

FORUM ARTICLE

Invisible on the globe but not in the global: Decolonising IR using small island vistas

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Abstract

Teaching and studying International Relations (IR) in the Caribbean makes the region's invisibility unmissable. Nevertheless, these locales have significantly influenced the structure of global processes and are also acutely affected by global occurrences. Exposure to the global has led Caribbean scholarship to offer worthwhile insights into world affairs. Thinkers from the region and its diaspora provide noteworthy perspectives about the criticality of the Caribbean in building systems of empire and a world structured around race, class, and gender in ways that mainstream IR approaches may miss. This article takes its starting point as the Caribbean intellectual tradition. Grounding IR scholarship in this neglected, though highly pertinent, thought tradition is one angle from which to decolonise the discipline. The article connects these insights to an appraisal of a nimble strategy that Caribbean states and territories employ to navigate the global. The strategy of developing offshore financial centres (OFCs) can educate us about the functioning of the world if we are willing to think about it as embedded in global processes rather than as a problematic gimmick. In sum, this piece illustrates how using Caribbean thought and examining Caribbean global integration strategies can help to decolonise IR.

Keywords: Caribbean Thought; Class; Decolonisation; Gender; Offshore Financial Centres; Race

Introduction

When we teach, study, and analyse international affairs we reproduce narratives and discourses; we retell histories of the world and of the discipline of International Relations (IR). We often end up participating in the ritual of reproducing a Western-centric, disembodied, race-gender, and class omitting objective discipline often facilitated by standardised textbooks and readings. When we follow this approach, we build the edifices of IR with bricks and mortar of skewed race-gender-class power relations and visions of how the world works (or should work) that are either ignorant or dismissive of the experiences of the global majority. At the margins of these edifices are other ways of thinking, seeing, and assessing the world such as Critical Theory, Feminist IR, or Post-Colonialism. Again, framing IR in this way reproduces a discipline of scant relevance for people located in states (or territories) with limited power or visibility in global politics. To decolonise IR it is important to centre works that evaluate the world using places, experiences, and analytical frames from outside of this mainstream. I offer Caribbean thought as an example of how we might do this.

Most of the Caribbean is invisible on standard world maps, mirroring the region's supposed insignificance in world affairs and within the discipline of IR. However, the historical location of

the Caribbean within systems of empire has been significant for shaping processes and power relationships in the world in which we live. When the Caribbean is visible, it is as a site of vulnerability, under-development and illegality. As such, places with limited visibility on the globe and with limited abilities to exercise power within global interactions are cast as passive actors. Those who live in Caribbean spaces are challenged to find ways to teach, study, and analyse the Caribbean in IR without replicating portrayals of such places as passive and deficient. Thus, IR for the Caribbean can end up being a study in pessimism and fatalism.

In this article I suggest that one way of decolonising IR could be using thought and scholarship emanating from experiences and vistas outside of the Global North. Caribbean vantage points provide the insight that the Caribbean has been an important space for constructing the world. I assert that the Caribbean has contributed to international affairs and that thought stemming from the region offers useful theoretical understandings for IR. I contend that Caribbean intellectual currents often reflect on the ways that the region has contributed to constructing a capitalist, exploitative, racialised, and gendered world. Finally, in this piece I investigate the agency that Caribbean states and territories have exercised in navigating the world. Although often not visible on maps, this region has remained sufficiently on the radar of the world's powerful states and actors because of how Caribbean states and territories play with their autonomy, using the openings created by an ever more global capitalist system. Here I employ the example of Caribbean states' and territories' use of offshore financial centres (OFCs). Rather than conceiving these sectors as rule-breaking gimmicks used to flirt with illegality, I argue that we can think of OFCs as ways of manoeuvring the spaces that global capitalist processes open. In brief, I work to illustrate how common threads from Caribbean thought can be employed heuristically to offer alternate ways of thinking about global relations. I examine Caribbean global integration strategies via OFCs as an illustrative case. The application of Caribbean thought in this manner is an example of a strategy one can employ to help to decolonise IR.

Thinking the world from the Caribbean historical experience

European adventures that landed Columbus in the Americas in the fifteenth century encountered a supposedly 'New World' and allegedly brought this world into history. This New World has been essential to world affairs and global processes as we understand them today. The Americas became important sites of conquest between Spain, Portugal, and then France, England, and the Netherlands in the race to build empires.¹ The region has been a site of globalising processes comprising mass migrations including the forced migration of Africans (captured and enslaved), Asians (many coming as indentured labourers), and Europeans who mostly came as owners of property, merchants, or managers of colonial estates.² These colonised spaces functioned as sites of extraction of agricultural and primary commodities in service of metropolitan wealth accumulation. Estate owners and merchants exploited free and low paid labour and repatriated their profits abroad.³ The racialised nature of colonial structures, the genocide of indigenous peoples and the inhumane treatment of enslaved Africans all constituted an increasingly international (and eventually global) system of exchange and capital accumulation that occurred in tandem with the solidification of a European state system. The manner of insertion of Caribbean spaces within this imperialist world; the contribution of these locales to the dispersion of power in the European state system and in the back garden of the rising US by the twentieth century; and their spectacular near-invisibility following the Cold War when the region's geo-strategic importance declined along with the advent

¹Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1944), pp. 2–4.

