic environment and historical organisation in the global system (Wivel, 2014; Jurkynas, 2014).

In the same vein, the definitions of small states above reflect the actual conceptions of what small states are. There are also obvious flaws or defects in the definitions above because the definitions failed to put into considerations the levels of developments recorded in some of the emerging economies like Switzerland and the



BRICS nations of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, as well as the Asia-Tigers-Taiwan, Singapore and South Korea, and significant other from the Middle East such as the UAE, Qatar, Oman, etc., and that share the same characteristics and faith with the supposed small states on the one hand, and a reasonable economic and political greatness with the big states over the years on the other hand. These obvious analytical lapses in the conceptual delineation of small states by scholars tend to open a flurry of endless debates that would take time to end with a unanimous agreement on the categorization of small states by the academic community.

On the contrary, *big states* are conceived differently from small state since they share improved indices or opposite features or characteristics. By and large, they are the states that enjoy all that the small states are denied because of the circumstances surrounding their emergence as nation-states in the global system. Such indices of determining a big state include large population, large territories, extended foreign policy behaviour, large and industrialised economy, political and military power, among other factors. Big states are often found in the global North or what is generally refers to as the developed nations of the world or capitalists economies or industrialised countries of Western Europe, some of the Eastern Europe, USA, Japan, etc.

In recent times, *big states* of the world system are the super powers of Western Europe who were at a time the colonisers of the some of the so-called small states or of the states of the global South including Asia, Africa and Latin America. They are states of the international system that enjoy economic autonomies and interdependent economies. By implication, their foreign policy behaviours are based on self-actualisation. Generally, internally and externally induced challenges have been the major challenges confronting the small states of the global south or TWCs including the states of the Caribbean in their post-independence era. Statecraft which is the art of the conduct of government affairs has been a mirage in some of the new and small states of the global south, particularly those of the Caribbean, including Cooperative Republic of Guyana. To this end, having a concise or generally accepted definition of the term has been a difficult task for scholar.

## **Empirical Review**

### **Guyana and the Root Causes of its Domestic Challenges and their Impacts on Statecraft**

Undeniably, a lot goes with the conduct of state affairs or what is termed the practice of statecraft in our contemporary societies. States' political experiences, leadership skills and capabilities, as well as foreign policy and diplomatic posture are essential tools of statecraft. The goal of any nation-state, thus, depends on how it manages its domestic and external relations, all of which are imbedded on the conduct of state affairs. Veritable statecraft in the state of Guyana has been under immense threat following persistent centripetal forces against all manners of confrontations in its domestic front, and that which ranges from climate change to socio-cultural, economic and political challenges.

All of these factors have been synonymous or associated with the state of Guyana. Significantly, the geographical location and the relatively small size of the country's population which is estimated to be under a million and has about 60% of essentially rural populace have been identified as one of the inhibiting factors to its development since independence. Essentially, over 80% of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) including its agricultural production and other non-mining sectors' activity are concentrated in the coastal area with low sea level. This has over the years attracted government's persistent protection of the country from the sea and other forms of climatic infractions. With the country's major export commodities as sugar, rice, timber, fishery, textile, bauxite and gold mining, it is yet to find its footings among the comity of nations (FAO/World Bank Cooperative Programme, 2005).

Also identified as a challenge, is the country's multi-racial community comprising generations of Indian, Asia, African and Portuguese descent on the one hand, and the indigenous tribes of the Carib – a scion of Asian nomads and the Arawak tribe both of which origins were traced to South America, on the other hand (Guyana

Development Policy Report, 2003; Ellis, 2019). This variegated demographic mix has remained a major challenge to national development in the face of internal and external political manipulations. The lack of articulate racial integration in Guyana has continuously robbed the country the need nation building pivot need to engender patriotism and nationalistic fervour to foster sustainable development of the republic.

Guyana Development Policy Report compiled by the World Bank in 2003 and supported by other multilateral development reports in recent years indicate that the total population of the country is made up 33% Afro Guyanese and 48% of Indo Guyanese. These figures remains a subject of intense debates as some analysts believe that Afro Guyanese make up more than 40% of the country's population. What is clear however is the fact that the two dominant sub races in the country have been in perpetual inconsistent struggle for the republic's socio-economic and political power spanning decades of Guyana's political history. This perennial division has remained one of the major challenges confronting the nation's socio-political environment over the years. Policies and other developmental strides initiated by the government to promote national growth and development as well as in the fight against corruption and crime have been thwarted by some of these factors as well.

