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LOCAL ISSUES

Maritime-security issues may be considered as ‘local’ in nature when their impact is limited largely to areas offshore from a single island or archipelago or at most a few adjacent islands. Although the maritime-security issues under consideration in this chapter do not generally transcend a local setting, they cover a wide gamut of offshore considerations and may be of vital interest for individual islands.

Two issues illustrate local maritime-security challenges to Caribbean island-states – maritime-boundary delimitation and ocean management. The two issues overlap. Boundary delimitation determines the extent of offshore areas to be managed, while the way in which these areas are managed, as well as resources located therein, may facilitate or complicate agreements on boundaries. The second issue – ocean management – encompasses a variety of related issues, including coastal-zone tourism, living and non-living marine resources, marine transportation and marine pollution.

The local nature of maritime-security issues contrasts with other issues which have been examined throughout this study. For example, Cold-War issues have affected the entire Latin American region and have global implications as well (Chapter 3). Superpower competition, whether of regional or global dimensions or both, tended to subordinate local interests and policies to those of the United States and the Soviet Union. With the decline of the Cold War, local security issues have gained prominence and the islands have greater leeway in dealing with them.

Caribbean boat people and Caribbean maritime drug trafficking (Chapters 4 and 5) originate in the Caribbean or Latin America but have a direct impact on the United States, and hence may be considered as ‘inter-American’ maritime-security issues. That is, these kinds of issues squarely involve both Latin America and the United States and their interaction. While these security issues do involve the Caribbean, they transcend the limited island setting and local capabilities are often of little value in attempting to control such forces. Small Caribbean island-states often share the view that Caribbean boat people and Caribbean
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Local maritime drug trafficking are ultimately the responsibility of the hemispheric superpower. In fact, prosperity and political stability pull boat people toward the US mainland, and the US demand for narcotics feeds drug transit through the Caribbean.

Local issues exhibit different dynamics. By definition, these issues do not generally have an impact beyond the local setting, and hence are of little or no interest to outside powers. At the same time, such issues are often regarded as considerably more important by the island-states than inter-American or Cold-War issues.

A number of considerations make local maritime-security issues important for Caribbean islands. First, the sea has an especially heavy impact on small, weak island-states, so that local maritime-security issues are likely to be more important for them than for larger continental states. Since the ocean at once links the islands with global commerce while also often isolating each from the other, the maritime setting constitutes a vital dimension of national economic and political life. Secondly, since most Caribbean islands are small and vulnerable, they are less able to cope with local maritime-security issues than are larger states. The adverse impact may shake domestic stability and thereby blur the distinction between land-based and maritime security. Thirdly, it is incumbent on the islands to fashion effective responses to local issues, since outside powers are likely to remain disinterested and neighbours may take advantage if these issues are neglected.

Local maritime-security issues illustrate the close relationship between security and economics in offshore areas. Latin American states regularly argue that security and economics are closely related for developing states, so that for them a broader definition must be given of 'security' than conventional military threats and capabilities. 'Economic security' constitutes a more pragmatic, broader definition adapted to Third-World conditions. The term, 'economic security', suggests the frequent fusion of economic and security considerations for developing countries, which are often buffeted about by international economic, military and political trends beyond their control. The international political economy may be just as threatening and destabilising, for vulnerable Third-World states, as more conventional military threats.

The marked smallness and vulnerability of Caribbean island-states scattered widely about a sizable ocean basin lends distinctiveness to threats to their 'economic security'. The island polities are heavily dependent on the global economy, because of their smallness and frequent reliance on exports of only one or two products. International