²George Beckford, 'Plantation society: Toward a general theory of Caribbean society', in Aaron Kamugisha and Yanique Hume (eds), *Caribbean Cultural Thought: From Plantation to Diaspora* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2013 [orig. pub. 1971]), pp. 109–20; Elsa Goveia, 'Slave society in the British Leeward Islands', in O. Nigel Bolland (ed.), *The Birth of Caribbean Civilisation: A Century of Ideas about Culture and Identity, Nation and Society* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2004 [orig. pub. 1965]), pp. 421–45 (pp. 423–4).

³Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, pp. 85–6, 92–3.

of neoliberal political and economic orthodoxy that foreclosed political and economic alternatives, combine to make it unsurprising that the region's people would reflect on their existence within the world.

Caribbean academicians have compiled the works of many of the region's writers and thinkers to document Caribbean intellectual traditions. Specialists such as Dennis Benn, Paget Henry, O. Nigel Bolland, Anthony Bogues, Sylvio Torres-Salliant, and Aaron Kamugisha have collected important works and have written about the contributions of these works to philosophical and theoretical scholarship.⁴ These works illuminate the functioning of the world from Caribbean vantage points that can be beneficial to consider in decolonising IR. C. L. R. James's work is a favourite among these. Like much work within the Caribbean thought tradition, his does not fit easily within disciplinary bounds and is instead rather 'undisciplined'.⁵ Yet, the nonconformity to discipline may make Caribbean intellectual contributions useful in the decolonising endeavour.

James offers a deep and masterful appraisal of the Haitian Revolution, which unfolds the contending forces operating within world politics of the time and reflects on the potentials of Haitian revolutionary activities, which should not be divorced from the European eighteenth-century liberal revolutions that shaped modernity.⁶ He also provides revelations about the role that the black population in French Santo Domingo played in the French Revolution, contending that 'the part played by the blacks in the success of the great French Revolution has never received adequate recognition.'⁷ Thus, James shows the role of Haiti within anti-imperialist struggles that eventually reshapes and expands the state system during the twentieth century. His analyses also highlight the role of black Haitians within a highly exploitative global division of labour and present the devastating consequences of revolting for black independence in a racialised world. James's evaluations provide potent entry points for alternate understandings of world history; global power asymmetries; the growth of the state system; development and under-development; and the racialised capitalist character of global politics. However, these insights have generally not been mined in IR.

James's work is far from alone in the Caribbean for offering evaluative power in IR. Scholarly work that sees the world from Caribbean vantage points generally shares in appraising the world as racialised and gendered, stemming in part from colonial processes of gross exploitation for capitalist wealth accumulation that have enriched the now 'developed' locations of the world.⁸ The manner of Caribbean exploitation has contributed to the region's continued portrayal as a 'problem' area of passivity in the world, despite its contributions to building the modern world. Let me summarise some of the contributions that Caribbean thought can offer for rethinking and decolonising IR.⁹

There is an extensive scholar activist tradition in the region that has been vital to twentieth-century Pan-Africanism evident in the written and activist works of George Padmore, Marcus Garvey, Amy Ashwood-Garvey and Walter Rodney, among others.¹⁰ These highlight the primacy

⁴Denis Benn, *The Caribbean an Intellectual History 1774–2003* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 2004); Paget Henry, *Caliban's Reason: Introducing Afro-Caribbean Philosophy* (London, UK: Routledge, 2000); Anthony Bogues, *Caribbean Reasonings: After Man, towards the Human: Critical Essays on Sylvia Wynter* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2006); Bolland (ed.), *The Birth of Caribbean Civilisation*; Sylvio Torres-Salliant, *An Intellectual History of the Caribbean* (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Aaron Kamugisha (ed.), *Caribbean Political Thought: The Colonial State to Caribbean Internationalisms* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2013); Aaron Kamugisha (ed.), *Caribbean Political Thought: Theories of the Post-Colonial State* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 2013).

⁵Kristina Hinds, 'Big ideas from small places: Caribbean thought for International Relations', in Amitav Acharya, Melisa Deciancio, and Diana Tussie (eds), *Latin America in Global International Relations* (New York, NY and London, UK: Routledge, 2021), pp. 67–88 (p. 71).

⁶C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the Santo Domingo Revolution* (rev. 2nd edn, New York: Vintage Books, 1963).

⁷C. L. R. James, *A History of Pan-African Revolt*, introduction Robin D. G. Kelley (Oakland, CA and Chicago, IL: PM Press and Charles H. Kerr Publishing, 2012 [orig. pub. 1938]), pp. 43–4.

⁸Hinds, 'Big ideas from small places'.