The deep inter racial and political divisions have become deeply embedded on the domestic polity of the country and remains an anathema to socio-economic development. These aforesaid factors have also impacted negatively on the mechanisms of the nation's parliamentary decision-making, and undermine its respect for the rule of law and complicated by the preference of ethnic identity over state's inequality, equity and national unity and development. Citing Singh (1996) and Ali (1997) respectively, the Guyana Development Policy Report (2003:1) states that, "upon independence, ethnic interest, relevance and dominance became the priority and practice among the dominant ethnic nationalities in the republic of Guyana". The report further stated that the two largest ethnic groups in particular jostled for economic, social and political powers, which had in no limited measure intensified the already existing multiracial consciousness among the people of the republic. The Cooperative Republic of Guyana (DRG) remains entrapped in racial identity politics and mutilated development.

With each groups struggling to gain pre-eminent advantage over the other and maintain paramountcy, the country remains in the throng of ethnic cum racial rivalry which up to date is a dominant practice in the country's political system. Ethnic, racial and primordial survival instinct and security was deemed the prevailing normal well over the economic wellbeing of the populace while national unity was equally sacrificed on the altar of ethno-racial sentiments. Over the years the dominant ethnic groups have been adopting, among other things, constitutional engineering, executive aggrandisement, parliamentary marginalisation, and boycotts of parliaments, as strategies to pursue their political agenda. All of which have impacted negatively on socio-political cohesion among the ethnic groups in the republic (Guyana Development Policy Report, 2003:1). This has engendered politics of ethno-racial patronage and institutional discriminatory policies geared towards ethnic survival rather than national survival. Here in lies the bane of Guyana's nation building and national development effort.

In the same vein, Bisram (2015) opines that the emergence of racial conflict in the Cooperative Republic of Guyana and its shifting impacts on national development, presented the country as a society plagued by intractable racial division and socio-political and economic challenges. To Bisram, the multi-ethnic state, how it started during the colonial rule, and how it was advanced by the colonial forces to serve their interests, as well as how it became institutionalised, undisputedly, became one of the reasons the United States and the United Kingdom delayed the independence of the former colony. To date, race and ethnic conflicts impacted negatively on the composition and conduct of country's socio-political and economic development despite its geo-strategic position, and abundant natural resources (Bisram, 2015). The new oil wealth may not change much of this trajectory as different global socio-economic interests are beginning to amass in the country. The eventual aggregate result of the new scramble for Guyana's oil resources remains a conjectural discourse even as scholars believe that new alliances and hybrid political economic templates will emerge amongst global powers with indeterminate developmental consequences for the republic.

In another development, the CRG finance minister, Hon. Winston Da Costa Jordan has identified inadequate trend in the funding of quality education and health care, as well as addressing the nation's vast infrastructure sector development and poverty reduction as great challenges of the government over the years. Also identified as a problem is the difficulty experienced in the process of integrating and harmonising the nation's multiracial differences and reduction of inequality among the ethnic groups across the country (Guyana Ministry of Finance First Voluntary National Review, 2019). By and large, ethnic assertiveness and discord among the ethnic groups has posed the greatest challenge to the nation and its overall development, including the standard of living and quality of life of the citizenry. These inter alia have also denied the country its vantage position among the states of the Caribbean and in the international community.

### **Guyana and Externally Induced National Security Challenges**

The Cooperative Republic of Guyana's externally induced challenges have also impacted on its national sovereignty, unity and development over the years. Perhaps one of the most prominent of all the externally induced challenges is the threats emanating from the continued pursuit of Guyana's territory along the Essequibo River in the Eastern part of the country and the threat of the claims of two Guyanas' offshore Exclusive Zone, which is the source of Guyana's new oil wealth along the maritime border close to the sea, and Surinamese government interference in the Guyanese territorial border along the eastern end of the country, as well as Suriname's continuous claims of the remote and sparsely populated portion of Guyanese land located at the interior end of the New River Triangle, have been identified (Bebi, 2018; Ellis, 2019).