⁹For a fuller exposition, see *ibid.*

¹⁰*Ibid.*; Rhoda Reddock, 'Radical Caribbean social thought: Race, class, identity and the postcolonial nation', *Current Sociology Monograph*, 2 (2014), pp. 1–19 (p. 5).

of racial exploitation and white supremacy in structuring the world as a system. Instead of portraying state sovereignty or power as the defining characteristics of this system, these perspectives offer globally racialised capitalism as characterising international relations and are activist in seeking to overcome this system of global inequities to provide freedom for people of colour.¹¹

Similarly, the towering twentieth-century works of Frantz Fanon have been essential for shaping postcolonial scholarship using his assessments of the criticality of white supremacy in the world capitalist system. Indeed, Fanon's willingness to reach outside of the Caribbean in his treatments of colonial racism as experienced for instance in South Africa, Madagascar, and North Africa, and as equally destructive as anti-Semitism, provides cutting global analyses of value for IR.¹² Like Fanon, others such as Aimé Césaire, Charles Mills, Paget Henry, and Sylvia Wynter have thought through the manner in which this racialisation has revolved around the depiction of black and other people of colour as not fully human, since the ideal for humanity seemingly resides within the white European man.¹³ This tradition in Caribbean thought centres the racialised and exploitative nature of the world system as critical to understanding globalising processes that allow wealth accumulation for some and impoverishment for others. The recognition that Caribbean people provided free labour and fought in the twentieth-century world wars to build and defend exploitative empires that oppressed them, continues to undergird present day scholar-activism in the reparation movement.¹⁴

A burgeoning feminist scholarly tradition in the Caribbean sharpens the Caribbean analytical approaches by unveiling the gendered nature of colonial, exploitative, and racialised processes that have shaped the Caribbean and characterise the region's placement within the global. Scholars such as Eudine Barriteau, Patricia Mohammed, Jaqueline Alexander, and Kamala Kempadoo are among the many who have carved a path for such thought in the region by assessing how Caribbean women have been integral to the global division of labour in ways borne out of colonial enslavement and extraction.¹⁵ Thus, Caribbean women have been used to build a global capitalist system in ways that may go ignored in both class and race-based analyses or evaluations of the world.¹⁶

Of note too for the IR subfield of International Political Economy are the contributions of Nobel Laureate W. Arthur Lewis and the group of scholars who came to be known as the New World Group. Lewis has been viewed as more within the mainstream of economic development thought in prescribing industrialisation using foreign investment for the Caribbean. Meanwhile in the 1960s and 1970s, New World Group thinkers sought more radical approaches to breaking with the extractive and exploitative world economic system. These thinkers often compared the

¹¹The prescriptions that emerge from this Pan-African tradition are not without their criticisms, including the ways in which they can seem to seek black supremacy to replace white supremacy or may even illustrate imperialist perspectives and intentions regarding Africa. Garvey's advocacy and writings are quite guilty of this. Yet, such imperfections exist in other thought traditions see Eze's appraisal of Kant, for instance: Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, 'The color of reason: The idea of "race" in Kant's anthropology', in Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (ed.), *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), pp. 103–31.

¹²Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1967), ch. 4.

¹³Charles Mills, *Radical Theory, Caribbean Reality: Race, Class and Social Domination* (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2010); Henry, *Caliban's Reason*; Tonya Haynes, 'Sylvia Wynter's theory of the human and the crisis School of Caribbean Heteromascularity Studies', *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism*, 20:1 (2016), pp. 92–112; Aimé Césaire, 'Discourse on colonialism', in Bolland (ed.), *The Birth of Civilisation*, pp. 210–27; Bogues, *Caribbean Reasonings*.

¹⁴See Hilary McD Beckles, Verene A. Shepherd, and Ahmed Reid, 'Introduction', *Social and Economic Studies: Special Reparations Issue*, 68:3–4 (2019), pp. 1–9.

¹⁵Eudine Barriteau, 'Theorizing gender systems and the project of modernity in the twentieth-century Caribbean', *Feminist Review*, 59 (1998), pp. 186–210; M. Jacqui Alexander, 'Not just (any) body can be a citizen: The politics of law, sexuality and postcoloniality in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas', *Feminist Review*, 48 (1994), pp. 5–23; Kamala Kempadoo, *Sexing the Caribbean: Gender Race and Sexual Labour* (London, UK: Routledge, 2004); Patricia Mohammed, 'The Asian Other in the Caribbean', *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism*, 13:2 (2009), pp. 57–71.

¹⁶See Hinds, 'Big ideas from small places', pp. 80–1.

Caribbean as functioning within a modern plantation system.¹⁷ The Plantation Economy Model, emerges as the best known of the critical approaches stemming from this group.¹⁸ Eric Williams's work *Capitalism and Slavery* coincides with and informs these perspectives in evaluating the ways in which the system of colonial slavery was integral to building empire while causing hardship for the people of the Caribbean.¹⁹ These assessments offer system level analyses that present the Caribbean as inseparable from globalising processes and, indeed, as integral to them.

Much of this diverse Caribbean thought tradition ends up contemplating ways for Caribbean people to free themselves from exploitation to live in dignity. When one tugs at the common thread running through Caribbean thought, it reveals that the region is a space prone to fitting into the gaps of a system built on exploitation (raced, gendered, and capitalist), which undermines Caribbean people's quest for true freedom. Although the Caribbean helped to build the wealth generated in unequal ways in this system, the region is rendered invisible except for the purposes of surveillance and discipline. The same thread animated rebellions of enslaved people and inspired the quest for independence and state sovereignty that several Caribbean locations attained by the early 1980s. The continued influence of the history of exploitation; the continued location in the global system as places of peripherality and often illegality; and the challenge of state sovereignty in the absence of power, combine to thwart the very pursuit of freedom and dignity which Caribbean thinkers seek for the region. Thus, despite the façade of state sovereignty operating as the organising force in the world, other imperatives repeatedly undercut the exercise of Caribbean agency, forestalling Caribbean people's pursuit of true emancipation.

This lightning tour through some essential elements of Caribbean thought shows that Caribbean scholarship has deeply and critically reflected on the world, and the region's situation therein. Such a swift tour cannot do the region's thought tradition(s) justice, but I hope that what I have presented has made the point that Caribbean thought could not help but be concerned with the functioning of the world since the region has been knotted into globalising processes since the fifteenth century in ways that are difficult to disentangle. This difficulty of disentanglement plagues efforts to decolonise knowledge production, with much knowledge invariably emerging from multidirectional contributions repacked and disguised as only emanating from 'the West'. Indeed, strategic forgetting of the long processes of co-creation of the global (and of knowledge) by those outside 'the West' have been integral to colonisation. Caribbean scholarship brings into sharp focus the deficiencies in 'mainstream' IR by strategically unveiling erasure in conceptualising how the world works. Consequently, this scholarship coincides with Critical Theory, Post/De-Colonial IR, and Feminist IR. Using Caribbean thought creates openings for thinking about the world differently and for seeking to change it. The perspectives I have outlined do not offer meta-theoretical explanations or precise predictive tools. Further, they do not claim the discipline of IR at all. Instead, these Caribbean approaches provide heuristic openings for understanding the world and for truly seeing places that go unseen.

Heuristic devices offer simplified claims that can help to understand complex problems and can foster new ways of thinking about situations. Even though such claims may simplify and are at times developed unconsciously, they can also be developed and used consciously, as I seek to do here by mining the common and pertinent appraisals that the Caribbean intellectual tradition offers.²⁰ The heuristic opening that Caribbean thought offers can help us to understand the actions

¹⁷Norman Girvan, 'Caribbean dependency thought revisited', *Canadian Journal of Development Studies/Revue canadienne d'études du développement*, 27:3 (2006), pp. 328–52; Norman Girvan, 'W. A. Lewis, the Plantation School and dependency: An interpretation', *Social and Economic Studies*, 54:3 (2005), pp. 198–221.

¹⁸George Beckford, 'Plantation society: Toward a general theory of Caribbean society', in Kamugisha and Hume (eds), *Caribbean Cultural Thought*, pp. 109–20; Lloyd Best and Kari Polanyi Levitt, *Essays on the Theory of Plantation Economy: A Historical and Institutional Approach to Caribbean Economic Development* (Kingston, Jamaica: University of West Indies Press, 2009); Girvan, 'Caribbean dependency thought revisited'.

¹⁹Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*.

²⁰Timothy P. Huffman, Sarah J. Tracy, and Ryan S. Bisel, 'Beautiful particularity: Using phronetic, iterative, and heuristic approaches to a positively deviant case', *Communication Research and Practice*, 5:4 (2019), pp. 327–41 (p. 9); Tim

of Caribbean states (and territories) in ways that go beyond seeing them as passive, powerless, deficient, and ever on the verge of misbehaviour. Instead, we can assess such places as both products and creators of global processes, relationships, and systems. Existing power relations in a globalised capitalist world utilise inequality for the benefit of some over others and provide avenues for activities that both perpetuate the status quo and that can subversively undermine it. State sovereignty is not the key to understanding the world, though sovereignty offers some opportunities to exercise agency. Caribbean states and territories readily seize these opportunities. Whether Caribbean actors (Caribbean states, territories, people, or private entities) exercise this agency towards the ends of overcoming exploitation or grabbing whatever they can by working within the spaces that it offers, is another story altogether. For now, though, let us move to a discussion of a Caribbean strategy that has captured global attention and think it through using commonalities in the Caribbean intellectual tradition.

Thinking through an example: Caribbean OFCs

The varied analytical frames that Caribbean intellectuals present can be applied to comprehending Caribbean OFC strategies because such frames: (1) explain why the Caribbean may choose to pursue certain precarious activities offered by an unjust international system; (2) outline the pitfalls of pursuing such strategies that replicate colonial legacies while acknowledging the risks of radically breaking with such (see Haiti); and (3) can allow Caribbean people to make claims for repair or for other racially, gender aware, and historically contingent social justice actions at the international level on the basis of the foregoing. These social justice claims can get foreclosed as unrealistic in disciplinary circles that are steeped in mainstream ways of teaching, thinking, and writing in IR.