On the national security front, Guyana's territorial security has long been under threat with claims to different parts of its territory by neighbouring Suriname and Venezuela, the latter being the most bellicose and relentless. These realities have given way to a new thinking that the country needs to buttress its national security infrastructure with the introduction of a formidable "third force" a specialist paramilitary organization which could provide border protection and aid other facets of Guyana's overworked Joint Services. Guyana's Atlantic coastline on the north east is 459 Km (285 Miles long), the total length of the entire Guyanese border is 2933 Km (1822 Miles long). The current constituted army of about 3000 soldiers and an estimated 4000-4600 police personnel cannot by any means provide adequate national security, law enforcement and public safety in any sustainable way.

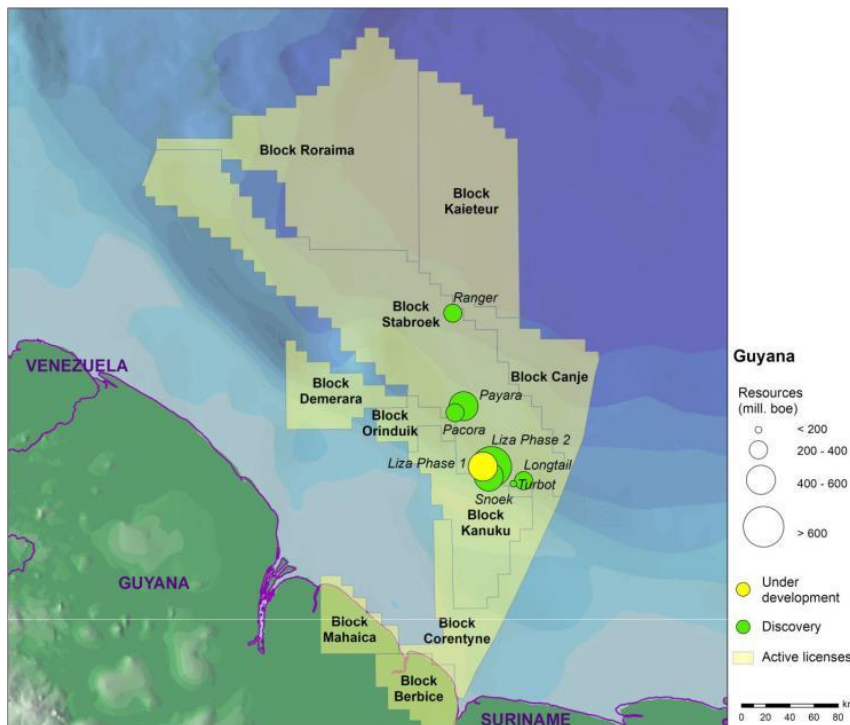
As a consequence, the famous May 2018 incident which took the lives of 16 Guyanese fishermen alleged to have been killed by Surinamese pirates and which was seen as reprisal attacks for the prior killing of a Surinamese drug Lord, that had hitherto posed greater threat to Guyana's national security remained a potent threat that is likely to repeat itself in the future if not properly managed (Bebi, 2018; Ellis, 2019). Essentially, the two major external threats to Guyana's territorial integrity came from two out of its three immediate neighbours, Venezuela and Suriname. Even though Brazil which has a 700 Mile boundary with Guyana has not constituted a major source of external aggression, there is no guarantee that such won't happen in the future. The vast un-policed boundary between Guyana and Brazil has a good potency for boundary disputes as both countries deepen their quest for mineral resources and economic development. In the recent years, the country's natural endowment, especially the newly found large crude oil deposits, has created new vistas for predatory neighbouring countries predispositions as exemplified by the recent external aggression from Venezuela and Suriname. The authors believe strongly that more external aggressive behaviours from the region will manifest in the face of massive new oil discoveries and enviable economic growth rate in the country.