So far, I have sought to show that such Caribbean perspectives assess the historical importance of the region for the development of a world system built on racialised, gendered, exploitative capitalist relationships. We see the emergence of Caribbean sovereign states within this system, since statehood is the principal way in which entities can make claims and navigate this world. However, some Caribbean locations are not sovereign but remain linked to larger and more powerful states such as the US, the UK, France, and the Netherlands. Jurisdictions such as Anguilla, the Cayman Islands, the British Virgin Islands, the US Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, occupy an in-between space. Although continually subject to metropolitan intervention in domestic affairs, these jurisdictions exercise some autonomy over internal governance and are expected to be responsible for their economic sustainability.²¹ Whether using sovereignty or exercising autonomy within the ambit of larger metropolitan states, Caribbean jurisdictions have had to find ways to remain economically viable on their own. Consequently, sovereign or not, they have pursued a set of similar strategies for attracting foreign investment to generate revenue. With the waning of fortunes of mono-crop agriculture benefiting from preferential purchasing agreements by the 1990s, the region has become increasingly dependent on tourism combined with other nimble strategies that take advantage of a combination of the Caribbean's small 'islandness', autonomy, or sovereignty. These strategies tend to be subject to heavy surveillance and tend to be evaluated in ways that reflect the racialisation of these entities. These strategies are also policed for contradicting the goals or interests of more powerful states. Here, I refer specifically to the strategies of attracting 'offshore' investment.

Both Ronen Palan's and William Vlcek's discussions of the development of what are termed 'offshore financial centres' (OFCs) or more pejoratively, 'tax havens', note that nineteenth-century British legal decisions as to the jurisdiction of companies for tax purposes in the UK, allowed

Huffman and Sarah J. Tracy, 'Making claims that matter: Heuristics for theoretical and social impact in qualitative research', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 24:8 (2018), pp. 558–70 (p. 559); Ralph Hertwig and Thorsten Pachur, 'Heuristics, history of', *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (2015), pp. 829–35.

²¹ Wouter P. Veenendaal, 'The Dutch Caribbean municipalities in comparative perspective', *Island Studies Journal*, 10:1 (2015), pp. 15–30 (pp. 18, 25).

the development of this sector.²² This precedent, combined with developments in telecommunications across Europe, the US, and Canada by the Cable and Wireless company, created conditions that facilitated the establishment of OFCs in the Caribbean. What is more, capitalists' appetites for limiting oversight of firms' encouraged firms to become 'nomadic', especially with increasing taxation levels in industrialised countries by the middle of the twentieth century and growing capital mobility by the 1970s.²³ The Bahamas has been cited as the first place in the Western Hemisphere to begin offshore operations, offering services to British and Canadian firms in 1936. OFCs opened in Anguilla, Cayman Islands, the British Virgin Islands and in much of what would become the independent Commonwealth Caribbean states from the 1980s.²⁴

Therefore, the location of Caribbean jurisdictions within empire in the nineteenth century combined with capitalist expansion to create openings for this sector. The sector emerged to facilitate capital and to accommodate its nomadic tendencies. As such, Caribbean locations were sites for capitalist extraction of benefits in ways not altogether dissimilar from the use of the Caribbean as a site of capitalist extraction using plantation agriculture, or primary product extraction. In brief, firms use foreign spaces to generate financial benefits 'offshore' and this has developed as part and parcel of the series of processes that have allowed for what we now call globalisation. With several Caribbean locations gaining sovereignty from the 1960s, state managers began to use OFCs as an economic development option to attract foreign investment and earn needed revenue. Hence, Caribbean states and territories have used their sovereignty or autonomy to incentivise foreign firms to register ships and other companies; to conduct administrative elements of multinational corporations' work; and to assist individuals and firms with tax and estate planning.²⁵ It is important to emphasise that non-sovereign Caribbean jurisdictions (territories) have continued to use this sector to earn revenue. In fact, the UK government has repeatedly assisted its overseas territories with compliance with external obligations so that these territories can continue to earn revenues, allowing the British government to be released from responsibilities of financially supporting them.²⁶ Sovereignty and statehood are not always critical for understanding how entities, such as those located in the Caribbean, operate in the world. Indeed, Caribbean scholarship such as that within the New World Group tradition, C. L. R. James's thought and Caribbean feminism illustrates that sovereignty has never been the defining feature of Caribbean places' functioning in the world.

Despite OFCs emerging out of global capitalist processes, Caribbean jurisdictions have faced significant difficulties in keeping this sector alive, being portrayed as aberrant for facilitating processes not even of their making. Although several Caribbean jurisdictions are sovereign and can decide their own taxation levels, investment policies and can craft domestic legislation, they have faced pressure from powerful states that wish to collect taxes and gain benefits from multinational companies 'onshore'. A paradox of the multinational corporation is that it can create wealth, but it seems to have little national loyalty or affinity to 'home'. These corporations are ultimately obligated to themselves and the profit motive. Therefore, the powerful states from which such companies

²²Ronen Palan, 'Tax havens and the commercialization of state sovereignty', *International Organization*, 56:1 (2002), pp. 151–76; William Vlcek, 'Behind an offshore mask: Sovereignty games in the Global Political Economy', *Third World Quarterly*, 30:8 (2009), pp. 1465–81 (p. 1468).