One of the major challenges of the small states of the Caribbean including the republic of Guyana is extreme weather events and global climate change. This can be best situated within geographical and historical contexts. Centuries of colonial exploitation and the rage of the elements as a by-product of colonialism and modernisation has attenuated the impacts of climate change and its concomitant consequences in the region and Guyana in

particular. The impacts of these will ultimately shape statecraft in profound manner. Migratory patterns in the Caribbean has also new challenges for Guyana’s development. The Caribbean islands are specifically vulnerable to all forms of extreme weather events and global climate change that made emigration a common practice. It impossible to understand the Caribbean without considering the impact of migration on the states of the region, and which in the first instance created some of the states of the region (International Organisation for Migration, IOM, 2017). While it is common knowledge that climate change has created severe global migration challenges the case of Guyana exacerbated with the political turmoil in Venezuela, Cuba and even Haiti. Citizens of these countries are moving to Guyana as refugees with attendant security threats. Accordingly, the (IOM, 2017) opined that with the European colonisation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and the subsequent massive and forced migration of African slaves to create and feed the colonial plantation economies, migration in the Caribbean including Guyana, is not a recent trend. Since the Caribbean region is situated between North and South America, it serves as a transit point for irregular migrants from South America and other places trying to reach the United States and has indescribably increased the risk of criminal behaviour across the region, some of which have posed security threats to the states of the region including the CRG. The consequential effect of this is that Guyana sits on a fault line of migratory route in a relatively troubled region of South America.

**The Volume of Guyana’s Oil and Economic Challenges**

Following the announcement by ExxonMobil in 2015, about massive oil finds off the Coast of Guyana, the company disclosed that the Liza 1 Field, which is part of Stabroek Block marked a new economic epoch that triggered massive investments in the sector (see Figure 2). Other oil corporations joined the rush for Guyana’s oil with an investment of over US\$ 8 Billion by the end of 2019 (Rystad Energy, 2020). The oil finds have remained progressive and estimates put Guyana’s proven oil reserve at over 8 Billion Barrels recognised within the oil sector as a good quality resources and relatively cheaper cost of production when compared to similar offshore oil ventures (Exxon Mobil, 2020).



**Figure 2.** Oil discoveries shown within offshore lease blocks.  
 Source: Rystad Energy UCube

The geographical benevolence of nature has bestowed upon Guyana unprecedented level of oil wealth and petrodollars. The year 2015 remains a watershed in the economic history of the country with the discovery of huge hydrocarbons at Liza Field off the coast of Guyana. With this discovery the country has joined the league of oil producing nations in South America and has progressively remained so with bigger oil finds in recent years. However, the new oil wealth presents new challenges with regards to oil resource utilization for development. This is against the backdrop of the curse of oil wealth in a lot of developing economies.

There are countless discourses on the correlation between huge resources and economic development. These are couched in the popular paradox of plenty and resource curse especially in petro-economies. Scholars have argued that most times petro wealth generate negative political and economic consequences within a framework of the vicissitudes of oil prices vis a vis economic planning and development (Auty, 1993; Sach and Warner, 1995; Karl, 1997). The consequences of oil price volatility on the political economy of these rich oil resource countries cannot be overemphasised. For nations with weak economic institutions, the ability to judiciously manage these oil revenues becomes quite daunting.

### **CRG Government Efforts in Managing its Domestic Challenges over the Years**

Recognising its domestic and externally induced challenges over the years, the government of Guyana overtime has formulated policy framework to resolve the challenges. Notably, the government in its attempt to solve the problem associated with high level of poverty, climate change, and other forms of socio-cultural and political challenges such as racial consciousness or ethnic assertiveness and discord, and economic challenges, collaborated with domestic and international bodies and agencies such as CARICOM, World Bank and other multilateral agencies to take up the monumental developmental challenges confronting the country. This has remained the task of successful governments in Guyana.

### **Conclusions**

As can be expected after a nasty and protracted election stalemate, which has become sort of commonplace in Guyana; there is a general perception held by the man in the street that ethnic and racial insecurities and tension are on the increase, though with some changes in dynamics. For example, one television commentator referenced the return of some racially pejorative terms, which were conspicuously absent from the country, ever since its embrace of socialism went into full gear in the early 1980s.

These terms he posited, were used by individuals of specific racial (contexts) rather than groups as a coded reference to other members of the Guyanese society. Since Guyana joined the ranks of major oil producers, approximately two years ago, there has been a notable shift in racial and ethnic dynamics, as ethnic groups attempted to gain favourable positions in the new pecking order established by the steady flow of Caucasians, who regularly arrive to work in the oil and allied industries.

The prolonged effects of the corona virus is having a toll on Guyana like so many other developing countries, however, while Covid 19 has dislodged the economic drivers of most countries of the world after just 3 months, Guyana has been somewhat fortunate that its economy was adjudged as the fastest growing in the world (43%) in one year, due to massive income primarily from oil production. Unfortunately, this development is accompanied by its own misfortune as many Guyanese are not optimistic that they will derive much benefits from the country's new found wealth.

While the police have being solving many serious crimes with alacrity, many Guyanese remain adamant that crime and insecurity, coupled with a marked increase in the cost of living due to disruptions in supply chains internationally caused by Covid 19 remain a major source of worry. Although there are numerous large scale



developmental projects underway, there are constant cries and accusations of ethnic exclusion due to systemic marginalization.

### **Recommendations**

The Guyanese statecraft trajectory towards a sustainable and stable Caribbean nation in the face of precarious post-colonial history, political alliance and nuances of intra and interregional influences on a country with great economic and geo-strategic potentials and the contradictions of a small population cannot be over emphasised.

The world is presently filled with extraordinarily successful small states in virtually all the four corners of the earth. Singapore, Qatar, Oman, the UAE, Israel etc are glaring examples of states with small populations with incredible success in developmental strides. Guyana can join the league with the right policy and programmes.

The nations of the Caribbean, including the Republic of Guyana are highly studied and most of their national challenges well known by researchers and scholars who have understudied the challenges of the Southern American countries. The following recommendations therefore are proffered to ameliorate and promote national growth and development in the CRG and cement its diplomatic intercourse with its neighbouring countries.

1. First and foremost, the government of the republic should promote and encourage national integration and unification of the multiracial groups without marginalisation of any of these groups. This will significantly promote national cohesion and the unity of the state. This is against the backdrop of verifiable racial-cum ethnic divide amongst indo-Guyanese, Afro-Guyanese, Asians and indeed Latinos within the political, economic and social landscape of the country. The urgently needed cohesion is a prerequisite for stability and virile statecraft, stability and development.
2. It is imperative that the Cooperative Republic of Guyana (CRG) needs massive strengthening of the institutions of governance including the security architecture. From politics to the economy, these institutions must be reformed and upgraded to meet current sub-regional and global challenges. This is against the backdrop of the relevance of these institutions to statecraft. The whole gamut of national security and law enforcement must be reinforced to attract the best brains and guarantee enhanced efficiency. Previous studies have shown that the reward system in the security sector is abysmally disincentive and bedevilled by corruption, apathy and poor performance. Adequate trainings and manpower development of personnel in collaboration with willing states such as the US will be needed. In a nut shell, a massive security sector reform is highly recommended to protect the new found wealth in the Republic.
3. Thirdly, with great economic potentials and near-geometric growth rate, the country needs an objective over haul of demographic policies needed to attract the right kind of immigrants that can sustain the tempo of macro- economic growth and sustainable development. The suggested population growth policy is also needed to provide the needed human resources that will be needed to police the enormous land mass of CRG which is bounded by potential predatory states like Brazil and Venezuela.
4. The geo-strategic architecture of CRG needs a comprehensive over haul in the face renewed interests from the United States, Venezuela, Russia (for historical reasons) and indeed China. These Kaleidoscope of interests by global powerful nations in a small state like the CRG can jolt the nation in centripetal directions and greatly undermine its stability and development.
5. Within the CARICOM region, the Cooperative Republic of Guyana (CRG) needs to upgrade the alliance between member countries aimed at reducing competition and engender cooperation based on shared common threats and destinies. This way, the trans-Atlantic geo-strategic alliances will be more robust and effective.
6. Within the ambit of statecraft, there is the need for the country to adopt the Costa Rican example of demilitarisation to save enormous resources hitherto utilized for some nebulous national security and reallocate same for policing and public safety and social security. Inclusive leadership rooted in deep

national patriotic culture is a prerequisite for sustainable development. This should permeate the entire country and stamped on the psyche of Guyanese via reorientation of the entire citizenry.

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