²³Palan, 'Tax havens and the commercialization of state sovereignty', p. 157; Vlcek, 'Behind an offshore mask', pp. 1467–9; Bill Maurer, 'Islands in the net: Rewiring technological and financial circuits in the "offshore"', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 43:3 (2001), pp. 467–501 (pp. 469–70).

²⁴Esther C. Suss, Oral Williams, and Chandima Mendis, *Caribbean Offshore Financial Centers: Past, Present, and Possibilities for the Future* (Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, 2002), p. 4.

²⁵Don D. Marshall, 'The new international financial architecture and Caribbean OFCs: Confronting financial stability discourse', *Third World Quarterly*, 28:5 (2007), pp. 917–38 (p. 931).

²⁶Foreign and Commonwealth Office, UK, *Partnership for Progress and Prosperity: Britain and the Overseas Territories* (London: Foreign and Commonwealth Office, UK, 1999), p. 31; Peter Clegg, 'The United Kingdom and its Caribbean overseas territories: Present relations and future prospects', *Caribbean Journal of International Relations and Diplomacy*, 1:2 (2013), pp. 53–64 (p. 56).

generally originate must find ways to bring these corporations' activities and wealth back 'home'. These powerful states have opted to police the Caribbean and to portray the region as a zone of illegality, filled with 'tax havens' and in need of continual surveillance and management.²⁷ Rather than accepting Caribbean states as sovereigns with legitimate rights to pursue their interests, they are treated as rule breakers requiring external intervention and guidance. The colonial tinge of this approach is undeniable. What is more, non-sovereign jurisdictions in the Caribbean tend to be singled out as rule violators rather than naming the states of which they are dependencies. As a result, British Overseas Territories feature on lists relating to tax and transparency non-compliance instead of the UK.²⁸ This feeds the trope of the Caribbean as an unruly zone that must be fixed rather than emphasising the roles of the world's powerful states and corporations that have been complicit in creating these processes.

While Caribbean OFCs are heavily scrutinised and policed for cross-border money laundering and terrorist financing, powerful actors are freed of culpability. Further, jurisdictions that are 'onshore' in the US, the UK, and across Europe participate in similar activities to those occurring in the Caribbean (e.g., Delaware, USA; the City of London, UK; Monaco and Switzerland). From the 1990s, Caribbean states and territories have been 'blacklisted' by the OECD, EU, US, and Canada, even while Caribbean jurisdictions have continually worked to comply with external recommendations, apparent in their attempts to comply with USA's Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA) and the OECD's Common Reporting Standards.²⁹ In contrast, the District of Columbia, Montana and Oregon in the USA have been reported as non-compliant with the corporate transparency and reporting standards to which Caribbean jurisdictions have worked ardently to conform. The OECD's Financial Action Task Force has also highlighted to US's lack of compliance on corporate transparency, yet the US avoids 'blacklists'.³⁰ The use of the term 'blacklist' pervades. For instance, in reporting on the EU's 2020 listing of 'non-cooperative jurisdictions', global accountancy firm KPMG presents this within its "EU Blacklist Update". Similarly, Oxfam International repeatedly mobilises against OFCs by criticising the leniency of 'tax haven blacklists'.³¹ The continued use of the term 'blacklist' occurs with little awareness of the crassness of employing such a racialised term to rebuke predominantly 'black' countries. Further, there is little concern about the economic fortunes of these countries that are very small and that have emerged as sovereign out of centuries of brutal and exploitative colonisation. There is little concern about blaming tiny entities for the dictates of global capitalism. Instead, they pay a penalty for daring to

²⁷ Don D. Marshall, 'The path to "international finance": Bringing (Caribbean) offshore financial centres in; attenuating the Western grand narrative', in Andrew F. Cooper and Timothy M. Shaw (eds), *The Diplomacies of Small States* (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 219–43; Don D. Marshall, 'Gender tropes and colonial discourses in the turbulence of global finance', *Contemporary Politics*, 15:4 (2009), pp. 413–27.

²⁸ EU, 'Common EU List of Third Country Jurisdictions for Tax Purposes' (22 February 2021), available at: https://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/common-eu-list-third-country-jurisdictions-tax-purposes_en accessed 30 July 2021; OECD, 'Compliance Ratings following Peer Reviews against the Standard of EOIR' (2021), available at: <https://www.oecd.org/tax/transparency/documents/exchange-of-information-on-request-ratings.htm> accessed 30 July 2021.

²⁹ Ronald Saunders, 'Commentary: The Coming OECD Blacklist', Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (19 October 2018), available at: <https://pressroom.oecs.org/commentary-the-coming-oecd-blacklist> accessed 18 July 2021; Jakub A. Bartoszewsk and Andrew Morriss, 'An Archipelago of Contrasts: Blacklists, Caribbean Autonomy and the New Tax Colonialism', *IFC Review* (17 May 2020), available at: <https://www.ifcreview.com/articles/2020/june/an-archipelago-of-contrasts-blacklists-caribbean-autonomy-and-the-new-tax-colonialism/> accessed 23 February 2021; Marshall, 'The new international financial architecture and Caribbean OFCs', p. 933.

³⁰ Bruce Zagaris, 'Raising Revenue on the Backs of Caribbean Jurisdictions', *Tax Notes International* (2015), pp. 607–08.

³¹ KPMG, 'Cayman Islands and Oman Delisted, Barbados and Anguilla Added to the EU List of Non-Cooperative Jurisdictions' (6 October 2020), available at: <https://home.kpmg/xx/en/home/insights/2020/10/etf-435-eu-blacklist-update.html> accessed 30 July 2021; Oxfam International, 'Weak EU Tax Haven Blacklist Allows Corporate Tax Dodgers to Pocket Millions of Euros in Bailouts' (5 October 2020), available at: <https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/weak-eu-tax-haven-blacklist-allows-corporate-tax-dodgers-pocket-millions-euros> accessed 30 July 2021.

exercise their autonomy using the spaces available to them in the global economy. Caribbean intellectuals' preoccupation with racialisation and white supremacy underpinning the world's political and economic systems is instructive here.

Caribbean jurisdictions may now be at the point of resigning themselves to being unable to maintain OFCs. The recent efforts by the G20, in this case led by the US under President Joe Biden, to push for a global minimum corporate tax of around 15 per cent continues this effort of the powerful states to reign in global capitalism. The COVID-19 pandemic has reinvigorated the drive to raise tax revenues within the world's powerful countries that must rebuild economies ravaged by lockdowns and that have needed to increase health care spending to address the COVID-19 crisis. As of 9 July 2021, 132 countries (i.e., a combination of sovereign states and non-sovereign jurisdictions) involved in the OECD's Inclusive Framework on Base Erosion of Profit Sharing had agreed to work towards a global minimum corporate tax rate by 2023.³² Of the seven countries that did not sign the agreement, only two were from the Caribbean (Barbados and St Vincent and the Grenadines), somewhat unsurprisingly considering the British government's increasing demands that its overseas territories bring their OFC operations in line with external expectations.³³ In August 2021, Barbados became the 133rd country to join this framework, its government indicating it 'would be better to fight from the inside'.³⁴

Using Realism, Liberalism, and even some approaches to Constructivism to assess the fates of Caribbean OFCs; the consequences of the sector for the region and the world; and the ways in which Caribbean states can or should respond to external pressures that seek to close OFCs, offers stale evaluations and options. In contrast, the emphases in Caribbean thought on the racialised, exploitative, inequitable, and capitalist nature of world affairs that combine to undermine the attainment of human dignity, particularly of the global majority who are not 'white', help us to contemplate alternatives for appraising the workings of the world. Varied strands of the Caribbean intellectual tradition provide alternate ways of analysing global occurrences; present the imperative of working to change world politics; and centre the vantage points of those who crucially require change. The continued surveillance and control efforts that seek to regulate Caribbean OFCs, and the pursuit of a minimum global corporate tax rate at a level that will likely terminate Caribbean OFCs, are actions that end up remaking Caribbean countries as passive under-developed areas that are policy takers. This framing fails to highlight that Caribbean jurisdictions have used their autonomy in ways that have helped to expand the profits of firms, thus, building out globalisation. Efforts to curb Caribbean autonomy in favour of the will of powerful states, undercuts the agile efforts of Caribbean jurisdictions to navigate the world system by making use of globalising processes, which Baldacchino terms 'strategy games crafted by the small'.³⁵

Critiques of global capitalism emanating from the New World Group and Sir Arthur Lewis's works (though with different concentrations and levels of radicalism) are useful here. New World Group approaches would take issue with the continued pursuit of dependent development that OFC strategies offer. Both New World Group perspectives and those stemming from Lewis's

³²Graison Dangor, 'G20 Signs Off On 15% Global Minimum Corporate Tax – Here's How It Will Work', *Forbes* (11 July 2021), available at: {<https://www.forbes.com/sites/graisondangor/2021/07/11/g20-signs-off-on-15-global-minimum-corporate-tax-heres-how-it-will-work/?sh=29ddf68a1c7e>} accessed 11 July 2021; OECD, 'Members of the OECD/G20 Inclusive Framework on BEPS joining the Statement on a Two-Pillar Solution to Address the Tax Challenges Arising from the Digitalisation of the Economy as of 9 July 2021' (20 July 2021), available at: {<https://www.oecd.org/tax/beps/oecd-g20-inclusive-framework-members-joining-statement-on-two-pillar-solution-to-address-tax-challenges-arising-from-digitalisation-july-2021.pdf>} accessed 30 July 2021.

³³OECD (20 July 2021); Peter Clegg, 'The United Kingdom and its overseas territories: No longer a "benevolent patron"?' *Small States and Territories*, 1:2 (2018), pp. 149–68 (p. 159).

³⁴Shawn Cumberbatch, 'Barbados joins OECD tax process', *Nation News* (15 August 2021), available at: {<https://www.nationnews.com/2021/08/15/barbados-joins-oecd-tax-process/>} accessed 15 August 2021.

³⁵Godfrey Baldacchino, 'Governmentality is all the rage: The strategy games of small jurisdictions', *The Round Table*, 101:3 (2012), pp. 235–51 (p. 239).

thought might also emphasise the need for Caribbean countries to use regional initiatives for industrial development so that they can better operate within the global environment and/or seek to change it while also transforming the internal political economies of the region. These perspectives can allow effective critique of Caribbean 'strategy games' and the world system that perpetuates them to offer alternatives for charting a course through global politics. The perspectives that these strains of Caribbean thought offer assist with grasping why Caribbean states and territories might pursue such strategy games (even if assessing the OFC approach negatively).

Further, when one moves beyond disembodied portrayals of the policing of cross border financial transactions, global tax policy, anti-money laundering, and anti-terrorist activities, one can examine how such policing is skewed in ways that are both racialised and gendered. Global actions that close sectors such as OFCs have significant effects on women's employment in economic areas that are fed by OFCs including domestic work and the care economy, especially in a region dominated by female-headed single parent households within an already depressed global economic environment wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased strain on women to undertake unpaid care work all over the world and is further compounded by war driven global inflation.³⁶ Thus, the insights offered by applying lenses developed by Caribbean feminist thinkers about the intersections of race, class, and gender within the global political economy can be useful for dissecting international actions and for making recommendations aimed at addressing them. OFCs in the Caribbean have expanded opportunities for women to earn and to provide for their families with some dignity even while building on racialised and gendered tropes that inform their operations in the region. Dismantling OFCs in the Caribbean will have real and gendered consequences.³⁷ Again, insights from feminist thought do not offer endorsements of OFC-type strategies but can illuminate their functioning and their consequences on actual human lives.³⁸

Conclusion

The currents running through the Caribbean intellectual tradition offer critical appraisals of the world being structured as racialised, gendered, and inequitable, built in no small part on a colonial legacy of which the Caribbean has been integral. These contributions can be used to think IR differently towards decolonising it. Using works within the Caribbean intellectual tradition can supply helpful heuristic tools for analysing the world for those located in the Caribbean, the Global South and, really, for anyone appraising global affairs. To decolonise IR, we should find ways to incorporate and centre these and other non-IR ways of studying and thinking about the world, not as footnotes, but as integral to enriching the field of enquiry.

My succinct discussion of OFCs was an attempt to apply evaluative insights that the Caribbean intellectual tradition presents. This Caribbean-OFC case suggests that OFCs emerged as part of wider globalising processes that Caribbean states and territories have used their autonomy to mine. Caribbean relationships with Europe, the US, and Canada and the development of practices that facilitated capital mobility across them, opened the door for OFCs that Caribbean jurisdictions used. In so doing, Caribbean locales have contributed to globalising capital and capitalism. Rather than being havens for bad behaviour or passive sites of under-development, Caribbean jurisdictions have exercised agency to extend globalisation. Whether one agrees with the Caribbean OFC strategy or not, the threads running through Caribbean intellectual works help us to evaluate

³⁶Bobo Diallo, Seemin Qayum, and Silke Staab, 'COVID-19 and the Care Economy: Immediate Action and Structural Transformation for a Gender-Responsive Recovery' (New York, NY: UN Women, 2020), available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/06/policy-brief-covid-19-and-the-care-economy> accessed 30 July 2021.

³⁷Navarro ably assessed the gendered construction and consequences of OFC-type strategies for the US Virgin Islands: Tami Navarro, *Virgin Capital: Race, Gender and Financialization in the US Virgin Islands* (New York, NY: SUNY Press, 2021).

³⁸See similar: Carla Freeman, *High Tech and High Heels in the Global Economy* (Durham, NC and London, UK: Duke University Press, 2000).

examples such as this one in ways that explain them differently from mainstream analyses that pessimistically recreate the Caribbean as invisible in its contribution to the global, except as a problem region for policing and managing.

To close, I reiterate that although Caribbean jurisdictions may be invisible on maps, they have contributed to structuring the world as we know it via impacting on the expansion of global capitalist processes. The Caribbean intellectual tradition can help us to see how the region has crafted global contexts and how it continues to affect global processes, while also being affected by them. Moreover, Caribbean thought can offer recommendations for Caribbean and other states, territories, and actors seeking to make their way in an unjust world, and perhaps even seeking to remake the world so it is more just. The Caribbean intellectual tradition can add to the collective of critical perspectives within IR that can be used for rethinking world affairs. To decolonise the discipline, we should take somewhat subversive steps. Applying Caribbean thought, almost alien to IR, to teach, study, and to change the discipline, is one such step.

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